

TONNAGE MEASUREMENT RECORDS



TONNAGE GUIDE 3

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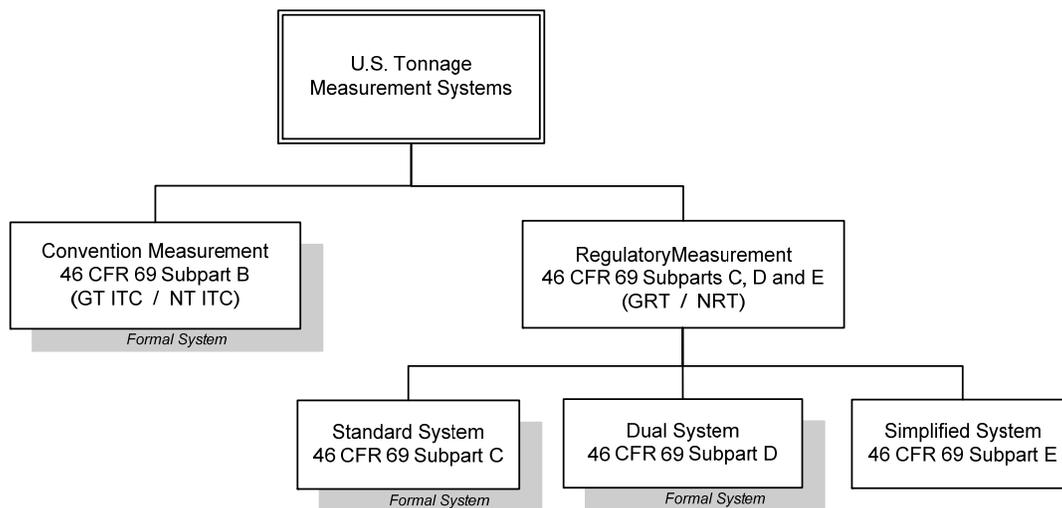
TONNAGE GUIDE 3

1. PURPOSE

This Guide provides general information on records associated with the tonnage measurement of United States flag vessels, including how members of the public may obtain copies of such records.

2. TONNAGE MEASUREMENT PROCESS

A vessel to which the application of a law of the United States depends on its gross or net tonnage must undergo a process referred to as "tonnage measurement", during which gross and net tonnages, as well as registered length, breadth, and depth dimensions, are assigned under one or more of four tonnage measurement systems. As illustrated in the figure below, three of the four systems are "formal" systems, for which tonnages are calculated based on detailed measurements of individual spaces associated with the vessel, as verified during an onboard survey. The fourth is a "simplified" system, for which tonnages are calculated using a simple formula having as its inputs certain principal dimensions and other vessel characteristics provided, in most cases, by the vessel's owner or builder. Refer to Title 46, United States Code, Subtitle II, Part J and Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 69 (46 CFR 69) for further details.



3. ENTITIES THAT MEASURE VESSELS

In the United States, the tonnage measurement program is under the administrative control of the United States Coast Guard, which assumed this responsibility from the Bureau of Customs in 1967. Prior to 1982, all tonnage measurement work was performed by officials of the United States government. From 1982 to 1989, the Coast Guard granted limited authorization for formal tonnage measurement work to a single classification society: the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS). In 1989, the Coast Guard turned most formal tonnage measurement work over to classification societies, with several exceptions (such as warship measurement), while retaining an oversight function. There are multiple classification societies that perform the formal tonnage measurement work on the Coast Guard's behalf. The Coast Guard has retained full responsibility for measurement under the simplified system.

4. TONNAGE MEASUREMENT RECORDS

In the context of this Tonnage Guide, tonnage measurement records are documents associated with the tonnage certification process. Depending on the measurement system used, these records may include

application forms, drawings, photos, sketches, tonnage calculations, water ballast justifications, and/or copies of tonnage certifying documents such as U.S. Tonnage Certificates (formerly Certificates of Admeasurement) and Applications for Simplified Measurement (Form CG-5397). Copies of tonnage calculations and tonnage certifying documents have generally been treated as permanent records. Drawings, photos and sketches used in the tonnage measurement process have generally not been treated as permanent records. For vessels measured by the Bureau of Customs or the Coast Guard, non-permanent records are no longer available in most cases.

5. LOCATION OF RECORDS

The location of tonnage measurement records depends on a number of factors, including the entity responsible for performing the tonnage measurement (e.g., the federal government vs. the private sector), the status of the vessel (e.g., whether the vessel is in service, out of service, or scrapped), and when the vessel was initially measured and/or remeasured (e.g., older federal records were not collected in a central location, and may reside at various National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) locations). Also, because of historical relationships between processes for tonnage measurement and vessel documentation, copies of tonnage certifying documents are frequently available in files associated with the vessel documentation process.

6. OBTAINING COPIES OF RECORDS

Obtain copies of tonnage measurement records from the current record holding entity as identified in Appendix A, using the procedures which follow, as applicable.

