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National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee

U.S. Coast Guard

Hull Identification Number (HIN)

Validation & Verification Guidelines

Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division



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HIN Background

- Prior to Nov. 1, 1972 there were no requirements for a “HIN” to be assigned to recreational boats. Manufacturers used mostly serial numbers. The serial number assigned to the vessel by the manufacturer was unique to that manufacturer, but had no prescribed format beyond that specific manufacturer.
- Nov. 1, 1972 The U.S. Coast Guard in CFR Title 33 §181 required all manufacturers to affix a 12 character HIN on all domestic and imported recreational boats.



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HIN Background

- Originally (and continues to be) the primary means for performing recreational boat recalls.
- Used by States for registration and titling purposes.
- Used by Law Enforcement to identify and recover stolen vessels.
- Used by the Dept. of Homeland Security for a host of National Security reasons.



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33 CFR § 174.16 (b)

As of **January 1, 2017**, before taking any action relating to a vessel imported or manufactured on or after November 1, 1972, the issuing authority must determine whether the vessel has a primary HIN meeting the requirements of 33 CFR part 181, subpart C.

33 CFR Part 181... (Recreational Vessels Only)

§ 181.23 Hull identification numbers required

- (a) A manufacturer must identify each boat produced or imported with primary and secondary hull identification numbers permanently affixed in accordance with § 181.29.**

- (b) A person who manufactures or imports a boat for his or her own use and not for sale must obtain the required hull identification number in accordance with the requirements of the issuing authority.**

- (c) No person may assign the same HIN to more than one boat.**



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§ 181.29 Hull identification number display

Two identical hull identification numbers are required to be displayed on each boat hull.

- (a) The primary hull identification number must be affixed –
(see Certification and Placement of Hull Identification Number Guidance Form)**
- (b) The duplicate hull identification number must be affixed in an unexposed location on the interior of the boat or beneath a fitting or item of hardware.**
- (c) Each hull identification number must be carved, burned, stamped, embossed, molded, bonded or otherwise permanently affixed to the boat so that alteration, removal, or replacement would be obvious. If the number is on a separate plate, the plate must be fastened in such a manner that its removal would normally cause some scarring of or damage to the surrounding hull area. A hull identification number must not be attached to parts of the boat that are removable.**



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§ 181.31 Manufacturer identification code assignment

- (a) Each person (Manufacturer) required by § 181.23 (a) of this part to affix hull identification numbers must request a manufacturer identification code in writing from the Commandant.**

- (b) For boats manufactured outside of the jurisdiction of the United States, a U.S. importer must obtain a manufacturer identification code as required by paragraph (a) of this section. The request must indicate the importer's name and U.S. address along with a list of the manufacturers, their addresses and the general types and sizes of boats that will be imported. If a nation has a hull identification number system which has been accepted by the Coast Guard for the purpose of importing boats, it may be used by the importer instead of the one specific within this subpart.**



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November 1, 1972 and newer vessels with improperly formatted HIN....

- Under certain circumstances....
- Occasionally the USCG has allowed a 12 character HIN with an incorrect format as long as the manufacturer and year of the vessel can be identified.
- Many times a HIN is verified as an 11 character or 13 character HIN. The format may be correct with either one digit missing or one extra digit in the production serial number portion of the HIN.



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Since November 1, 1972

there have been three hull identification number formats.

1. Straight Year Format
2. Model Year Format
3. New (Current) Format



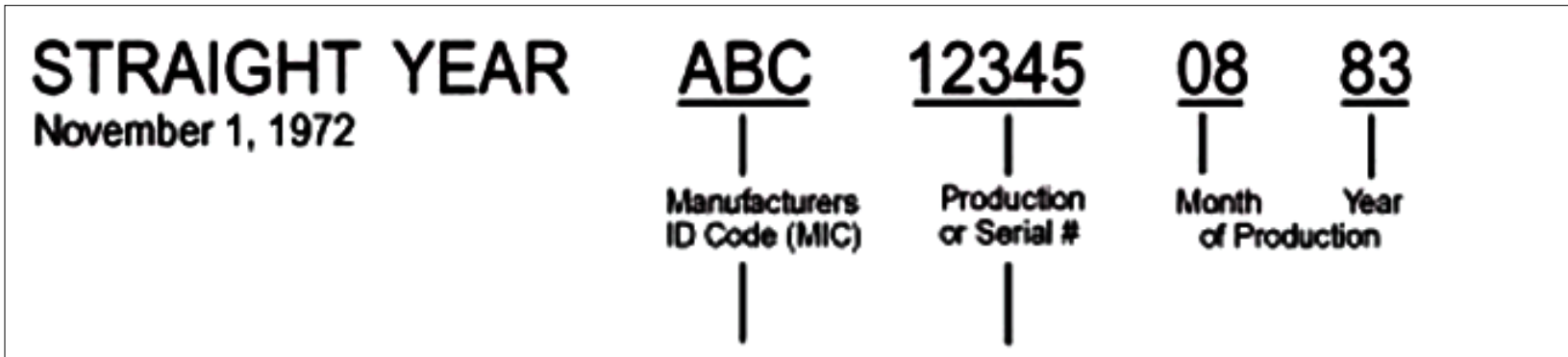
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Between November 1, 1972 and July 31, 1984
Two HIN formats were available:

