



# U.S. Coast Guard Hull Identification Number (HIN) Validation & Verification Guidelines

Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division

Updated June, 2018



# The Hull Identification Number (HIN)

## Background:

- Prior to Nov. 1, 1972 there were no requirements for a HIN to be assigned to recreational boats. Manufacturers used mostly serial numbers that were unique to that manufacturer, but had no prescribed format beyond that specific manufacturer.
- Nov. 1, 1972 The U.S. Coast Guard in CFR Title 33 §181 required all manufacturers to affix a 12 character HIN on all domestic and imported recreational boats.

## Purpose/Use:

- The HIN is the primary means for performing recreational boat recalls
- Used by States for registration and titling
- Used by USCG for documentation
- Used by Law Enforcement to identify and recover stolen vessels
- Used by the Dept. of Homeland Security for a host of National Security reasons



## **33 CFR Part 181...(Recreational Vessels Only)**

### **§181.23 Hull identification number required**

- A manufacturer must identify each boat produced or imported with a primary and duplicate hull identification number permanently affixed in accordance with §181.29.
- A person who builds or imports a boat for his or her own use and not for the purposes of sale must obtain the required hull identification number in accordance with the requirements of the issuing authority listed in 33 CFR part 173, Appendix A for that boat's State of principal operation and permanently affix the HIN to the boat in accordance with §181.29 of this subpart.
- No person may assign the same HIN to more than one boat.

### **§181.27 Information displayed near HIN:**

- With the exception of the characters "US-", which constitute the country of origin code for the United States, if information is displayed within 2 inches of the HIN, that information must be separated from the HIN by means of borders or must be on a separate label so that it will not be interpreted as part of the HIN

## **33 CFR Part 181...(Recreational Vessels Only)**

### **§181.29 Hull Identification Number Display**

- **Two identical HINs are required to be displayed on each boat hull**
  - The primary HIN must be affixed in accordance with §181.29
  - The duplicate HIN must be affixed in an unexposed location on the interior of the boat or beneath a fitting or item of hardware
    - This duplicate HIN has been required since the 1984 regulatory update to HIN formats, and may be used to replicate the primary HIN in the case that the primary HIN is missing. Contact CG-BSX-23 for more information.
- Each HIN must be carved, burned, stamped, embossed, molded, bonded or otherwise permanently affixed to the hull so that alteration, removal, or replacement would be obvious. If the number is on a separate plate, the plate must be fastened in such a manner that its removal would cause some scarring of or damage to the surrounding hull area.
- A HIN must not be attached to parts of the boat that are removable and the characters must be no less than one-fourth of an inch high

