

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES
Revised April 13, 2026

Merchant Vessels of the United States is a data file of merchant and recreational vessels documented under the laws of the United States by the U.S. Coast Guard. The source for this file is the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) and Vessel Documentation System (VDS) databases, a comprehensive system serving many Coast Guard marine safety units, including the National Vessel Documentation Center. The data file of merchant vessels has been specifically prepared from several data tables contained in MISLE and VDS.

The data file consists of vessel particulars and managing owner identification information. Vessels in this file have a valid Certificate of Documentation. Foreign vessels are not contained in this file. The file contains vessel information through **April 13, 2026**.

A new field is added to the Vesdoc file with information on ship builders. This field was originally positioned in the builder file on the CD-ROM. By moving this field to the Vesdoc file, we do away with the need to load a second file. This simplifies the data loading process and reduces the amount of computer code for data retrieval.

The field ship builder differs from the ship yard field in that the ship yard refers to the facility or site where the vessel was constructed while the builder refers to the individual or company that constructed the vessel. The ship yard field has not been updated since 2001, please refer to the ship builder field for the individual or company that constructed the vessel.

Other Changes: Dead Weight Tons added to file. **See change in record size, layout and new field positions (September 2016).**

New Modifications: The Vessel Database key has been permanently removed from the file. The vessel name column has been expanded from 33 to 50 characters (March 2016).

Vesdoc File Specifications:

Record Size: 2,570
Records: 393,454

Three file formats are currently available to you. The file vesdocApr26tab.txt uses tab stops as field separators while the file vesdocApr26fix.zip is arranged in fixed-width fields. In addition, there is a version in Microsoft Access format. The fixed-length and Access files are compressed using WinZip® utility to conserve space. The documentation provided here is compatible with both data structures.

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| Data Element Name | Data Type | Length | Position |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| VesselID | AN | 10 | 1 - 10 |
| VesselName | AN | 50 | 11 - 60 |
| Call_Sign | AN | 8 | 61 - 68 |
| Official_Number | AN | 10 | 69 - 78 |
| IMO_Number | AN | 30 | 79 - 108 |
| Hull_Number | AN | 30 | 109 - 138 |
| HIN | AN | 30 | 139 - 168 |
| Service | CH | 30 | 169 - 198 |
| Flag | CH | 2 | 199 - 200 |
| Self_Propelled_Ind | Logical | 1 | 201 - 201 |
| Gross_Ton | DS | 7 | 202 - 208 |
| Net_Ton | DS | 7 | 209 - 215 |
| Length | DS | 7 | 216 - 222 |
| Breadth | DS | 6 | 223 - 228 |
| Depth | DS | 6 | 229 - 234 |
| ITC_Gross_Ton | DS | 7 | 235 - 241 |
| ITC_Net_Ton | DS | 7 | 242 - 248 |
| ITC_Length | DS | 7 | 249 - 255 |
| ITC_Breadth | DS | 6 | 256 - 261 |
| ITC_Depth | DS | 6 | 262 - 267 |
| Dead_Weight_Ton * | DS | 7 | 268 - 274 |
| Dead_Weight_Ton_Measure_Unit ** | CH | 40 | 275 - 314 |
| Measuring_Organization_Name | CH | 50 | 315 - 364 |
| Hailing_Port | CH | 50 | 365 - 414 |
| Hailing_Port_State | CH | 2 | 415 - 416 |
| Hailing Port Country | CH | 50 | 417 - 466 |

* **Dead Weight Tons added March 2, 2009**

** **Dead Weight Tons Measure Unit added March 17, 2009**

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| Data Element Name | Data Type | Length | Position |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| Coastwise Unrestricted | CM | 1 | 467 - 467 |
| Limited Coastwise Bowaters Only | CM | 1 | 468 - 468 |
| Limited Coastwise Restricted MARAD Waiver | CM | 1 | 469 - 469 |
| Limited Coastwise Oil Spill Response Only | CM | 1 | 470 - 470 |
| Limited Coastwise Under Charter to Citizen | CM | 1 | 471 - 471 |
| Limited Coastwise Trade Fish Products Only | CM | 1 | 472 - 472 |
| Fishery | CM | 1 | 473 - 473 |
| Limited Fishery Only | CM | 1 | 474 - 474 |
| Recreation | CM | 1 | 475 - 475 |
| Limited Recreation Great Lakes Use Only | CM | 1 | 476 - 476 |
| Registry | CM | 1 | 477 - 477 |
| Limited Registry Cross Border Financing | CM | 1 | 478 - 478 |
| Limited Registry No Foreign Voyage by Sea | CM | 1 | 479 - 479 |
| Limited Registry Trade with Canada Only | CM | 1 | 480 - 480 |
| Great Lakes | CM | 1 | 481 - 481 |
| Builder | CH | 80 | 482 - 561 |
| Shipyard | CH | 50 | 562 - 611 |
| Build Year | CH | 4 | 612 - 615 |
| Vessel Complete Build City | CH | 50 | 616 - 665 |
| Vessel Complete Build State | CH | 2 | 666 - 667 |
| Vessel Complete Build Province | CH | 50 | 668 - 717 |
| Vessel Complete Build Country | CH | 64 | 718 - 781 |
| Vessel Hull Build City | CH | 50 | 782 - 831 |
| Vessel Hull Build State | CH | 2 | 832 - 833 |
| Vessel Hull Build Province | CH | 50 | 834 - 883 |
| Vessel Hull Build Country | CH | 64 | 884 - 947 |