Straight Year Format





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EXAMPLE: Straight Year Format

CYT6A1330579



STRICTLY SAIL INC.

CINCINNATI

513-984-1907



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Model Year Format November 1, 1972 to August 1, 1984

MODEL YEAR

November 1, 1972

XYZ

45678

M

84

A

M Designates
Model Year
Format

Model
Year

* Month
of Production

* Key to month of production for model year format:

A - August

D - November

G - February

J - May

B - September

E - December

H - March

K - June

C - October

F - January

I - April

L - July

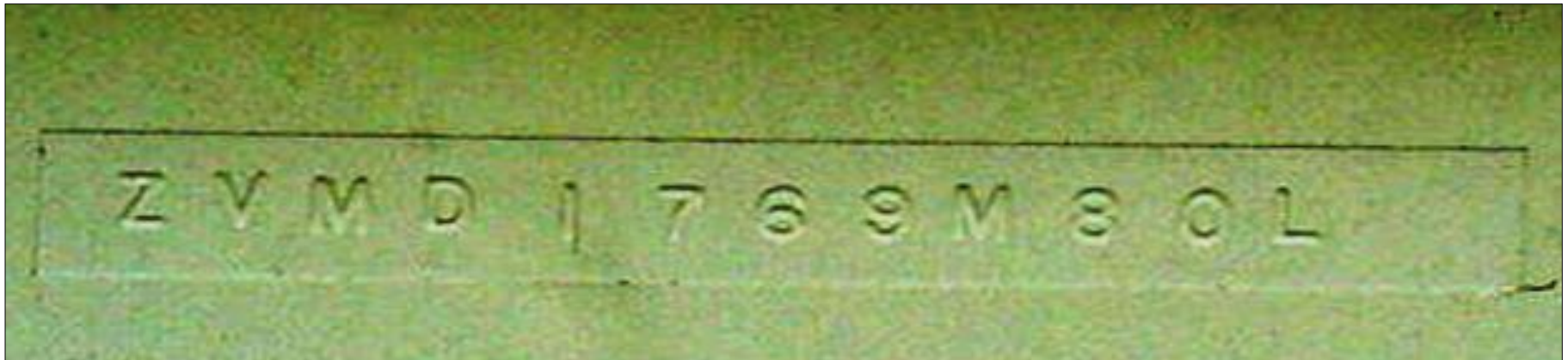


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EXAMPLE: Model Year Format





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The two formats were changed August 1, 1984 to the **New (Current) Format**

HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER FORMATS

NEW (Current)
August 1, 1984

FORMAT

BMA

45678

H4

85

Manufacturers
ID Code (MIC)

Production
or Serial #

Month Year
of Production

Model
Year

* Key to month of production for current format:

A - January

D - April

G - July

J - October

B - February

E - May

H - August

K - November

C - March

F - June

I - September

L - December

The CURRENT FORMAT replaced STRAIGHT YEAR and MODEL YEAR formats. The Current Format was optional as of January 1, 1984, but mandatory as of August 1, 1984. Confidential HINs were not required prior to August 1, 1984.



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EXAMPLE: New (Current) Year Format

X D Y J O 3 8 2 I 4 8 5

- The HIN must consist of 12 characters uninterrupted by slashes, hyphens, or spaces.
- Characters 1-3:
 - Manufacturer Identification Code (MIC), assigned by the U.S. Coast Guard and may consist of letters and/or numbers. Use of numbers discontinued in mid-1990s.

EXAMPLE: SER

Visit the [USCG MIC website](#)



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➤ Characters 4-8:

- Must be a serial number assigned by the manufacturer and may include letters and/or numbers except the letters I, O, and Q cannot be used in this portion of the HIN, due to similarities to numbers.

EXAMPLE: SER25A67



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- Characters 9-12: contain the month and year of manufacture/certification.
 - 9: Must be a letter value to represent month Hull was built.
A= January and B = February, etc....
 - 10: A number value indicating the last digit of the year of manufacture/certification, i.e. 8 represents 2008
 - 11-12: Indicate the model year, the year it was offered for sale by the manufacture.

