**MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Revised September 8, 2023**

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 **September 8, 2023.**

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: 2570**

Records: 391,972

Three file formats are included on your CD-ROM. The file vesdocSep23Rtab.txt uses tab stops as field separators while the file vesdocSep23Rfix.zip is arranged in fixed-width fields. New on the CD-ROM is a version in Microsoft Access format. The fixed-length and Access files are compressed using WinZip® utility to conserve space. The documentation provided on the   
CD-ROM is compatible with both data structures.

**RECORD LAYOUT FOR MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES.**

**Revised September 8, 2023**

Data  
Data Element Name Type Length Position

VesselID AN 10 1 - 10

VesselNameAN 50 11 - 60Call\_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

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

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

**COD dates reinstated on May 31, 2008**

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

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

Data Types:

AN - Alpha Numeric CH - Character

IS - Integer Logical - 1/0  
DS - Decimal (Floating) 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

CONCRETE

FRP (Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic)

OTHER

PLASTIC – MSIS Legacy

PLASTIC (non-reinforced)

STEEL

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 - The vessel is licensed, to engage in coastwise trade.

- Limited 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 Fishing.
* 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.
* Limited Registry No Foreign Voyage by Sea.
* Limited Registry Trade with Canada Only.
* Great Lakes - The vessel is licensed to engage in trade on the Great Lakes.

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.

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

Freight Barge

Freight Ship

Industrial Vessel (e.g., Cable Layer, Dredge, Crane Barge)

Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit

Offshore Supply Vessel

OIL RECOVERY (vessels designated to recover spilled oil)

Passenger (More Than 6)

Passenger Barge (6 or Fewer)

Passenger Barge (More Than 6)

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

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 Lloyd's Registry "Register of Ships" 7-digit identification number. This is a unique number that has been assigned by Lloyd's Registry 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 be the same or may differ.

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.