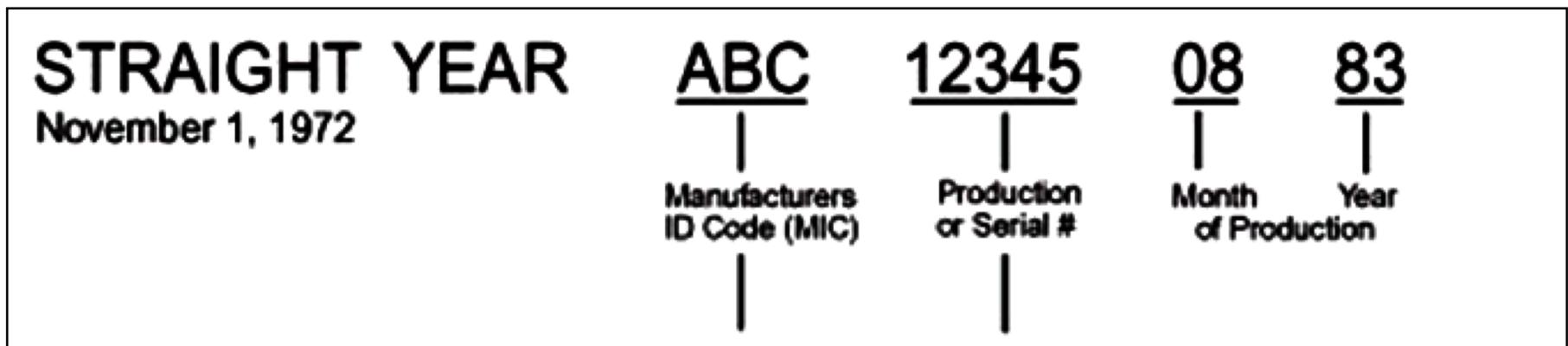


# HIN Formats

- **Since November 1, 1972 there have been three HIN formats:**
  - Straight Year Format (Used November 1, 1972– July 31, 1984)
  - Model Year Format (Used November 1, 1972– July 31, 1984)
  - New (Current) Format (Used exclusively August 1, 1984 to present)
  
- **Each format consisted of the same three components in the order below:**
  - A Manufacturer(s) Identification Code (MIC)
  - A 5 digit serial number assigned by the manufacturer
  - A 4-digit alpha-numeric code that represents the boats model year and date of production

# **Straight Year Format**

## **Used November 1972- July 1984**



## **EXAMPLE: Straight Year Format**



# Model Year Format

## Used November 1972- July 1984

**MODEL YEAR**  
 November 1, 1972

XYZ

45678

M

84

A

\*M\* Designates  
 Model Year  
 Format

Model  
 Year

\* Month  
 of Production

\* Key to month of production for model year format:

A - August

D - November

G - February

J - May

B - September

E - December

H - March

K - June

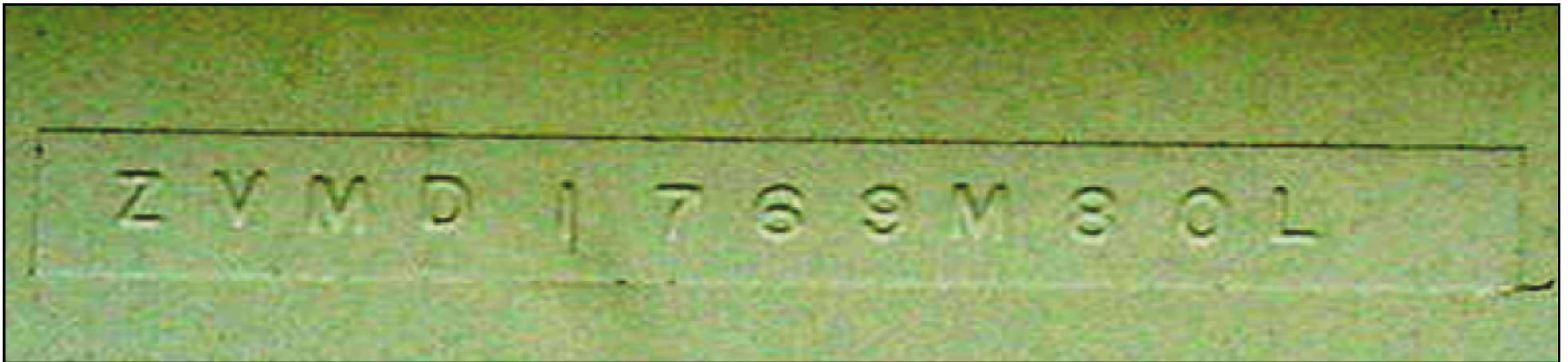
C - October

F - January

I - April

L - July

## **EXAMPLE: Model Year Format**



# New (Current) Format

## Used as of August 1984

### HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER FORMATS

**CURRENT FORMAT**  
 August 1, 1984

BMA  
 |  
 Manufacturers  
 ID Code (MIC)

45678  
 |  
 Production  
 or Serial #

H4  
 |  
 Month Year  
 of Production

85  
 |  
 Model  
 Year

\* Key to month of production for current format:

