



# FLORIDA VESSEL OWNER'S GUIDE

Provided by the Seminole County Tax Collector

- Starting January 1, 2010, anyone born on or after January 1, 1988, must take a boating safety course and get an FWC-issued boating safety ID card.
- If you were born on or after January 1, 1988, and purchase a boat, you have **90 days** from the purchase date to get the ID card.
- New rules for boat titles, numbers, and registration now apply to all vessels used, stored, or operated on state waters, except for those legally kept at a dock or marina.

## DEFINITIONS:

**Canoe:** A long, light, narrow vessel with sharp ends and curved sides. A canoe-like vessel with a squared transom may still be considered a canoe if its transom is less than 45% of its width or if the United States Coast Guard designates it as a canoe.

**Commercial Vessel:** A vessel primarily used for catching or landing saltwater or freshwater fish or products, or licensed to harvest commercial quantities of saltwater products for sale. It does not include recreational vessels.

**Documented Vessel:** A vessel with a valid Certificate of Documentation issued by the U.S. Coast Guard under federal regulations.

**Floating Structure:** A barge-like entity that is not primarily for transportation but used for purposes like residence, business, office, hotel, restaurant, or storage. It's excluded from the definition of a vessel but may move on water or rest on the bottom.

**Homemade Vessel:** A vessel built after Oct. 31, 1972, that doesn't require a Federal Hull Identification Number, or any vessel built before Nov. 1, 1972, by someone other than a licensed manufacturer for their own or a specific person's use. Vessels assembled from kits or unfinished manufactured hulls are considered homemade if they don't require a hull identification number.

**Manufactured Vessel:** A vessel built after Oct. 31, 1972, that requires a Federal Hull Identification Number, or any vessel built before Nov. 1, 1972, by a licensed manufacturer.

**Personal Watercraft:** A vessel under 16 feet long that uses an inboard motor and water jet pump for propulsion, designed to be operated by sitting, standing, or kneeling on it instead of sitting or standing inside.

**Recreational Vessel:** A vessel primarily for noncommercial use or leased, rented, or chartered for noncommercial purposes.

**Vessel:** A general term for any watercraft, including boats, barges, and airboats, used or capable of being used for transportation on water. It does not include seaplanes or floating structures.

## TIPS FOR SAFE BOATING:

1. Stay Alert for Danger:
  - o Always scan in all directions, as the person operating the nearby boat may not be paying attention. Stay vigilant for any potential hazards.
2. Develop a "Life Jacket Habit":
  - o Make wearing a life jacket a regular habit. It's critical to stay afloat, and there's often no time to put on a life jacket if an emergency occurs.
3. Wear Your Kill Switch Lanyard:
  - o Always wear your kill switch lanyard to prevent being thrown from the boat and injured by the propeller. It's a simple step that can prevent a serious accident.
4. Avoid Alcohol:
  - o While boating is fun and relaxing, alcohol should not be part of the mix. The sun, heat, vibration, and noise already put stress on your body, and alcohol slows reflexes, making it more dangerous.
5. Ensure Passengers Can Operate the Boat:
  - o In the unlikely event that something happens to you, make sure that your passengers know how to operate the boat and can get both you and the vessel back to safety

## 1. INITIAL REGISTRATION AND TITLING

- The purchaser must apply for registration and title within 30 days of purchase.
- During the 30-day grace period, the owner must have proof of the date of purchase aboard the vessel.
  - **Operating an unregistered vessel after 30 days is a second-degree misdemeanor.**
- Applications for vessel registration and title certificates must be filed by the vessel owner with the county tax collector's office.
- Vessels not exempt from titling must be titled when registered.
- Initial registration and titling can be done by submitting:
  - Completed Form HSMV 82040 VS
  - A Manufacturer's Certificate of Origin (or equivalent)
  - A registration fee based on the fee schedule (paragraph 12) must be included.
  - A \$8.25 titling fee
  - An additional \$1 fee is required to record each existing lien.
  - An extra \$4 titling fee applies for vessels previously registered outside the state.
- If sales tax on the purchase price has not been paid, it must be paid with the fees.
- If sales tax has been paid, a valid receipt must be provided to the county tax collector.
- The registration certificate must be on board the vessel when in operation.

