

## Infectious Disease

A further responsibility of the Authority is the control of infectious disease affecting the crew and passengers of vessels and aircraft arriving in the district. The Authority operates a 24hr telephone standby system to enable messages to be received from the Masters of vessels and the Commanders of aircraft arriving at London City Airport who are required to notify the presence of illness thought to be of an infectious nature. Doctors are on call to visit vessels and aircraft to enable a diagnosis to be made of the illness and to recommend further action to prevent the spread of the disease. Health promotion is carried out by Port Health Officers on the prevention of HIV and AIDS infection and certain other illnesses.



## Pollution

The Authority also issues Permits under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations 2000, which will be replaced by the Environmental Permitting Regulations from 6th April 2008. Currently Permits have been issued to installations used for the loading and discharge of coal, loading and discharge of cement, vehicle respraying and timber processing. Each Permit contains numerous conditions which must be complied with in order to prevent pollution from discharges to the air arising from the operations being carried out.



Noise control is also an important part of the Authority's enforcement role. Problems occur with Thames disco launches particularly when operating after midnight. Most of these vessels have now been fitted with noise limiting devices but unless these are correctly used then unacceptably loud music may result causing disturbance to the public, and legal action has been taken to prevent such occurrences.

The Authority works closely with the Environment Agency and has undertaken a project

to evaluate the microbiological quality of the Thames in relation to recreational use. A further study into the potential public health risk for recreational users of the river was published in 2007.

Smoke free legislation was introduced on 1st July 2007 and is enforced by the Authority throughout its area.

## General

Other regulatory responsibilities of the Authority include the control of odour emission from certain port industries, the checking of conditions aboard houseboats and the monitoring of the handling of refuse on the river. As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, the Authority must assess the risk of emergencies and use this to inform its contingency planning.

The London Port Health Authority is a member of the Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA), committees of which meet regularly to discuss policy issues and new legislation in relation to Border Inspection Posts, imported feed and food control, and environmental health and hygiene. The City held the Presidency during 2006. This Association is an excellent forum for the exchange of information between authorities, promoting consistency of enforcement and other Port Health matters of significance. The Authority is also represented on the European Major Border Inspection Post forum.

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LARGER PRINT THEN PLEASE  
CONTACT US ON THE DETAILS  
BELOW:**

**The London Port Health Authority**  
City of London, PO Box 270, Guildhall, London  
EC2P 2EJ

Tel: 0207 332 1170

Email: [porthealth@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:porthealth@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

Web: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/porthealth](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/porthealth)

## The London Port Health Authority



## Summary of the Principal Functions

## Introduction

The City of London is responsible, as the London Port Health Authority, for enforcing public, animal and environmental health related legislation within a district which extends for 94 miles (150km) from Teddington Lock to the outer limits of the Thames Estuary and includes the Port of Tilbury, London City Airport and other docks, marinas and riverside wharves. To the south the district incorporates the lower course of the River Medway and the Western section of the Swale with the ports of Sheerness, Ridham Dock, Queenborough and the container handling terminal at Thamesport on the Isle of Grain. The district also includes part of the River Crouch, the River Roach and its tributaries, as well as the proposed London Gateway port on the former Shellhaven site.

## Shellfish

The London Port Health Authority district encompasses around 300 square miles of estuarial waters within which there are many shellfish layings and the



organisation is responsible for ensuring that cockles, oysters, mussels and other bivalve molluscs are harvested from designated areas in order to prevent illness. Shellfish movement documents are issued to fishermen on request provided the Authority is satisfied that safeguards will be met with regard to their treatment before sale. Shellfish are also harvested from the Rivers Roach and Crouch, and the Authority is responsible for carrying out similar checks in these areas. Frequent samples of shellfish (over 284 in 2007) are obtained using the Authority's launches in order to establish the extent of pollution and to enable the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to classify the harvesting layings under UK and EU legislation.

Over 11,000 tonnes of cockles were harvested from the Thames Estuary during the 2007 season, although it has been as high as 25,000 tonnes in the past.

Samples are also sent to be tested for algal toxins



that can survive a heat treatment process. Atypical Diarrhetic Shellfish poisoning toxin has been detected in recent years resulting in temporary closures of the shellfish beds.

## Imported Food & Products of Animal Origin

One of the major public and animal health related responsibilities of the London Port Health Authority is the control of imported food and animal feed cargoes under both English and European Union legislation.



The Ports of Tilbury and Thamesport (Isle of Grain) are approved as Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) by the European Commission for the importation of meat and other products of animal origin (POAO) under its Veterinary Checks Regime. The Authority employs Official Veterinarians to oversee the clearance of meat, and they are assisted by Port Health Officers, Technical, General and Support Assistants. The inspection and clearance of fish and fish products is undertaken by the Port Health Officers. Around 400,000 tonnes of POAO are imported annually from third countries through the London Port Health Authority BIPs and a charge is made to recover the cost of the inspection service. Following the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, additional specific checks were carried out, particularly at London City Airport, to detect smuggled POAO especially from countries where there were animal and public health problems. However, this is now the primary responsibility of H.M Revenue & Customs. Other foodstuffs are checked to ensure that they meet the



requirements of general food safety legislation and are thereby fit for consumption at the time of importation. Checks are also made to ascertain whether the food complies with the Official Feed and Food Control Regulations, the Contaminants in Food Regulations, and a variety of other legislation controlling compositional and labelling requirements. Several hundred samples are drawn annually for microbiological and chemical checks and cargo is regularly detained pending the receipt of the results. Rejected consignments are destroyed, re-exported, re-conditioned or used for some purpose other than human consumption.

## Ship Sanitation

Rodent control both aboard vessels and within premises in the port area has always been of major importance in preventing the spread of ratborne disease from foreign shores, principally plague. Foreign going merchant ships are required under the International Health Regulations to be inspected at six monthly intervals, and providing the conditions are satisfactory, are issued with a Ship Sanitation Control Exemption Certificate, or if rodents or unsanitary conditions are found, following remedial measures, a Ship Sanitation Control Certificate.



## Food Hygiene

Another enforcement role for the Authority is the checking of food hygiene standards aboard Thames Passenger Launches, permanently moored Restaurant vessels and merchant ships, including cruise liners. Regular visits are made to check compliance with legislation which is aimed primarily at preventing food poisoning outbreaks. Water supplies both aboard vessels and in port areas are sampled and analysed to ensure that they are safe and wholesome.

