



SURFRIDER FOUNDATION'S RESPONSE TO PLASTIC PELLET POLLUTION IN THE NORTH SEA

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Following the collision in the North Sea between the container ship *Solong* and the tanker *Stena Immaculate*, [industrial plastic pellet](#) pollution has been detected in the water near a bay approximately 70 kilometers south of the accident site, as well as along a 30-kilometer stretch of coastline that includes several nature reserves.

According to British authorities, the observed pellets are charred and emit a kerosene odor, reinforcing the hypothesis that the pollution is linked to the collision.

"Pollution control specialists have been mobilized to recover these pellets as quickly as possible," explains Cristina Barreau, head of Surfrider Foundation's Marine Litter campaign. "Immediate action is necessary to try to limit the spread of these microplastics in both terrestrial and marine environments. Some migration and nesting areas for species are already affected. In addition to the chemical additives they contain, these pellets act like sponges, absorbing toxic substances present in their environment. The risk here is even higher due to their potential contamination by kerosene and other hazardous substances that may have been carried by the involved vessels."

Surfrider Foundation expresses deep concern over this new pollution event. "In May 2021, a ship spilled a true 'white tide' off the coast of Sri Lanka. In the winter of 2024, a container loss off the coast of Portugal led to massive pollution on the shores of Galicia, Spain. Today, a collision between two ships has caused yet another pollution event with potentially serious consequences. Will we witness another 'white tide'?" wonders Cristina Barreau.

"Industrial Plastic Pellets (also known as nurdles) are lost throughout the supply chain—during production, processing, transport, and storage," she reminds us. "However, container losses frequently result in massive pollution. Beyond being toxic to marine life, these microplastics contribute to the suffocation of the ocean."

"Industry must be held accountable. Companies already know which measures to implement to prevent these losses but often fail to do so due to the lack of binding regulations," adds Lucie Padovani, European Advocacy Officer for Surfrider Foundation. "At the European level, a regulation is currently under discussion. Yet, even today, some states and policymakers are still trying to exclude maritime transport from the text, hiding behind the International

Maritime Organization. If their goal is truly to prevent such disasters, international action is, of course, welcome, but the European framework remains the most effective for swift and efficient implementation.

This new pollution incident reminds us of the urgent need for preventive measures and sanctions to be integrated into the final text," she emphasizes. The text is currently in the trilogue stage and is expected to be adopted by the end of the first half of 2025.

Note to the Editor: [Press release in response to the European Council's opinion on the proposed legislation](#) (published in December 2024).

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À propos de Surfrider Foundation Europe

Surfrider Foundation is a collective of positive activists who take concrete action daily to ensure future generations inherit a preserved Ocean. Our mission: To be the loud and clear voice of the Ocean! Our tools? Raising awareness and mobilizing citizens, both children and adults (notably through 48 volunteer chapters across Europe), leveraging our scientific expertise for lobbying efforts, and transforming businesses. Learn more about the organization at <https://surfrider.eu/>

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