

# Appendix E: Tennessee's Legal Requirements of Boating

## Tennessee: The Legal Requirements of Boating

### Your Vessel's Certificate of Number and Validation Decals

- ◆ Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Tennessee, you must have a Tennessee Certificate of Number and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters in Tennessee. The only exceptions are:
  - Vessels propelled only by paddles or oars
  - Vessels registered in other states using Tennessee waters for 60 days or less
- ◆ An application for the Certificate of Number is obtained after paying sales tax to the dealer or county clerk's office. The application then is mailed to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency or dropped off at the Nashville TWRA sales office.
- ◆ *The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized registration card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.*
- ◆ The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow where no other number may be displayed.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high, plain, vertical **BLOCK** letters.
  - Number's color must contrast with its background.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a hyphen or a space:  
**TN-3717-ZW** or **TN 3717 ZW**.
  - Decals may be placed to the left or right of the registration number on both sides of the bow.
- ◆ If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

### Other Facts About Registering Your Vessel

- ◆ The Certificate of Number is valid for one, two, or three years, at the option of the owner.
- ◆ The owner of a numbered vessel must notify TWRA within 15 days if:
  - You change your address.
  - The vessel is lost, stolen and/or recovered, destroyed, abandoned, or sold.
- ◆ Vessels registered in another state may operate on Tennessee waters for 60 consecutive days before Tennessee registration is required.
- ◆ If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or validation decals, you must apply to the TWRA for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.
- ◆ Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information.
  - Documented vessels must be registered in Tennessee and carry the Certificate of Number on board, but are not required to display the registration number.
  - The validation decals issued by the TWRA must be placed on both sides of the documented vessel on the windows closest to the main operator station.
    - If the vessel does not have windows, the decals must be placed in the immediate vicinity of the operator and must be clearly visible to enforcement officers.
    - Sailboats may place the decals on both sides of the bottom of the main mast.



### Certificate of Number

*The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized registration card) must be carried on board the vessel whenever the vessel is operated.*



Spaces or hyphens should appear here.



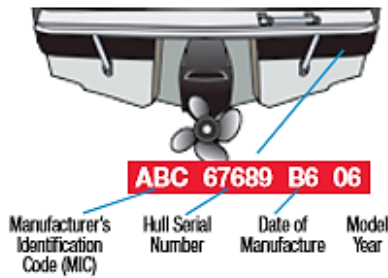
### Validation Decal

*(May be placed to left or right of the registration number)*



*PWCs also are required to display the certificate's number and validation decals.*

## Hull Identification Number



### TWRA Boating Safety Education Certificate

*Those born after January 1, 1989, must have on board the Boating Safety Education Certificate issued by TWRA (shown above) whenever the vessel is in operation. This is the only certificate that will be recognized as meeting the requirements of the law for those born after January 1, 1989. The certificate will not expire but may be revoked in a court of law.*

## Hull Identification Number

- ◆ The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- ◆ Hull Identification Numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another—the same as serial numbers distinguish one car from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- ◆ You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.

## Who May Operate a Vessel

- ◆ **Those born after January 1, 1989**
  - Tennessee residents must successfully complete the TWRA Boating Safety Exam and carry on board the Boating Safety Education Certificate issued by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) when operating a vessel on Tennessee waters. Only the TWRA-issued certificate will be accepted as meeting the requirements of Tennessee law. This does not apply to non-residents or persons who rent a vessel.
  - Non-residents within this age category must show proof of successful completion of a NASBLA (National Association of State Boating Law Administrators) approved boating safety course.
  - Operators of vessels powered by engines of 8.5 horsepower or less and operators of sailboats under sail alone are not required to possess the Boating Safety Education Certificate.
- ◆ **To operate a motorized vessel of more than 8.5 horsepower**
  - Those less than 12 years old must have a supervisor on board who is at least 18 years old and able to take immediate control of the vessel. The supervisor, if born after January 1, 1989, also must have a Boating Safety Education Certificate issued by TWRA.
  - Those 12 years old or older operating alone must have a Boating Safety Education Certificate issued by TWRA.
- ◆ **Those less than 16 years of age** may not *rent* a personal watercraft (PWC).

Source: Boat Tennessee Course at <https://www.boat-ed.com/tennessee/>

DRAFT