

MARPOL

Main Components of MARPOL – Explained

The MARPOL Convention is made up of two main parts: the Convention text and six technical annexes. Together, they form the legal and practical framework for preventing marine pollution from ships.

1. Convention Text (Main Body)

This part of the Convention outlines the general principles of MARPOL. It defines important terms, sets the scope of application, and outlines the responsibilities of the contracting states. It also describes how amendments can be made, how compliance is ensured, and how enforcement is handled.

The Convention text serves as the legal foundation for the technical regulations contained in the annexes. Without it, the annexes would lack binding international status.

2. The Six Technical Annexes

Each annex focuses on a specific type of pollution and contains detailed rules and technical requirements for preventing that kind of pollution. These include design standards for ships, operational procedures, and discharge limits.

The annexes are:

- Annex I – Oil
- Annex II – Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk
- Annex III – Harmful Substances in Packaged Form
- Annex IV – Sewage
- Annex V – Garbage
- Annex VI – Air Pollution

Each annex can be ratified separately by member states. That means a country can agree to be bound by the main convention and only some of the annexes, depending on its national priorities and capabilities.

How it Works in Practice

Once a country ratifies MARPOL and its annexes, it must implement the rules into national law and enforce them through inspections, certifications, and penalties for non-compliance. Ships that operate internationally must carry relevant MARPOL certificates and follow the rules set out in the annexes.