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| Data Element Name | Data Type | Length | Position |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Party ID | AN | 10 | 948 - 957 |
| Organization Name | CH | 80 | 958 - 1037 |
| Organization Type | CH | 30 | 1038 - 1067 |
| Person Name First | CH | 30 | 1068 - 1097 |
| Person Name Middle | CH | 50 | 1098 - 1147 |
| Person Name Last | CH | 50 | 1148 - 1197 |
| Person Name Suffix | CH | 10 | 1198 - 1207 |
| Address Line 1 | CH | 255 | 1208 - 1462 |
| Address Line 2 | CH | 255 | 1463 - 1717 |
| Address Line 3 | CH | 255 | 1718 - 1972 |
| Address Line 4 | CH | 255 | 1973 - 2227 |
| City | CH | 30 | 2228 - 2257 |
| State | CH | 2 | 2258 - 2259 |
| Province | CH | 30 | 2260 - 2289 |
| Country | CH | 64 | 2290 - 2353 |
| Postal Code | CH | 30 | 2354 - 2383 |
| Main HP Ahead | IS | 7 | 2384 - 2390 |
| Main HP Astern | IS | 7 | 2391 - 2397 |
| Propulsion Type | CH | 30 | 2398 - 2427 |
| Hull Material | CH | 30 | 2428 - 2457 |
| Hull Configuration | CH | 30 | 2458 - 2487 |
| Hull Shape | CH | 30 | 2488 - 2517 |
| COD Status | CH | 30 | 2518 - 2547 |
| COD issue date | CH | 10 | 2548 - 2557 |
| COD expire date | CH | 10 | 2558 - 2567 |
| Filler | CH | 1 | 2568 - 2568 |
| CR/LF * | CH | 1 | 2569 - 2569 |

* Carriage return line feed terminates each record

Note: COD dates reinstated on May 31, 2008

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Data Types: | AN - Alpha Numeric | CH - Character |
| | IS - Integer | Logical - 1/0 |
| | DS - Decimal | CM - "X"/ blank |

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Explanation of Data Fields

Vessel Id is a unique field used by the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement System (MISLE) database to identify a vessel record. This element is primarily used for joining data tables in the MISLE database. (Other data tables may be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act from the U.S. Coast Guard.)

Official Number is a six or seven digit number that has been awarded to each merchant and recreational vessel of the United States. In this data file, 'D' does not precede the official number as was the case in MSIS. The official number is permanently marked on some structural part of the hull interior. A vessel's official number should not be confused with the manufacturer's hull identification number.

Hull Material is one of the types listed below or may be blank indicating unknown.

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| ALUMINUM | OTHER |
| CONCRETE | PLASTIC – MSIS Legacy |
| DIESEL | PLASTIC (non-reinforced) |
| FIBERGLASS OVER WOOD | RUBBER |
| FRP (Fiberglass) | STEEL |
| GASOLINE INBOARD | UNSPECIFIED |
| GLASS | WOOD |

Self-Propelled. The indicator field is '1'/'0' data type, but may be blank. A '1' means the vessel is self-propelled, a '0' means not self-propelled. If a vessel is propelled by sail and machinery, it is considered self propelled.

Trade Indicator Fields. Trade describes the use for which the vessel is licensed. A vessel may be licensed for more than one use. An 'X' in the field indicates an authorized trade. MORE SO THAN THE SERVICE FIELD, THE TRADE INDICATORS ARE THE BEST AVAILABLE MEANS TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC TYPES OR USES OF VESSELS THAT ARE NOT COAST GUARD INSPECTED. While some vessels may have multiple trades authorized a great majority of fishing and recreational vessels will have only one specific trade authorized. Most commercial vessels will have coastwise, registry or Bowater in combination with one or more other trade types. A brief explanation of the trade authorities is provided below.