## 2. EXEMPTIONS FROM REGISTRATION

Vessels exempt from titling include:

- Non-motor-powered vessels less than 16 feet in length
- Any non-motor-powered canoe, kayak, racing shell, or rowing scull, regardless of length
- Vessels used exclusively on private lakes and ponds
- Vessels owned by the United States Government
- Vessels used exclusively as a ship's lifeboat
- Vessels covered by numbers under federal law or a federally approved numbering system, provided they are not operated in state waters for more than 90 consecutive days

## 3. EXEMPTIONS FROM TITLING

Vessels exempt from titling include:

- Non-motor-powered vessels less than 16 feet in length
- Vessels owned by the United States Government
- Federally documented vessels
- Vessels used exclusively on private lakes and ponds
- Amphibious vessels with a vehicle title issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV)
- Vessels used solely for demonstration, testing, or sales promotional purposes by a bona fide dealer or manufacturer
- Vessels owned and operated by the state or its political subdivisions
- Vessels from a country other than the U.S., temporarily using state waters for no more than 90 days
- Vessels covered by registration numbers under a federally approved numbering system of another state or the U.S. Coast Guard in a state without such a system, provided they are not operated in Florida waters for more than 90 consecutive days

## 4. TRANSFER OF TITLED OWNERSHIP

Requirements for Transferring Ownership of an Undocumented Vessel:

- Application & Fee:
  - Must file an application for transfer of ownership with the county tax collector within 30 days.
  - Required fee: \$8.25.
- Late Fee:
  - Additional \$20 fee if the application is not properly filed within the 30-day period.
- Document Submission:
  - The new owner must surrender the last title document issued for the vessel, properly executed, to the county tax collector.
- Additional Fees & Taxes:
  - \$1 for each lien to be recorded.
  - Applicable sales tax on the total purchase price or proof of sales tax payment.
- Special Cases:
  - For transfers due to probate, contractual default, or prior federal documentation, contact the local county tax collector's office for instructions.

## 5. REQUIRED CERTIFICATE OF TITLE

Requirements for Selling, Transferring, or Purchasing a Vessel Titled by the State of Florida:

- Selling or Transferring a Vessel:
  - The seller must deliver a valid certificate of title to the purchaser or transferee.
  - The certificate of title must include an assignment showing the transfer of title to the new owner.
- Purchasing or Acquiring a Vessel:
  - The purchaser must obtain a certificate of title for the vessel in their name.
- Application Filing:
  - The purchaser or transferee must file an application for a title transfer with the county tax collector within 30 days of the vessel ownership change.

## 6. HOMEMADE VESSEL TITLE APPLICATION

Initial Application for Title and Registration of a Homemade Vessel:

- Application Process:
  - The vessel owner must file the application with the county tax collector's office.
- For Homemade Vessels:
  - Submit the following to the county tax collector:
    - Form HSMV 82040 VS
    - Form HSMV 87002
    - \$8.25 titling fee
  - The department may conduct a visual inspection to confirm it meets the legal definition of a "homemade vessel."

## 7. NUMBERING

Florida Vessel Registration Number Requirements:

- Permanence:
  - The registration number is permanent and remains with the vessel as long as it is operated or stored in Florida, even if ownership changes.
- Placement:
  - Must be painted or permanently attached to both sides of the bow (forward half) of the vessel.
- Appearance:
  - Block letters and numerals at least three inches high.
  - Must read from left to right.
  - Must contrast in color with the hull.
  - Must be maintained in legible condition.
- Formatting:
  - Prefix and suffix should be separated from the numbers by a hyphen or a space equal to the width of the digits.
  - Example format: FL 0001 AB.

## 8. DECALS

Florida Vessel Registration Decal Requirements:

- Issuance:
  - A decal signifying the valid registration year is issued with each registration certificate.
- Placement:
  - Must be displayed on the port (left) side of the vessel.
  - Can be placed immediately before or after the registration number.
- For Federally Documented Vessels:
  - The decal may be affixed to a window or windshield on the port side.
- Old Decals:
  - Any decal from a previous year's registration **must be removed** from the vessel.

