



U.S. Coast Guard Reference Guide for Importers of Recreational Boats

Thank you for contacting the U.S. Coast Guard for information about importing recreational boats into the United States. For boats manufactured outside of the United States, the manufacturer is required to use an importer based in the U.S., and that importer must obtain a manufacturer identification code (MIC) from the U.S. Coast Guard as required by 33 CFR 181.31. This code is required to build and sell recreational boats in the United States and is also accepted in Canada. MICs are issued at no cost by the Coast Guard's Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety and you can start the process to obtain a MIC by sending an email to micapp@uscg.mil. The email message should explain what types of boats you want to build and where they will be built. After confirming that you do require a MIC, the Office of Auxiliary Boating Safety will send you a MIC application that must be filled out completely, signed and dated and returned via micapp@uscg.mil.

The importer has the responsibility to ensure that all boats they import meet the Federal regulations. In the event that an imported boat is found to not comply with U.S. Coast Guard requirements or a substantial risk safety defect is identified, the importer, not the foreign manufacturer, has the responsibility to conduct a defect notification campaign and correct the problem at no expense to the boat owner.

Your assigned MIC will be the first three characters of each hull identification number (HIN) that you affix to every recreational boat that you import. This document, along with the MIC Certification Course you were required to complete and the Boat Builder's Handbook available on our website at <https://safeafloat.com> is designed to provide you with information you need to ensure that you comply with all applicable Coast Guard laws and regulations pertaining to the construction of recreational boats. The spring 2016 Boating Safety Circular contains an article (pg.4) which explains the responsibilities of a recreational boat importer: [Boating-Safety-Circular-Spring-2016.pdf](#).

Please ensure that your MIC application includes any brand names or "Doing Business As" (DBA) names that appear on a Manufacturers Statement of Origin (MSO) or Certificate of Origin (COO). These documents are used when numbering and titling recreational boats, and State numbering authorities verify hull identification numbers, including the MIC, during this process. If the company listed in the MIC record does not match the name listed on the MSO or COO, this can cause a delay in the boat owner being able to number and title their boat.

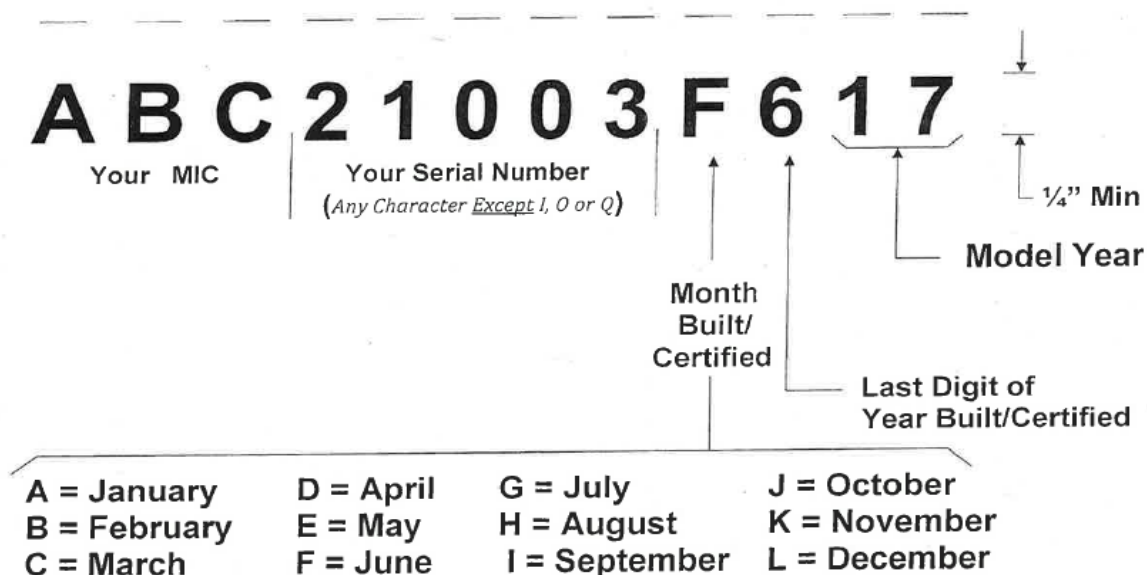
Upon receipt of a properly completed MIC application Coast Guard staff will process the application and assign a three-character code to the manufacturer. This code and the manufacturer's contact information will be entered into the Recreational Boating Safety Database (RBSDB) and will be viewable on the internet at <https://uscgboating.org/content/manufacturers-identification.php> within 24-72 hours of assignment. MICs are assigned in order of availability.