A - January

D - April

G - July

J - October

B - February

E - May

H - August

K - November

C - March

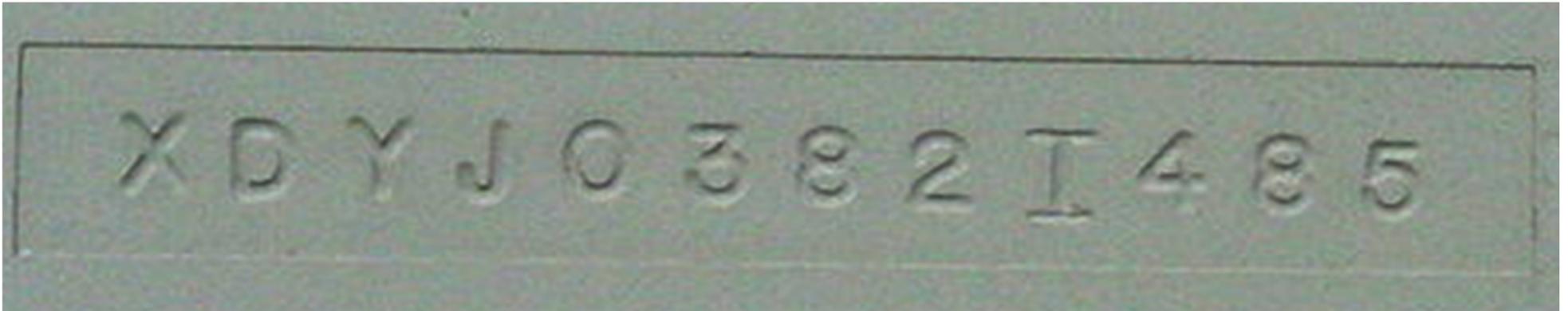
F - June

I - September

L - December

The CURRENT FORMAT replaced STRAIGHT YEAR and MODEL YEAR formats. The Current Format was optional as of January 1, 1984, but mandatory as of August 1, 1984. Confidential HINs were not required prior to August 1, 1984.

## **EXAMPLE: New (Current) Format**





## **33 CFR Part 181...(Recreational Vessels Only)**

### **§ 181.31 Manufacturer(s) Identification Code (MIC) Assignment**

- Each person (manufacturer) required by §181.23 to affix HINs must request a Manufacturer(s) Identification Code in writing from the USCG Commandant.
- For boats manufactured outside of the jurisdiction of the United States, a U.S. importer must obtain a Manufacturer(s) Identification Code. The request must indicate the importer's name and U.S. address along with a list of the manufacturers, their addresses and the general types and sizes of boats that will be imported.
- If a nation has a hull identification number system which has been accepted by the Coast Guard for the purpose of importing boats, it may be used by the importer instead of the one specified within this subpart.

## § 181.25 Current HIN Format

### ➤ Characters 1-3:

- Manufacturer(s) Identification Code (MIC), assigned by the U.S. Coast Guard and may consist of letters and/or numbers. Use of numbers was discontinued in mid-1990s.
- An MIC may be reassigned if the manufacturer assigned to it has been out of business for 10 or more years.
- Visit the USCG MIC Website here:  
<http://uscgboating.org/content/manufacturers-identification.php>

**EXAMPLE:** **ABC**

## § 181.25 Current HIN Format

### ➤ Characters 4-8:

- Must be a serial number assigned by the manufacturer and may include letters and/or numbers, with the exception of the letters I, O, and Q, which cannot be used in this portion of the HIN due to similarities to numbers.

**EXAMPLE:** ABC**25A67**

## § 181.25 Current HIN Format

- **Characters 9-12:** contain the certification/manufacture date and model year of vessel.
  - **9:** Must be a letter value to represent month hull was built:  
A = January, B = February, etc....
  - **10:** A number value indicating the last digit of the year of manufacture/certification, i.e. 8 represents 2008  
*(33 CFR 181.25(c) - The date indicated can be no earlier than the date the construction or assembly began and no later than the date the boat leaves the place of manufacture or assembly, or is imported into the US for sale.)*
  - **11-12:** Indicate the last two digits of the model year or year it was offered for sale by the manufacturer

**EXAMPLE: ABC25A67H809**

## § 181.25 Current HIN Format

- The HIN must consist of 12 characters uninterrupted by slashes, hyphens, or spaces.
- Occasionally the USCG has allowed a 12 character HIN with an incorrect format as long as the manufacturer and year of the vessel can be identified.
- Occasionally the USCG will verify a HIN as valid even though it has 11 or 13 characters. The Manufacturer(s) Identification Code, certification date, and model year will be correct with either one digit missing or one extra digit in the production serial number portion of the HIN. This is done when a manufacturer produces a high number of boats with invalid HIN's, and is permitted by the USCG, not at a state level.



