

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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26 OCT 1990

From: Commandant
To: Distribution

Subj: Tonnage Measurement Guidelines
for Small Fishing Vessels

1. Commandant (G-MVI) has received a number of requests for guidance concerning possible documentation requirement violations on small "State Numbered" fishing vessels. While Volume IV, Chapter 7, Marine Safety Manual (Tonnage Measurement Program) is being updated, enclosure (1) is provided as a general response to frequently asked questions, and as a guide to enforcement criteria concerning tonnage requirements for these vessels.

2. Please disseminate this information to all MSOs, OCMIs, and COTPs in your district.

James M. MacDonald
JAMES M. MACDONALD
By direction

Encl: (1) Tonnage Measurement Guidelines
for Small Fishing Vessels

Dist: All CG District offices (m)

OPTIONAL FORM 99 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

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of pages = *3*

Enclosure(1)

G-MVI-5
(202)267-2992

**TONNAGE MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES
FOR SMALL FISHING VESSELS**

1. REQUIREMENTS

All vessels of 5 or more registered net tons that engage in the fisheries or the coastwise trade must be documented as vessels of the United States.

2. TONNAGE ASSIGNMENTS

Owners of vessels that are under 79 feet in overall length may elect to have their vessels assigned tonnages under either the Simplified Measurement System or under the Standard Measurement System.

Tonnages assigned under the Simplified Measurement System are based only on the vessel's overall measurements (length, breadth and depth). These tonnages are assigned, at no cost to the vessel owner, by the Coast Guard documentation office where the vessel is to be documented. These tonnages are usually much higher than those assigned under the Standard Measurement System, which allows the owner to deduct certain spaces allocated strictly for the crew and for working the vessel.

Vessels as small as 24 feet in overall length may measure over 5 net tons under either the Simplified or the Standard Measurement System. However, under the Standard System many vessels in the 40 - 50 foot length range may measure less than 5 net tons. If extensive tonnage reduction techniques are used, even much larger vessels may measure less than 5 net tons.

3. BACKGROUND

Many Coast Guard field offices have directed owners of "State Numbered" fishing vessels that are in the 32' - 40' length range to provide proof that the vessels are under 5 net tons and thereby not required to be documented as vessels of the United States. To provide this proof vessel owners must have their vessels formally measured by the American Bureau of Shipping under the Standard Measurement System. Formal measurement can be expensive, and in many cases indicates only that the vessel was already under 5 net tons.

A study of vessels that are less than 5 net tons under the Standard Measurement System indicated a considerable difference between the principal dimensions of those that are propelled by motor and those that are sailing vessels. The study also pointed out that when the principal dimensions of the largest vessels in

each of the classes were multiplied together their product was generally constant. The vessels used in the study were typical commercial fishing vessels of normal single hull construction having a fish hold within the hull and all spaces above the weather deck used for crew's accommodations or for operating the vessel.

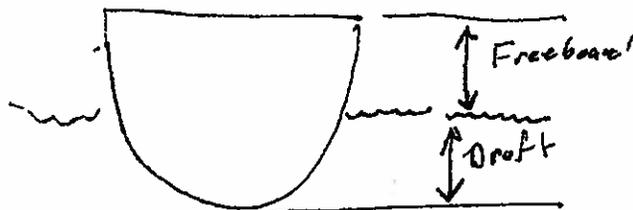
4. GUIDELINES

Small commercial fishing vessels may be regarded as being less than 5 net tons if the vessel does not have a significant amount of closed-in cargo space above its weather deck, does not have closed-in passenger space (space for persons other than the crew), and the product of its principal dimensions (overall length times overall breadth times overall depth), as defined in 46 CFR 69.203 (in feet and fractions of a foot) is less than: 4000 for vessels propelled by motor, or less than 3000 for vessels propelled by sail.

Law enforcement action on fishing vessel documentation violations should be initiated only when undocumented fishing vessels clearly exceed the above guidelines.

Define closed-in cargo space above its weatherdeck

Define closed-in passenger space (space for persons other than the crew).



Draft + Freeboard
= depth