

**MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES**  
**Revised February 04, 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 **February 04, 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: 392,543

Three file formats are currently available to you. The file vesdocFeb26tab.txt uses tab stops as field separators while the file vesdocFeb26fix.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
<b>ITC_Length</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>249 - 255</b>
<b>ITC_Breadth</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>256 - 261</b>
<b>ITC_Depth</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>262 - 267</b>
<b>Dead_Weight_Ton</b> *	<b>DS</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>268 - 274</b>
<b>Dead_Weight_Ton_Measure_Unit</b> **	<b>CH</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>275 - 314</b>
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
<b>Builder</b>	<b>CH</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>482 - 561</b>
<b>Shipyard</b>	<b>CH</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>562 - 611</b>
<b>Build Year</b>	<b>CH</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>612 - 615</b>
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 vessel's 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.