# Boats Affected by Federal Regulations

- Homemade Boats
- Kit Boats
- All vessels imported or manufactured after November 1, 1972 without a correct HIN format. (Vessels imported or manufactured prior to November 1, 1972 do not fall within the regulations, but may be treated as such by the states)

# What is a Homemade Boat?

## ➤ **Homemade/Backyard Built Boat**

- A single boat built with raw materials by a person or persons for personal use and not made for the purpose of building multiple boats for sale. (Not more than 1 vessel per year)
- This boat requires a state issued HIN in the New (Current) Format

## ➤ **SPECIAL NOTE:**

- Some manufacturers are in the practice of selling non-compliant recreational boats to persons and calling them “homemade” by giving the new owner a materials list. Be aware of these practices. These boats will NOT have Certification Labels nor will they have USCG Maximum Capacities established! **THESE BOATS ARE UNSAFE AND SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED IN RECREATIONAL SERVICE!**

# What is a Kit Boat?

## ➤ Kit Boat

- A kit boat is a boat in which the buyer purchases plans to build the boat and the materials to complete the boat are supplied by the manufacturer/seller. **IT IS NOT A HOMEMADE BOAT!**
- This boat requires a HIN to be provided by the manufacturer/seller.
- All kit boats imported or manufactured after Nov. 1, 1972 must comply with all U.S. Coast Guard Minimum Safety Standards (33 CFR Part 183) where applicable.



# Imported Boats

- **Imported boats fall into two categories:**
  - Boats imported for resale are done so by an importer or U.S. subsidiary that has been issued a MIC from the U.S. Coast Guard. The importer is responsible for all recall issues on these boats as well as ensuring the HIN is placed on the boat correctly.
  - A single boat imported by an individual for their own personal use. **This boat requires a state issued HIN in the New (Current) Format from the State in which the boat will be principally operated.**



# Commercial Boats

- All persons engaged in the registration of boats and validation/issuance of HINs should be aware that the U.S. Coast Guard does not issue MICs to manufacturers of non-recreational boats.
- There are manufacturers with commercial/Government divisions that have MICs; however, these manufacturers build their products to all U.S. Coast Guard Standards in 33 CFR Part 183.
- In the past, some manufacturers have gained State-issued HIN's en masse, labeled their products as "Commercial Use Only" and sold them to the public via a network of dealers. This is a deceptive practice. **States are PROHIBITED from issuing State HIN's en masse to manufacturers.**
- **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CAN A STATE ISSUE A STATE-ASSIGNED HIN TO A VESSEL NOT BUILT TO RECREATIONAL VESSEL CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS**



# Commercial Boats

There are a number of manufacturers that produce a line of boats that they label as “**Commercial Use Only**”. In reality, there is usually no practical **commercial** use for these boats. The majority are rigged for hunting/fishing and all fail to meet certification, maximum capacities, and flotation requirements. Some will come with a HIN that has a USCG issued MIC as the first three characters. The Coast Guard views these as non-compliant recreational boats and will revoke the USCG issued MIC of any manufacturer engaging in this practice.