## 9. REREGISTRATION PERIOD

Florida Vessel Registration Periods:

- For Vessels Owned by Individuals:
  - Registration Period:
    - Begins: First day of the owner's birth month.
    - Ends: Last day of the month immediately preceding the owner's birth month in the following year.
  - If Multiple Owners:
    - The birth month of the person whose name appears first on the registration determines the period.
  - Renewal Period:
    - The 30-day period ending at midnight on the vessel owner's date of birth.
- For Vessels Owned by Companies, Corporations, Governmental Entities, Dealers, and Manufacturers:
  - Registration Period:
    - Begins: July 1.
    - Ends: June 30.
  - Renewal Period:
    - The 30-day period beginning June 1.

## 10. CLASSIFICATION OF VESSELS

Vessel Classification and Registration:

- Recreational Craft:
  - Any vessel required to be registered that is not operated for commercial purposes.
- Commercial Vessel:
  - Vessels meeting the definition of a commercial vessel as provided in paragraph 2 of the pamphlet must be registered as commercial.

## 11. CHANGE OF CLASSIFICATION

Changing Vessel Classification (Recreational to Commercial or Vice Versa):

- Required Documents & Fees:
  - Completed Form HSMV 87015.
  - The current certificate of registration.
  - Applicable service fees.
- Submission:
  - Submit the documents to the county tax collector.
- Replacement Registration:
  - The county will issue a replacement registration reflecting the new classification.
- Additional Fee for Non-Residents or Aliens:
  - If a non-exempted vessel owned by a non-resident or alien changes from recreational to commercial, an additional \$50 commercial vessel fee is required.

## 12. FEES TO REGISTER VESSELS (RECREATIONS OR COMMERCIAL)

Florida Vessel Registration Fees:

- Class A-1 (Less than 12 feet in length, including motorized canoes): \$10.75
- Class A-1 (12 feet or more, but less than 16 feet in length): \$21.50
- Class 1 (16 feet or more, but less than 26 feet in length): \$34.00
- Class 2 (26 feet or more, but less than 40 feet in length): \$83.50
- Class 3 (40 feet or more, but less than 65 feet in length): \$133.00
- Class 4 (65 feet or more, but less than 110 feet in length): \$158.00
- Class 5 (110 feet or more in length): \$195.00
- Dealer Classification: \$30.75

Included Fees:

- \$2.25 service fee
- \$0.50 FRVIS fee
- \$1.00 Decal on Demand fee

**Note:**

- Some counties impose an additional county registration fee. Contact the tax collector's office where you'll be registering your vessel to confirm the exact fee amount before sending payment.

### 13. COMMERCIAL FEES

Additional Fees for Non-Residents and Aliens:

- An additional \$50 commercial vessel license fee is required for all non-residents or aliens unless specifically exempted by statute.
- Saltwater Products License:
- Required for individuals who:
  - Possess over the recreational bag limit.
  - Sell or harvest with certain gear in Florida.
- License Costs:
- Residents: Minimum cost of \$50.
- Non-Residents: Minimum cost of \$200.
- Aliens: Minimum cost of \$300.

### 14. HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

Hull Identification Number Requirements for Vessels:

- Vessel Operation:
  - A vessel for which the DHSMV has issued a certificate of title or which is required to be registered must display the assigned hull identification number.
  - This applies to vessels with a hull identification number required by the U.S. Coast Guard for manufactured vessels or by DHSMV for homemade vessels or other vessels.
- Hull Identification Number Placement:
  - The hull identification number must be:
    - Carved, burned, stamped, embossed, or permanently affixed to the vessel.
    - Placed on the outboard side of the transom (or, if no transom, on the outermost starboard side at the end of the hull that bears the rudder or other steering mechanism).
    - Above the waterline in such a way that alteration, removal, or replacement would be obvious.
- Size and Format:
  - The hull identification number must:
    - Be at least 12 characters in number.
    - Have characters no less than one-fourth inch in height.
- For Vessels without a Manufacturer's Hull Identification Number:
  - Vessels with no manufacturer-provided hull identification number and homemade vessels constructed or assembled by the owner must be assigned a hull identification number by the DHSMV.
- Additional Information:
  - For questions about hull identification numbers, contact:
    - Fish and Wildlife office or
    - Bureau of Titles and Registrations
      - 2900 Apalachee Parkway, Tallahassee, FL 32399
      - Phone: (850) 617-2000