- Coastwise Unrestricted - The vessel is licensed, to engage in coastwise trade.
- Limited Coastwise Bowaters Only - The vessel is licensed to engage in limited coastwise trade under 46 App U.S.C. 883-1. This license currently applies to about 500 freight barges and self propelled vessels under 500 gross tons.
- Limited Coastwise Restricted MARAD Waiver.
- Limited Coastwise Oil Spill Response Only.
- Limited Coastwise Under Charter to Citizen.
- Limited Coastwise Trade Fish Products Only.
- Fishery - The vessel is licensed to engage in the fisheries trade in the navigable waters of the U.S. and on the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- Limited Fishery Only.
- Recreational - The vessel is licensed to use as a pleasure craft and may not engage in commerce unless it also has one of the other licenses.
- Limited Recreational Great Lakes Use Only.
- Registry - The vessel is licensed to engage in trade between U.S. and foreign ports.
- Limited Registry Cross Border Financing.

Vessel Complete Build is filled when the vessel construction is completed at site different than the hull construction site.

Vessel Hull Build is the place where the hull and vessel was constructed.

Vessel Build Year is the year of completion of the vessel as shown by the builder 5 certificate.

Vessel Service indicates the general use of the vessel, but the accuracy of the data is limited. Service of vessel applies specifically to about 12,000 Coast Guard inspected vessels. Some uninspected vessels may not contain a service type. The following service types exist in the file:

- Commercial Fishing Vessel
- Fish Processing Vessel
- Fishing Tender
- Freight Barge
- Freight Ship
- Industrial Vessel (e.g., Cable Layer, Dredge, Crane Barge)
- In-service Inspected
- Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit
- Not in vessel service
- Offshore Supply Vessel
- Oil Recovery (vessels designated to recover spilled oil)
- Passenger (Inspected)
- Passenger (Uninspected)
- Passenger Barge (Inspected)
- Passenger Barge (Uninspected)
- Public Freight
- Public Tankship/Barge
- Public Vessel, Unclassified
- Recreational
- Research Vessel
- School Ship
- Tank Barge (barge regulated by 46 CFR Subchapter D)
- Tank Ship
- Towing Vessel
- Unclassified
- Unknown
- UNSPECIFIED

Party Identification Number is a unique field used by the U.S. Coast Guard's MISLE database to identify a specific party involved with the operation or ownership of a vessel. These elements are used for joining data tables in the MISLE database. (Other data files must be obtained from the Coast Guard.)

Company Name and Person Name. These fields identify the vessel owner as the party designated as the managing owner of the vessel. The managing owner is the sole owner or, if there are two or more owners, one of the owners. Complete ownership information is available from the National Vessel Documentation Center. A Managing Owner name may be found either in the Organization Name field or in the Person Last Name, First Name, Middle Name fields. Generally, managing owners that are not individual persons are found in the company name field. Every effort has been made to properly classify owners as a company or individual, but there are instances in the file where an individual is listed in the company name field. There is an ongoing effort to correct these errors. If an owner's name is found in the Company Name field, then the Person Last Name, First Name and Middle Name fields will be blank, and vice versa.

Owner Address. The owner address consists of six fields for the street address, city name, state code (standard U.S. Post Office codes), province, foreign country name and zip code/foreign postal code field.

Hailing Port is displayed on the vessel's stern, and may be used to best determine the vessels geographic area of operation.

Home Port. Vessel records are held at the National Vessel Documentation Center in Falling Waters, West Virginia. Unless otherwise indicated, the vessel's homeport is the National Vessel Documentation Center.

IMO Number is the 7-digit number assigned by the manager of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme (currently S&P Global) as a unique identification number for the life of the vessel. Most vessels with an IMO number are self propelled, over 100 gross tons, and operate on ocean and/or coastwise waters.

ITC Gross Tons and ITC Net Tons are a vessel's International Tonnage Convention (ITC) gross and net tonnages.

NOTE on ITC tonnages: Some vessel records may have both national and ITC tonnages. The values for ITC gross and registered gross tons (as well as ITC net and registered net tons) may

ITC Length. ITC length in feet used on Certificate of Documentation.

ITC Breadth. ITC breadth in feet used on Certificate of Documentation.

ITC Depth. ITC depth in feet used on Certificate of Documentation.

Hull Configuration Values: Monohull, Trimaran, Catamaran, Unknown

Hull Shape Values: Box, Ship, Sail(Faired Keel), Sail(Distinct Keel)

COD Status Values: Canceled, Case Pending, Expired, Invalid, No Operation-PM, Revoked-PM, Unspecified and Valid

Case Pending refers to vessels undergoing documentation (primary redocumentation).

No Operation-PM or Revoked-PM are vessels that hold a maritime lien and are considered documented vessels of the U.S and are not available for state registration.

Expired vessels are granted a grace period before deletion and are considered a documented vessel of the U.S.

Unspecified or Canceled statuses are under review by the National Vessel Documentation Center and a determination on these vessels will be made at a later date.

On Deposit CODs kept at the National Vessel Documentation Center for vessels that do not have space to display the COD. Primary applies to barges.

Valid holds a current COD.

Vessels with the above statuses are considered documented vessels of the U.S.