**These boats are prohibited by law for use in commercial fishing or carrying passengers for hire on the navigable waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States!**

**For any questions relating to Commercial vessels, email the USCG at [HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)**



# Vessel Inspections

- **33 CFR 174.16 – As of Jan 1, 2017- before taking any action to issue, renew, or update ownership information for a certificate of number relating to a vessel imported or manufactured on or after November 1, 1972, the issuing authority must determine whether the vessel has a primary HIN meeting the requirements of 33 CFR Part 181, subpart C.**
- **The following methods can be used to verify the HIN:**
  - Pencil Tracing
  - Digital Picture/Photo
  - A Physical Inspection by a State Official (includes HIN, make, model, year, hull material, propulsion, length, and boat registration number)
  - Signed Affidavit by customer swearing HIN was applied
  - Contact the manufacturer (if in business to verify HIN)
  - NICB: National Insurance Crime Bureau database (used to locate secondary HIN's)
- NASBLA recommends all vessels be inspected to verify the Hull Identification Number if the vessel has an apparent improperly formatted HIN.
- **NOTE:** This inspection is to verify vessel information, **NOT** to determine seaworthiness.

# 12 Character HIN with Incorrect Format

- When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **within 10 years** from the date of manufacture:
  - **If the manufacturer is still in business:**
    - The State issuing office should send an email to the USCG at [HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil) with the owner and vessel information and the USCG will contact the manufacturer and authorize the manufacturer to correct the HIN discrepancy.
    - The USCG will provide the State with a confirmation of the manufacturer's actions.
  - **If the manufacturer is out of business:**
    - The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format
    - When the State issues a new HIN, the Legacy (aka original) HIN must be made a part of the boat's record, the owner should retain a copy for their records, and a copy should be kept on the boat.

# 12-Character HIN with Incorrect Format

- When the State encounters a discrepancy within a 12 Character HIN on a boat **older than 10 years** from the date of manufacture:
  - **And the discrepancy is within the serial number (Characters 4 - 8):**
    - The State should document the discrepancy in the boat's record, the owner should retain a copy for their records, and a copy should be kept on the boat.
  - **And the discrepancy is within the MIC or the last four characters of the HIN:**
    - The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format.
    - When the State issues a new HIN, the Legacy (aka original) HIN must be made a part of the boat's record, the owner should retain a copy for their records, and a copy should be kept on the boat.
    - **NOTE:** On boats built prior to November 1, 1972, States are not required to issue a State HIN but may choose to do so.



# HIN with other than 12 Characters

- When the State encounters HINs on boats **within 10 years** from the date of manufacture that contain any number of characters other than 12:
  - **If the manufacturer is still in business:**
    - The State issuing office should send an email to the USCG at [HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil) with the owner and vessel information and the USCG will contact the manufacturer and authorize the manufacturer to correct the HIN discrepancy.
    - The USCG will provide the State with a confirmation of the manufacturer's actions.
  - **If the manufacturer is out of business:**
    - The State should issue a State HIN using the New (Current) Format
    - A record of the original HIN must be made a part of the boat's record, the owner should retain a copy for their records, and a copy should be kept on the boat.



# State Issued HIN

## ➤ Format:

- State HIN's issued before 2017 may be accepted if they are 12 characters, using any format, and verified on the vessel.
- All State Issued HIN's issued after January 1, 2017 must use the New (Current) Format
- The last four characters must be the month and year the State HIN is issued in the following format:
  - The 9<sup>th</sup> character should be the letter denotation A-L that corresponds to the month the State HIN is being issued (see Slide 10)
  - The 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> characters should be the year the State HIN is issued. For example- if the state assigned HIN is issued in 2018, characters 10-12 would be 818

## ➤ Examples:

- 2012 Year Built Vessel inspected July 2017 = **GAZ12345G717**
- 2016 Year Built Vessel inspected November 2017 = **GAZ23456K717**
- 1979 Year Built Vessel inspected January 2018 = **GAZ34567A818**

