

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES

Revised September 02, 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. This file is the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement and Vessel Documentation System (VDS) databases, a comprehensive system of U.S. Coast Guard marine safety units, including the National Vessel Documentation Center. This file of merchant vessels has been specifically prepared from several data tables including MISLE and VDS.

The data file consists of vessel particulars and managing owner identification. Vessels in this file have a valid Certificate of Documentation. Foreign vessels are not in this file. The file contains vessel information through **September 02, 2026**.

A new field is added to the Vesdoc file with information on ship builder information originally positioned in the builder file on the CD-ROM. By moving this information to the new field, we do away with the need to load a second file. This simplifies the code 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 field refers to the location 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 1990. The ship builder field for the individual or company that constructed the vessel is now included in the ship builder field.

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

New Modifications: The Vessel Database key has been permanently updated. The vessel name column has been expanded from 33 to 50 characters.

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES
Revised September 02, 2026

Data Element Name	Data Type	Length
VesselID	AN	10
VesselName	AN	50
Call_Sign	AN	8
Official_Number	AN	10
IMO_Number	AN	30
Hull_Number	AN	30
HIN	AN	30
Service	CH	30
Flag	CH	2
Self_Propelled_Ind	Logical	1
Gross_Ton	DS	7
Net_Ton	DS	7
Length	DS	7
Breadth	DS	6
Depth	DS	6
ITC_Gross_Ton	DS	7
ITC_Net_Ton	DS	7
ITC_Length	DS	7
ITC_Breadth	DS	6

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

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES
Revised September 02, 2026

Data Element Name	Data Type	Length
Coastwise Unrestricted	CM	1
Limited Coastwise Bowaters Only	CM	1
Limited Coastwise Restricted MARAD Waiver	CM	1
Limited Coastwise Oil Spill Response Only	CM	1
Limited Coastwise Under Charter to Citizen	CM	1
Limited Coastwise Trade Fish Products Only	CM	1
Fishery	CM	1
Limited Fishery Only	CM	1
Recreation	CM	1
Limited Recreation Great Lakes Use Only	CM	1
Registry	CM	1
Limited Registry Cross Border Financing	CM	1
Limited Registry No Foreign Voyage by Sea	CM	1
Limited Registry Trade with Canada Only	CM	1
Great Lakes	CM	1
Builder	CH	80
Shipyard	CH	50
Build Year	CH	4
Vessel Complete Build City	CH	50
Vessel Complete Build State	CH	2

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES
Revised September 02, 2026

Data Element Name	Data Type	Length
Party ID	AN	10
Organization Name	CH	80
Organization Type	CH	30
Person Name First	CH	30
Person Name Middle	CH	50
Person Name Last	CH	50
Person Name Suffix	CH	10
Address Line 1	CH	255
Address Line 2	CH	255
Address Line 3	CH	255
Address Line 4	CH	255
City	CH	30
State	CH	2
Province	CH	30
Country	CH	64
Postal Code	CH	30
Main HP Ahead	IS	7
Main HP Astern	IS	7
Propulsion Type	CH	30
Hull Material	CH	30

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

MERCHANT VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES

Revised September 02, 2026

Explanation of Data Fields

Vessel Id is a unique field used by the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Information Law Enforcement System (MISLE) database to identify a vessel record. It is primarily used for joining data tables in the MISLE database. (Other data was 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 recreational vessel of the United States. In this data file, 'D' does not precede the number as was the case in MSIS. The official number is permanently marked on a 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

ALUMINUM	OTHER
CONCRETE	PLASTIC – MSIS Legal
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. If a vessel is self-propelled, a '1' means self-propelled. If a vessel is propelled by another means, 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 use. SO THAN THE SERVICE FIELD, THE TRADE INDICATORS ARE AVAILABLE MEANS TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC TYPES OR USES. TRADE INDICATORS ARE NOT COAST GUARD INSPECTED. While some vessels may have other uses, authorized a great majority of fishing and recreational vessels will have coastwise only authorized. Most commercial vessels will have coastwise, registry or Bowaters only with one or more other trade types. A brief explanation of the trade authorized is as follows:

- Coastwise Unrestricted - The vessel is licensed, to engage in coastwise trade.
- Limited Coastwise Bowaters Only - The vessel is licensed to engage in coastwise trade under 46 App U.S.C. 883-1. This license currently covers 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 waters of the U.S. and on the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- Limited Fishery Only.

Vessel Complete Build is filled when the vessel construction is completed 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

Vessel Service indicates the general use of the vessel, but the accuracy of Service of vessel applies specifically to about 12,000 Coast Guard inspected uninspected vessels may not contain a service type. The following service 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

Party Identification Number is a unique field used by the U.S. Coast Guard 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 information obtained from the Coast Guard.)

Company Name and Person Name. These fields identify the vessel owner designated as the managing owner of the vessel. The managing owner is the owner if there are two or more owners, one of the owners. Complete ownership information is obtained from the National Vessel Documentation Center. A Managing Owner name is found either in the Organization Name field or in the Person Last Name, First Name and Middle Name fields. Generally, managing owners that are not individual persons are found in the Organization 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 Organization 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 are blank.

Owner Address. The owner address consists of six fields for the street address, city, state code (standard U.S. Post Office codes), province, foreign country name and postal 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, Martinsburg, West Virginia. Unless otherwise indicated, the vessel's homeport is the location of the Vessel Documentation Center.

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

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, 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 not available for state registration.
Expired vessels are granted a grace period before deletion and are considered documented vessels 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.