

which are not under the direct ownership or operational control of the NSF, *e.g.*, the U.S. Military Sealift Command, the U.S. Navy, or U.S. Coast Guard vessels. Further, the proposed general permit applies only to the ocean dumping of man-made ice piers from the NSF station at McMurdo Sound, Antarctica. The 1992 amendments to the MPRSA (Pub. L. 102-580) provide that permits under the MPRSA shall be issued for a period not to exceed seven years (section 104(a), 33 U.S.C. 1414(a)); consequently, the term of this proposed permit is limited to a maximum of seven years.

The proposed general permit establishes several specific conditions that must be met during the life of, and prior to the ocean dumping of, the ice pier. In addition, it requires the NSF to report by June 30 of every year to the Director of the Oceans and Coastal Protection Division, in EPA's Office of Water, on any spills, discharges, or clean-up procedures on the ice pier, and on any ocean dumping of ice piers from McMurdo Station conducted under this general permit.

With the institution of new protective measures, such as longer length hoses for unloading petroleum products from the annual supply tanker, and new precautions taken in the handling and return to bases outside Antarctica of used or contaminated chemicals, solvents, and hazardous materials, the chance of a spill or a discharge of these materials is low. There is considerable vehicular traffic on the ice pier during the austral summer season, and the possibility of engine block leaks or discharges from these vehicles cannot be totally avoided. However, the NSF has informed the Agency that vehicles are parked on the pier for only brief periods of time, ranging from minutes to less than an hour, and that no vehicles are ever parked on the pier overnight.

The proposed general permit requires that the NSF have an SPCC plan in place, consistent with the requirements of 40 CFR 112.3, for the ice pier that addresses:

- (1) The unloading of petroleum products from supply tankers to the storage tanks at McMurdo Station;
- (2) The unloading of drummed chemicals, petroleum products, and material (cargo) from cargo freighters to supply depots at McMurdo Station; and
- (3) The loading of materials to freighters destined to be returned to bases outside Antarctica.

The proposed permit requires that the SPCC plan include methods to minimize the accidental release or discharge of any products to the ice pier. In addition, the proposed general

permit requires that the following clean-up and reporting procedures must be followed by NSF in the event of a spill or discharge on the pier:

(1) All spills or discharges must be cleaned up within two hours of the spill or discharge, or as soon as possible thereafter.

(2) If a spill or discharge occurs, clean-up procedures must be completed to a level below any visible evidence of the spill or discharge.

(3) As part of normal permit monitoring requirements, an official record of the following information shall be kept by NSF:

(a) The date and time of all spills or discharges, the location of the spill or discharge, the approximate volume of the spill or discharge, clean-up procedures employed, and the results;

(b) The number of wooden poles remaining in the pier at the time of release from McMurdo Station, and their approximate length;

(c) The approximate length of the steel cables remaining in the pier at the time of its release;

(d) Any other substances remaining on the pier at the time of its release; and

(e) The date of detachment of the pier from McMurdo Station, and the geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) of the point of final release of the pier in McMurdo Sound.

(4) A copy of this record shall be submitted to the Director of the Oceans and Coastal Protection Division, in the EPA's Office of Water, by June 30 of every year as part of the annual reporting requirements.

The conditions specified in the proposed permit are intended to protect the Antarctic environment against release of contaminants from the McMurdo Station ice pier following its ocean dumping and subsequent melting. As noted above, section 104(c) of the MPRSA, 33 U.S.C. 1414(c), and EPA regulations at 40 CFR 220.3(a) authorize the issuance of general permits for the dumping of materials which have minimal adverse environmental impacts.

In light of the testing and analyses described above, and the conditions which are stipulated in the proposed permit for the disposal of ice piers, it is the determination of the Agency that only minimal adverse environmental impacts would result from the dumping of ice piers from the NSF base at McMurdo Station in Antarctica.

Furthermore, the NSF is directed, as a condition of this permit, to utilize a methodology to track any ice piers released from McMurdo Station for a period of one year from the date of release of the pier. Such methodologies

may include the use of satellite-tracked pingers placed on the ice pier, or any other methodology that will allow data to be collected on the course, speed, and location of the ice pier. The results of these tracking efforts are to be included in the reports that the NSF is required to submit to the Agency. The period of one year was chosen by the Agency for several reasons: first, batteries for pinger tracking operations beyond a period of one year become considerably heavier and bulkier (and a greater source of pollution to the marine environment when the ice piers eventually melt); and further, one year's measurements should provide substantial evidence concerning the track of ice piers in the dissolution process.

The NSF shall submit tracking reports to the Agency for all releases of ice piers from McMurdo Station under this permit. If tracking results demonstrate that all such ice piers released have generally followed the same path and time duration for the one year following release, the Agency will consider whether further tracking efforts and tracking reports shall be required from the NSF under any future versions of this permit.

Considering that any contaminants remaining on the surface of the piers are expected to be extremely minimal, and further, that the area over which the melting and disintegration of the piers occurs is immense, the potential for damage to the environment from ocean dumping of any McMurdo Station ice piers is minimal. In addition, the possibility of entanglement of large organisms in suspended loops of cable from the melting ice piers has been determined by the Agency to be very minimal; further discussion of this issue can be found in "C. Potential Effects of Ice Pier Disposal," above.

Further, it should be noted that the issuance of an ocean dumping permit to the NSF does not in any way relieve the NSF of meeting any of its obligations under the Antarctic Protocol, the Antarctic Conservation Act, or the implementing regulations.

Statutory and Executive Order Reviews

A. Paperwork Reduction Act

The Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, is intended to minimize the reporting and record-keeping burden on the regulated community, as well as to minimize the cost of Federal information collection and dissemination. In general, the Act requires that information requests and record-keeping requirements affecting ten or more non-Federal respondents be approved by the Office of Management