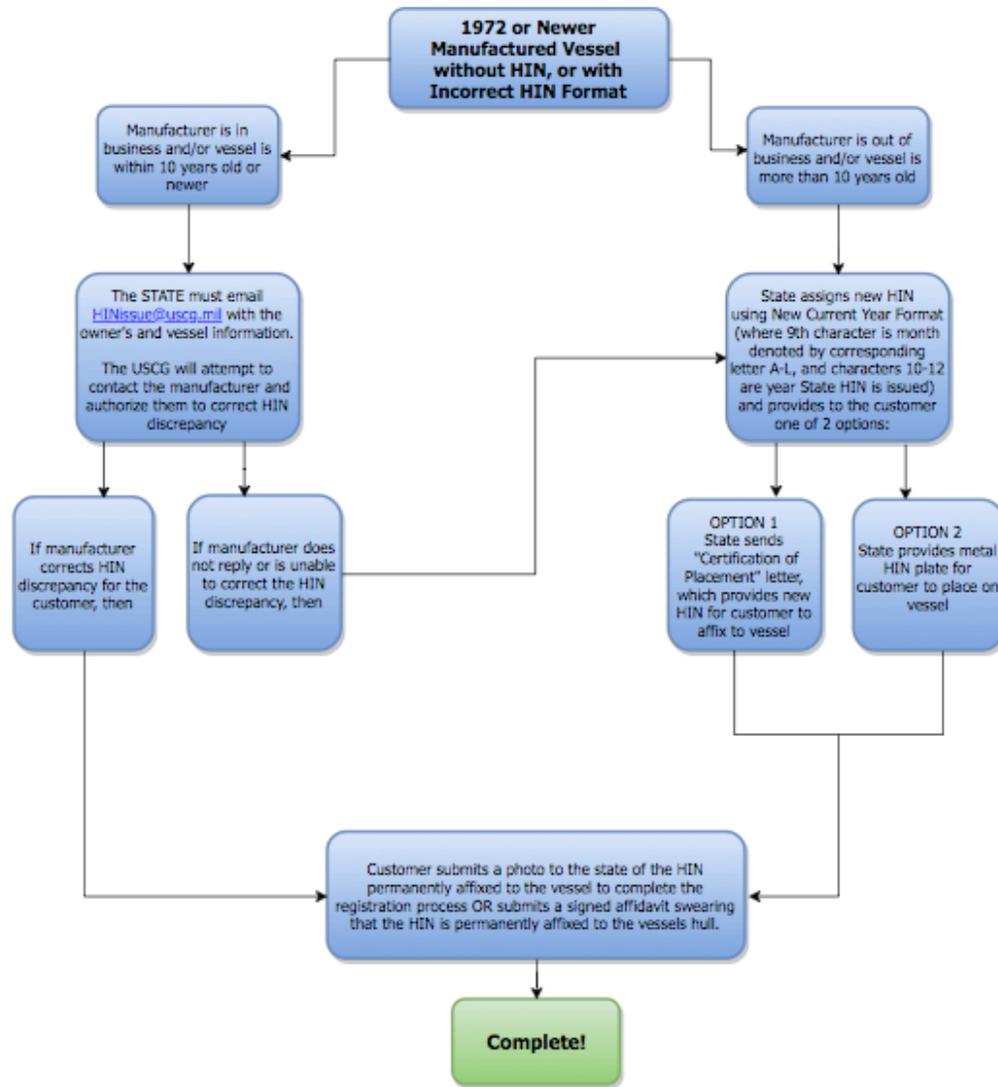


# **HIN Assignment Flow Charts**

**The following three slides can be used as a quick reference guide on issuing HIN's.**

**You can find originals on the NASBLA Website  
Nasbla.org**

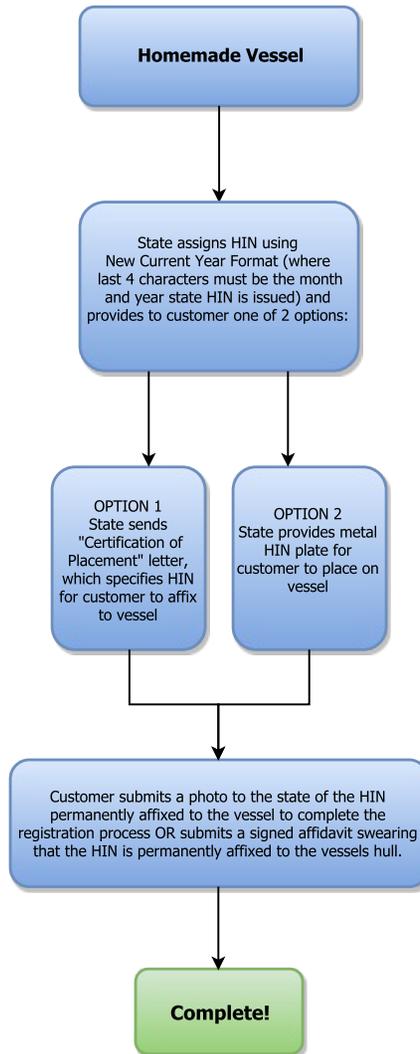
**For all HIN related questions, please email  
[HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)**