- (a) **MARINE SAFETY CENTER (MSC)** Submit written requests to the MSC. If you are not the owner (or owner's representative) of the vessel or a sister vessel, your request will be processed under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) procedures, and the MSC may withhold information deemed not releasable under this law (e.g., tonnage calculations, the release of which may be considered to cause substantial competitive harm to the owner or designer). Otherwise, include a statement of attestation of owner authorization to obtain the desired record copies (e.g., "I certify that I am the vessel's owner/authorized representative."). Before submitting any written request, we encourage you to contact the MSC Tonnage Division to discuss the availability of records (including those of sister vessels). Refer to the MSC's web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/HQ/msc> for contact information.
- (b) **CLASSIFICATION SOCIETY** Contact the classification society directly, for its policy and procedures on release of copies of tonnage measurement records. FOIA does not apply to tonnage measurement records held by classification societies. **NOTE: Copies of tonnage certificates issued by classification societies but held in NVDC files are subject to release under FOIA procedures.**
- (c) **NATIONAL VESSEL DOCUMENTATION CENTER (NVDC)** Submit written requests to the NVDC, under FOIA procedures, regardless of whether or not you are the vessel's owner or the owner's representative. Refer to Appendix B for more detailed information on how to obtain copies of tonnage measurement records from the NVDC. **NOTE: In most cases, for vessels measured under the simplified system, the only available tonnage measurement record is a form submitted by the owner or builder.**
- (d) **NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA)** Contact NARA directly for procedures on obtaining copies of tonnage measurement records.

7. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you have questions on tonnage measurement records, or are experiencing difficulty in locating specific records, please contact the MSC Tonnage Division for further assistance. Refer to the MSC's web site for contact information.

P. D. EARECKSON
Chief, Tonnage Division
U.S. Coast Guard
By direction

APPENDIX A**ENTITIES THAT MAINTAIN TONNAGE MEASUREMENT RECORDS**

The information contained in this table applies to United States flag non-military vessels (e.g., commercial and recreational vessels). This information should only be used as a general guide, as there are a number of exceptions not reflected in the table. *Note: In most cases, copies of tonnage certificates for formally measured vessels that were documented as vessels of the United States are available in files associated with the vessel documentation process. Refer to Appendix B for information on how to obtain copies of such records from the National Vessel Documentation Center (NVDC).*

TONNAGE MEASUREMENT RECORDS		
DATE VESSEL MEASURED	ISSUING AUTHORITY	CURRENT RECORDS ENTITY
FORMAL SYSTEMS		
1789 - 1967	Bureau of Customs	MSC/NARA
1967 - 1982	USCG Field Units	MSC/NARA
1982 - 1989	USCG Field Units/Class Societies	MSC/Class Societies
1989 - Present	Class Societies	Class Societies
SIMPLIFIED SYSTEM		
1966 - 1984	Bureau of Customs/USCG Field Units	NVDC/MSC
1984 - 1988	USCG Headquarters	NVDC/MSC
1988 - 1995	USCG Field Units / NVDC	NVDC
1995 - Present	NVDC	NVDC

APPENDIX B**NVDC TONNAGE MEASUREMENT RECORDS**

1. **GENERAL** The National Vessel Documentation Center (NVDC) maintains copies of tonnage certificates and other documents used as the basis for tonnages and registered dimensions that appear on Certificates of Documentation (CODs). Copies of these tonnage measurement records are releasable to the public under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) procedures.
2. **SUBMITTAL PROCESS** Obtain copies of tonnage measurement records from the NVDC in accordance with the following:
 - a. **Required Information** The request must be in writing, attention to the FOIA Manager. Include your name and mailing address, along with the official number and current name of the vessel. For expedited service, also include credit card information (refer to the **Payment** section below).
 - b. **Transmittal to NVDC** Mail, fax or email the request to the NVDC per instructions found on the NVDC's web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/nvdc>. Send your fax request to (304) 271-2541, or email your request to the following nvdc.w.webmaster@uscg.mil.
 - c. **Making Copies** The NVDC will locate the records and make necessary copies, which may involve record retrieval from an offsite storage facility (e.g., a Federal Records Center (FRC)). Retrieval of records from an FRC will generally add 7 to 10 business days to the NVDC's processing time.
 - d. **Payment** The cost of obtaining a certified copy of these records is \$4.00 per document. The NVDC will notify you of the total cost once the records are located. Payment must be made via credit card or check or cash before the NVDC will provide any copies from their files. Checks should be payable to either "U.S. Coast Guard" or "National Vessel Documentation Center". Credit card information must include the card number, card association (e.g., VISA, Master-Card etc.), and expiration date, as well as the full name of the card holder as it appears on the card.
 - e. **Mailing of Copies** The NVDC will mail copies to you upon receipt of payment.
3. **RESPONSE TIME** The NVDC has a 20 business day service standard for responding to FOIA requests. This does not guarantee you will receive the requested material in this time frame. You can help minimize response times by ensuring that submittals are clear and complete, and that payment is promptly made.
4. **QUESTIONS** If you have questions on the process for obtaining copies of tonnage measurement records from the NVDC, please contact the NVDC's FOIA Manager (Ms. Kim Demory at (304) 271-2547). If you have questions regarding the overall tonnage certification and record keeping process, please contact the Coast Guard Marine Safety Center (MSC) Tonnage Division. Refer to the MSC's web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/HQ/msc> for contact information.