### 15. OUT OF STATE RECIPROCITY

Florida Vessel Registration for Out-of-State Owners:

- Recognition of Out-of-State Registration:
  - Florida recognizes valid registration certificates and numbers issued by other states for up to 90 days.
- Use Longer than 90 Days:
  - If an owner intends to use their vessel in Florida for more than 90 days, they must register it with a county tax collector.
  - The owner may retain the out-of-state registration number if they plan to return to their home state within a reasonable time.
- Permanent Residency in Florida:
  - If the out-of-state vessel owner plans to remain permanently in Florida, they must notify the county tax collector.
  - The county will issue a Florida registration number to replace the out-of-state number.
  - The out-of-state registration and certificate of title, if issued, must be surrendered to the tax collector.
- Military Personnel:
  - Out-of-state registrations and certificates are valid for vessels owned by military personnel on active duty in Florida until their expiration date.
  - After expiration, the vessel must be registered in Florida.

## 16. CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR INTEREST

Reporting Requirements for Vessel Owners:

- Destruction or Abandonment of a Vessel:
  - The vessel owner must report the destruction or abandonment of a registered vessel to the DHSMV within 30 days.
- Transfer of Interest in a Vessel:
  - The vessel owner must notify the DHSMV within 30 days of any transfer of interest in the vessel.
- Change of Address:
  - The owner must notify the DHSMV or the county tax collector of any change in address within 30 days if it differs from the address on the registration certificate.

## 17. DUPLICATE CERTIFICATES

Obtaining Duplicate Registration or Title in Florida:

- Duplicate Certificate of Registration:
  - If the Florida certificate of registration is lost, destroyed, or mutilated, the vessel owner can obtain a duplicate by submitting Form HSMV 87015 to the county tax collector.
- Duplicate Certificate of Title:
  - If the certificate of title is lost, destroyed, or mutilated, the titled owner can obtain a duplicate by:
    - Submitting a completed Form HSMV 82101 and paying a \$9.00 fee to the county tax collector.
- Expedited Duplicates:
  - For counties issuing expedited duplicates and DHSMV offices, the fee is \$11.50.

## 18. IN CASE OF ACCIDENT

- Accident Reporting Requirements for Vessel Operators:
  - In the event of a collision, accident, or casualty involving a vessel, the operator must report the incident if it involves:
    - Capsizing, collision with another vessel or object, sinking, personal injury requiring medical treatment beyond immediate first aid, death, or disappearance of any person under circumstances indicating possible death or injury.
    - Damage to any vessel or property with an apparent aggregate amount of at least \$2,000.
  - Notification:
    - The operator must, without delay, notify one of the following agencies by the quickest means available:
      - The Division of Law Enforcement of the Fish and Wildlife Office
      - The sheriff of the county where the accident occurred
      - The police chief of the municipality where the accident occurred (if applicable).

## 19. BEACON REGISTRATION

Registration Fee Reduction for Beacon Owners

- Eligibility for Fee Reduction:
  - Owners of recreational vessels equipped with an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB).
  - Owners of recreational vessels who possess a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).
  - Must submit the required documentation during an original or renewal transaction.
- Beacon Registration Information:
  - Visit the NOAA website: <http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov/beacon.html>
  - Register online: <https://beaconregistration.noaa.gov/rgdb/>
- Contact for Assistance:
  - Email: [beacon.registration@noaa.gov](mailto:beacon.registration@noaa.gov) (Include "Beacon Registration" in the subject line).
  - Phone: (888) 212-7283 or (301) 817-4515