**Examples of State issued HINs for 1972 and newer:**  
 State of Georgia: GAZ  
 2012 Manufactured Vessel Inspected April 2017 = GAZ12345D717  
 1976 Manufactured Vessel Inspected January 2018 = GAZ12345A818

For questions, please email the USCG  
[HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)

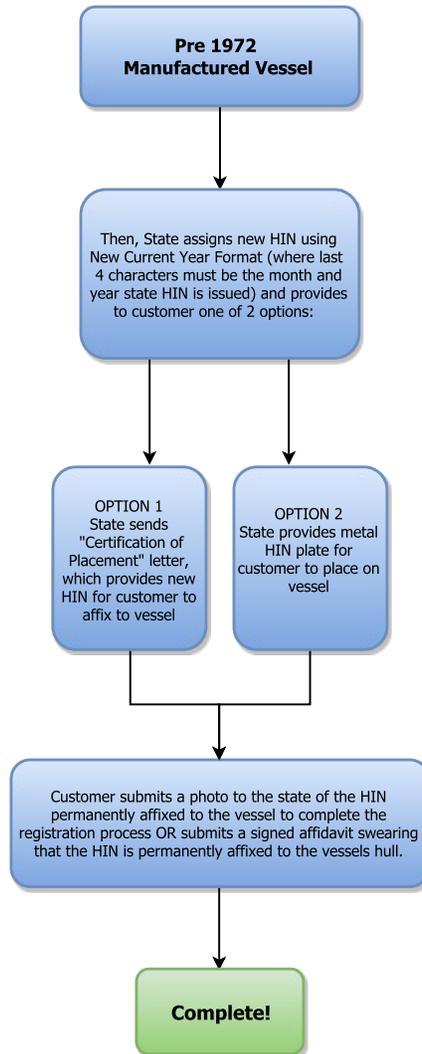




**Example of a State issued HIN for Homemade Vessels:**  
State of Georgia: GAZ  
June 2015 Homemade Vessel = GAZ12345F515

For questions, please email the USCG  
[HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)





**Example of a State issued HIN for Pre 1972 Vessels:**  
State of Georgia: GAZ  
1968 Manufactured Vessel inspected November 2016: GAZ12345K616

For questions, please email the USCG  
[HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)



# Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

SB2X3461H595

**Good** – New (Current) Format

YAM43789C010

**Good** – New (Current) Format

WELC7259A574

**Bad** – Cannot be New (Current) Format due to year of vessel

BAY68240M83E 2987

**Good** – Model Year Format.  
Additional characters allowed within 2 inches when separated by a border or separate label



# Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

WNN6532I0883

**Bad**– There is an I in the serial number

APB1875CZ888

**Bad** – The 9<sup>th</sup> character must be a letter A-L

TJD284234567

**Bad** – Appears a SSN is used along with initials

US-NOR17693D797

**Good** – New (Current) Format. US- designates country of manufacture (no other country code is authorized)

# Examples of Good and Bad HIN Formats

CCMT23C50379

**Good** – Straight Year Format

CM279493L213

**TRICK HIN** – CM2 is not a valid MIC

SERM01305F213

**Bad** – 13 characters within 10 years of manufacture

CFZ28610L717

**Good** – State issued in December 2017 using New (Current) Format



# Contact the US Coast Guard CG-BSX23

USCG Boating Safety Division: (202) 372-1062

USCG HIN Issues: [HINissue@uscg.mil](mailto:HINissue@uscg.mil)