Boat Builders Tool Kit

The Boat Builder's Tool Kit is intended to be the one-stop location for all your boat building needs. The Tool Kit can be accessed by clicking here: <https://safeafloat.com/boat-builders-tool-kit/>. Within this Tool Kit you can access the Boat Builder's Handbook which is designed to provide boat builders with the information and assistance to be able to build recreational boats that are fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations. We recommend that you become familiar with the handbook and consult it should you have any questions about how to comply with Coast Guard requirements. Additionally, the Tool Kit provides you with easy access to:

1. Coast Guard Policies
2. Boating Safety Circulars
3. Factory Inspector Contact
4. Factory Inspection Checklist
5. Coast Guard Documents

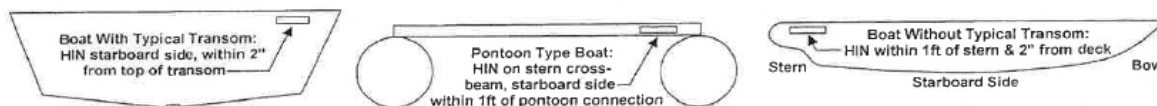
EXAMPLE Hull Identification Number (HIN)



Date of manufacture or certification: Month (per above table) and last digit of calendar year (Example: F6 for June 2016).

Model year: Last two digits of the model year which may begin as of June 1st and must be implemented by July 31st. You have a two-month window to change the model year. For example: model year 2017 can begin any time between June 1, 2016 and July 31, 2016.

Example HIN Locations:



US Recreational Boat Regulatory Reference Chart BOAT TYPE>>	Canoe/ Kayak	Rowboat - Manual	Gasoline O/B <20'	Gasoline O/B ≥20'	Gasoline Inboard <20'	Gasoline Inboard ≥20'	Diesel Inboard <20'	Diesel Inboard ≥20'	Diesel O/B <20'	Diesel O/B ≥20'	Electric O/B <20'	Electric O/B ≥20'	Electric Inboard <20'	Electric Inboard ≥20'	Pontoon	Houseboat	Sail aux power	Sail only	Inflatable/RHIB	Vessel powered by PWC
(Not an official compliance document)																				
APPLICABLE REGULATIONS																				
Certification Label, Part 181 Subpart B		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1,2 & 3	1,2 & 3	1,2 & 3	1	1,2 & 3	X
Hull Identification Number (HIN)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Display of Capacity, Part 183 Subpart B		X	X		X		X				X		X							X
Safe Loading, Part 183 Subpart C		X	X		X		X				X		X							X
Safe Powering, Part 183 Subpart D			X								X									
Basic Flotation, Part 183 Subpart F					X		X						X							
Level Flotation, Part 183 Subpart G			X								X									
Mod-Level Flotation, Part 183 Subpart H		X																		X
Electrical Systems, Part 183 Subpart I					X	X									2	2	2		2	
Fuel Systems, Part 183 Subpart J					X	X									2	2	2		2	
Ventilation Systems, Part 183 Subpart K			3	3	X	X									2, 3	2, 3	2, 3		2, 3	
Start-in Gear Protection, Part 183 Subpart L			X	X					X	X	X				O/B	O/B	O/B		O/B	
Backfire Flame Control, Title 46 Subpart 25.35					2	2									2	2	2			
Engine Cut-off Device, 46 U.S. Code 4312			4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		4	

Applies to boats when:

1. Navigation lights are installed
2. Gasoline inboard engine is permanently installed (propulsion or generator)
3. Gasoline fuel tank space requires natural ventilation (Note: US EPA controls gasoline emissions in 40 CFR 1060)
4. Boat is less than 26' with 115 lbs. or greater thrust. (Engines greater than 2 HP, not including electric trolling motors) New boats effective Jan 2020.

Applicable to all boats:

- Builder shall maintain 1st purchaser records for at least 10 years
- When installed, toilet requires Type I, II or III Marine Sanitation Device
- When installed, navigation lights must be properly configured and 'USCG Xnm' certified ("X" is a variable for the number of miles required by 33 CFR 83 for which ever boat length applies)

General boat manufacturer requirements:

- Requires establishment of a US Importer or US Subsidiary with a US address to be fully responsible for compliance, safety defects, and recalls
- Issuing of a Manufacturer Identification Code (MIC) by the USCG to the US entity
- US Hull Identification Number (HIN) shall be installed on the boat before it leaves the place of manufacturer or import into the US
- Certification of Compliance label with US address shall be installed on boat before it leaves the place of manufacturer or import into the US
- Product shall be in compliance with USCG safety standards (CFR) in effect on the date of certification (self-certification)

Legal Responsibilities

All laws and regulations pertaining to Coast Guard recreational boat building requirements can be found in 46 USC Chapter 43 and 33 CFR Subchapter S. It is important that you familiarize yourself with all these requirements, but we want to highlight two of them below:

- **46 USC 4307 – Prohibited Acts**

This statute makes it illegal to build a recreational boat for sale in the United States that does not comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

- (a) A person may not—

- (1) manufacture, construct, assemble, or offer for sale, introduce or deliver for introduction into interstate commerce, or import into the United States, a recreational vessel, associated equipment, or component of the vessel or equipment unless—

- (A)(i) it conforms with this chapter or a regulation prescribed under this chapter; and

- (ii) it does not contain a defect which has been identified, in any communication to such person by the Secretary or the manufacturer of that vessel, equipment or component, as creating a substantial risk of personal injury to the public; or

- (B) it is intended only for export and is so labeled, tagged, or marked on the recreational vessel or equipment, including any markings on the outside of the container in which it is to be exported;

- (2) affix, attach, or display a seal, document, label, plate, insignia, or other device indicating or suggesting compliance with standards of the United States Government on, in, or in connection with, a recreational vessel or item of associated equipment that is false or misleading; or

- (3) fail to provide a notification as required by this chapter or fail to exercise reasonable diligence in carrying out the notification and reporting requirements of this chapter.

- (b) A person may not operate a vessel in violation of this chapter or a regulation prescribed under this chapter.

- **46 USC 4311 – Penalties and Injunctions**

This statute provides the penalties and injunctions if an individual or boat builder does not comply with 46 USC 4307. As a professional boat builder it is important to understand all of the requirements involved with building recreational vessels. If a builder fails to take

appropriate action for a safety related issue, 46 USC 4311 gives the U.S. Coast Guard the authority to seek fines or imprisonment of a boat builder who does not comply with statutory and regulatory requirements. The Coast Guard understands that mistake may happen. And if they occur, the boat builder should take the proper steps to address them and ensure they are corrected in a timely and professional manner. For example, failure to act on a known safety defect could result in a fine of \$10,000 dollars, imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

Defect Notification & Recalls

Per federal law, any known safety defect must be brought to the attention of the Coast Guard. 46 USC 4310 (b) states:

If a recreational vessel or associated equipment has left the place of manufacture and the recreational vessel manufacturer discovers or acquires information that the manufacturer decides, in the exercise of reasonable and prudent judgment, indicates that a recreational vessel or associated equipment subject to an applicable regulation prescribed under section 4302 of this title either fails to comply with the regulation, or contains a defect that creates a substantial risk of personal injury to the public, the manufacturer shall provide notification of the defect or failure of compliance as provided by subsections (c) and (d) of this section within a reasonable time after the manufacturer has discovered the defect.

Exemption & Equivalency Process

If due to the unique nature of the design of your vessel you cannot meet the regulations but you can prove that your product can still be operated safely, you may opt to apply for an exemption from or equivalency to certain regulations. To request an exemption or equivalency send an email to rbscompliance@uscg.mil detailing your request. Once we have received and identified your product and the applicable regulation you wish to be exempted from or receive an equivalency to, your inquiry will be assigned to one of our staff engineers. Our engineers will work with you to see if your product is eligible for an exemption or equivalency. Please note, that an exemption or equivalency will not automatically be granted; you must demonstrate that safety will not be adversely affected and in the case of exemption requests, that your product has a unique design that makes it impossible to comply with Coast Guard regulations. This may be done through documented demonstrations, schematics, compliance with voluntary consensus standards, testing or many other options. If an equivalency is granted, it will be listed on our website and available for any manufacturer to use. If an exemption is granted, you will receive a letter from our office for that particular model of vessel which is good for five years. You will have to amend any exemptions granted if changes are made to the model that has an exemption, and exemptions must be renewed every five years.

Change In Company Information

Please note that the regulations in 33 CFR §181.33(b) require you to notify the Coast Guard if you change company ownership, name, or address; failure to do this will subject you to the penalties in Title 46, United States Code, Section 4311. You can notify the Coast Guard of any changes to your company information by sending an email to micapp@uscg.com.

Conclusion

It is your responsibility to understand the laws and regulations applicable to the boats that you are building, and to certify that the boats you build meet the requirements of those laws and regulations.

In the Boat Builders Tool Kit you will find the contact information for the USCG Factory Inspector for your region. Please contact them if you have specific questions about complying with Coast Guard requirements. If you have any questions about MICs and the application process, please submit them via email to micapp@uscg.mil. If you have any other questions about Coast Guard requirements for recreational boat builders, please submit them to rbscompliance@uscg.mil.

We wish you the best of luck with your boat building experience. Please remember, in the end it is about keeping the recreational boaters safe on the water. That responsibility starts with you, the boat builder! Thank you and good luck!