EXAMPLE: SER25A67H809



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Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

SB2X3461H595

Good – New (Current) format

YAM43789C010

Good – New (Current) format

WELC7259A574

Bad - Cannot be New (Current) Format, due to year of the boat

BAY68240M83E 2987

Good – Model Year format. Additional characters allowed within 2 inches when separated by a border or separate label.



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Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

US-NOR17693D797

Good - New (Current) Format. US-designates country of manufacture (no other country code is authorized).

WNN6532I0301

Bad - Straight year format with the letter I in serial number portion

APB1875CZ888

Bad – Z is not a “Month” character

TJD284234567

Bad – Appears a SSN is used along with initials



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Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

CCMT23C50379

Good - Straight year format

CM279493L213

Trick HIN - CM2 MIC code is not valid;
for more information see contact page

SERM01305M73A

Bad – 13 Characters, Model Year format

CFZ286190484

Good - State issued on April 1984 using
straight year format

State HIN's issued before 2017 may be accepted if they are 12 characters, using any format, and verified on the vessel.

State HIN's issued after **January 1, 2017** must use the **New (Current) Format** and the last four must be the month and year State HIN was assigned to the vessel.



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Boats Affected by Federal Regulations

- All vessels imported or manufactured after November 1, 1972 and newer without a correct HIN format.
- Vessels imported or manufactured prior to November 1, 1972 do not fall within the regulations, but may be treated as such by the states



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Boats Affected by Federal Regulations

- **Homemade/Backyard Built Boat:**
 - A homemade/backyard built boat is a single boat made with raw materials by a person or persons for personal use and not built for sale.
 - This boat requires a state issued HIN in the New Current Format.
- **Kit Boat:**
 - A kit boat is a boat in which the buyer purchases plans to build the boat and the materials to complete the boat are supplied by the manufacturer/seller.
 - This boat requires a HIN provided by the manufacturer/seller.



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What is a homemade boat???

Any boat made with raw materials by a person or persons for personal use and not made for the purpose of building multiple boats for sale. (Not more than 1 vessel per year)

SPECIAL NOTE

Some manufacturers are in the practice of selling non-compliant recreational boats to persons and calling them “homemade” by giving the new owner a materials list. Be aware of these practices. These boats will NOT have Certification Labels nor will they have USCG Maximum Capacities established!

THESE BOATS ARE UNSAFE AND SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED IN RECREATIONAL SERVICE!



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- **Is a Kit boat a homemade boat???**
- NO! A Kit boat is any boat in which the buyer purchases plans to build the vessel and the materials to construct the vessel are supplied by the seller/manufacturer. This type of vessel is required to have a HIN assigned to it by the seller/manufacturer of the kit.
- Kit boats must also comply with all U.S. Coast Guard Minimum Safety Standards (33 CFR Part 183) where applicable.



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- Imported boats fall into two categories:
 - Boats imported for resale are done so by an importer or U.S. subsidiary that has been issued a MIC from the U.S. Coast Guard. The importer is responsible for all recall issues on these boats as well as ensuring the HIN is placed on the boat correctly.
 - A single boat imported by an individual for their own personal use receives a HIN from the State in which the boat is principally operated.
This boat requires a state issued HIN in the New (Current) Format.

Commercial Boats

There are a number of manufacturers that produce a line of boats that they label as “**Commercial Use Only**”. In reality, there is usually no practical **commercial** use for these boats. The majority are rigged for hunting/fishing and all fail to meet Certification, Maximum Capacities, and Flotation requirements. Some will come with a HIN that has a USCG issued MIC as the first three characters. The Coast Guard views these as non-compliant recreational boats and will revoke the USCG issued MIC of any manufacturer engaging in this practice.

These boats are prohibited by law for use in commercial fishing or carrying passengers for hire on the navigable waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States!



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Commercial Boats

In the past, some manufacturers have gained State-issued HINs en masse; labeled their products as “Commercial Use Only” and sold them to the public via a network of dealers. This is a deceptive practice.

States are **PROHIBITED** from issuing State HINs en masse to manufacturers.

There are legitimate purposes for commercial boats throughout the United States and those boats often require a HIN to get registered in a State.

Continued next page....



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Commercial Boats

All persons engaged in the registration of boats and validation/issuance of HINs should be aware that the U.S. Coast Guard does not issue MICs to manufacturers of non-recreational boats.

There are manufacturers that have commercial/Government divisions that have MICs; however, these manufacturers build their products to all U.S. Coast Guard Standards in 33 CFR Part 183.



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Secondary/Hidden HIN

The regulations found in 33 CFR 174.16 address only the Primary HIN.

A Secondary HIN has been required since the 1984 regulatory update to HIN formats.

In the case of a missing Primary HIN the Secondary HIN may be used to replicate the Primary.

