



भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS  
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING, MUMBAI

DGS CIRCULAR NO. 18 OF 2026

Nautical Wing - Safety in Carriage of Cargoes and Containers Branch	
<b>File No. 25-63011/20/2026-NT – DGS (Comp. No.:39255)</b>	<b>Date: 03.04.2026</b>
<b>Authorised By:</b> Nautical Advisor to the Government of India.	<b>Subject:</b> Requirements for the Carriage of Plastic Pellets by Sea in Freight Containers – reg.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The safety of ships, cargo and protection of the marine environment remain paramount to the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS). The Directorate is committed to ensuring the highest standards of maritime safety and environmental protection through effective implementation of applicable international conventions adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).</li><li>2. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended, under Chapter VII, contains mandatory provisions governing the carriage of dangerous goods in packaged form. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78), as amended, establishes mandatory requirements for the prevention of pollution from ships. Further, MARPOL Annex III contains provisions for the prevention of pollution by harmful substances carried by sea in packaged form, while MARPOL Annex V prohibits the discharge of plastics into the marine environment.</li><li>3. In this regard, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has issued recommendations through MEPC.1/Circ.909 concerning the carriage of plastic pellets by sea in freight containers. The Marine Environment Protection Committee, at its eighty-first session, approved these recommendations as an initial step to reduce environmental risks associated with the maritime transport of plastic pellets.</li><li>4. Further discussions are ongoing at the IMO Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) regarding the introduction of mandatory measures for the carriage of plastic pellets by sea. These include proposals for amendments to MARPOL Annex III to address the environmental risks associated with the maritime transport of plastic pellets in freight containers.</li><li>5. Meanwhile, recent incidents along the Indian coastline have highlighted serious concerns regarding marine pollution caused by the loss of freight containers carrying plastic pellets at sea. In such incidents, containers carrying plastic pellets were lost overboard and the pellets subsequently washed</li></ol>	

ashore along extensive stretches of the Kerala and Tamil Nadu coastline, also affecting neighboring waters of Sri Lanka, resulting in widespread contamination of beaches and coastal waters.

6. Recovery of these pellets has proved extremely difficult and requires extensive manual clean-up operations involving local authorities, government agencies and volunteers. Such operations are labour-intensive and time-consuming and often cannot fully remove the pellets from the marine environment.
7. Plastic pellets may further fragment into microplastics, which may be ingested by marine organisms and enter the marine food chain. This raises serious concerns regarding the long-term impact on marine biodiversity, coastal ecosystems and fisheries-dependent livelihoods.
8. In view of the foregoing and to safeguard the marine environment and coastal ecosystems of India, the Competent Authority hereby directs the following measures for the carriage of plastic pellets by sea:
  - (a) Vessels carrying plastic pellets (nurdles) and calling at Indian ports or transiting through Indian coastal waters shall ensure that such **cargo is stowed under deck only. Carriage of containers having plastic pellets (nurdles) on deck is prohibited.**
  - (b) The packaging of plastic pellets shall meet stringent and secure packaging standards not less than those prescribed under the IMDG Code for packaged dangerous goods, in order to prevent leakage or loss during transport.
9. Compliance with the provisions of this Circular shall be verified during Port State Control inspections and Flag State inspections. Port authorities, shippers, shipping lines, logistics agents and Multimodal Transport Operators (MTOs) shall ensure strict adherence to the above requirements. All concerned stakeholders are advised to bring the contents of this Circular to the notice of their personnel and ensure effective implementation.
10. The provisions of this Circular shall come into force for all container shipments on or after 15 April 2026.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.



Capt. Ravi Singh Sikarwar  
Nautical Surveyor-cum- DDG (Tech.)

Copy to:

1. DGS Secretariat.
2. All Major/Non-Major Port Authorities of India.
3. Multimodal Transport Operators, MANSA, Logistic Agents, Shipping Companies.
4. INSA, MASSA, FOSMA, ICCSA.
5. Computer Cell.