



National Vessel Documentation Center

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: DOCUMENTING A VESSEL

Updated 03/2025

Initial Documentation – is the term used when a vessel is being documented with the U.S. Coast Guard for the first time.

- [Instructions and forms](#)

Redocumentation/Reissue (Exchange, Reinstatement or Return to Documentation) – is the term used for a vessel which has already been documented.

- [Instructions and forms](#)

Exchange - is the term used when changes are made to the Certificate of Documentation (COD) for a vessel which is currently documented with the U.S. Coast Guard. The changes may include ownership, vessel name, hailing port, and/or endorsement(s).

Return to Documentation – is the term used when a previously documented vessel was deleted from documentation and is now being documented with the U.S. Coast Guard again.

Reinstatement of Documentation – is the term used when the COD for a documented vessel has expired and was not renewed in a timely manner.

Replacement of Documentation - is the term used when the COD for a documented vessel has been wrongfully withheld, lost or mutilated.

- [Instructions and forms](#)

Renewal of Documentation – ([CG-1280](#)) - is the term used to renew the COD for a documented vessel. Recreational vessels may be renewed for a period of 1-5 years. Commercial vessels are not eligible for multi-year documents and must continue to be renewed annually.

- [Instructions and forms](#)

Duplicate Submissions – Do not submit your information more than once. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 codified at 46 USC 2110 requires that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) establish user fees for USCG National Vessel Documentation Center (NVDC) services. The USCG sets fees at an amount calculated to achieve recovery of the costs of providing the service. Each time you submit paperwork it must be reviewed and charges incur.

In accordance with Title 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations, [Subpart 67.500\(d\)](#) all application fees are non-refundable. The application fees are associated with reviewing the paperwork submitted to determine if it complies with regulatory and statutory requirements. It is not associated with actually getting a product.