Contact CG-BSX-23 for more information regarding Secondary HINs.

(See USCG Contact Sheet at the end)



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Vessel Inspections

- **33 CFR 174.16** Whenever a State issues a new or renewal or any reason to update vessel owner information on a certificate of number, the State must validate that the vessel has a properly formatted HIN.
- NASBLA recommends all vessels be inspected to verify the Hull Identification Number if the vessel has an apparent improperly formatted HIN.
- This inspection is to verify vessel information and NOT to determine seaworthiness.

12-Character HIN with Incorrect Format

When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **within 10 years** from the date of manufacture:

- If the manufacturer is still in business;
 - The State issuing office should send the Coast Guard an email to HINissue@uscg.mil with the owner's and vessel information and the Coast Guard will contact the manufacturer and authorize the manufacturer to correct the HIN discrepancy.

12-Character HIN with Incorrect Format

When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **within 10 years** from the date of manufacture:

- If the manufacturer is out of business;
 - The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format.
 - The **last four** characters should be the month and year the State HIN is assigned to that vessel.
 - A record of the original HIN must be made a part of the boat's record and the owner should retain a copy for their records and a copy should be kept on the boat.



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12-Character HIN with Incorrect Format

When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **older than 10 years** from the date of manufacture:

- And the discrepancy is within the serial number (Characters 4 - 8)
 - The State should document the discrepancy in the boat's record and the owner should retain a copy for their records and a copy should be kept on the boat.

12-Character HIN with Incorrect Format

When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **older than 10 years** from the date of manufacture:

And the discrepancy is within either the MIC or the last four characters of the HIN:

- The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format.
- The **last four** of the State HIN should be the month and year issued to that vessel.
- A record of the original HIN must be made a part of the boat's record and the owner should retain a copy for their records and should be advised to keep a copy on their boat.
- On boats built prior to November 1, 1972 States are not required to issue a State HIN but may do so.

HIN with other than 12 characters

When the State encounters HINs on boats within **10 years old** from the date of manufacture, that contain any number of characters other than 12:

- If the manufacturer is still in business;
 - The State issuing office should send the Coast Guard an email to HINissue@uscg.mil with the owner's and vessel information and the Coast Guard will contact the manufacturer and authorize the manufacturer to correct the HIN discrepancy.



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HIN with other than 12 characters

When the State encounters HINs on boats within **10 years old** from the date of manufacture, that contain any number of characters other than 12:

- If the manufacturer is out of business;
 - States should verify if the USCG authorization has been given.
 - The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format.
 - The **last four** of the State HIN should be the month and year issued to that vessel.
 - A record of the original HIN must be made a part of the boat's record and the owner should retain a copy for their records and should be advised to keep a copy aboard their boat.



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HIN with other than 12 characters

When the State encounters HINs on boats **older than 10 years** from the date of manufacture that contain any number of characters other than 12:

- The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format
- The **last four** of the State HIN should be the month and year issued to that vessel.
- A record of the original HIN must be made a part of the boat's record and the owner should retain a copy for their records and should be advised to keep a copy aboard their boat.
- On boats built prior to November 1, 1972 States are not required to issue a State HIN but may do so.



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State Issued HIN Examples

All State Issued HIN's must use the New (Current) Format
The last four must be the month and year state HIN is issued

2012 Year Built Vessel inspected on July 2016 = **GAZ12345G616**

2016 Year Built Vessel inspected on November 2016 = **GAZ12345K616**

1979 Year Built Vessel inspected on January 2016 = **GAZ12345A616**

1965 Year Built Vessel inspected on April 2016 = **GAZ12345D616**



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33 CFR 174.16 Whenever a State issues a new or renewal or any reason to update vessel owner information on a certificate of number, the State must validate the vessel has properly formatted HIN. The following are possible alternatives to verification of vessel HIN's.

- 1. Pencil Tracing**
- 2. Digital Picture/Photo**
- 3. A Physical Inspection by a State Official (includes HIN, make, model, year, hull material, propulsion, length, and boat registration number)**
- 4. Signed Affidavit by customer swearing HIN was applied**
- 5. Contact the Manufacturer (if in business to verify HIN)**
- 6. NICB : National Insurance Crime Bureau database**
(used to locate secondary HIN's on some vessels)



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Contact the US Coast Guard CG-BSX23

Phil Cappel: Chief of Branch Product Assurance Branch
(202) 372-1076 or Philip.J.Cappel@uscg.mil

CWO2 Will Hillyer: Boating Safety Compliance Officer
(202) 372-1077 or William.Y.Hillyer@uscg.mil

Michael Jendrossek: Marine Investigator
(202) 372-1052 or Michael.A.Jendrossek@uscg.mil