

FORMAT #1: This is the current format that has been in use since January 1985. Note that this number may be preceded by a three-character code that indicates the country of manufacture. The country code is described below.

Format #1 (Current)	MMM	SSSSS	A	B	CC
Manufacturer's Identification Code (MIC) — Digits 1 to 3 e.g., CTY = Catalina, GND = Grand Banks, etc.					
Hull Serial Number — Digits 4 to 8					
Month of start of manufacture where: A=Jan B=Feb C=Mar D=Apr E=May F=Jun G=Jul H=Aug I=Sep J=Oct K=Nov L=Dec					
Year of start of manufacture as a number that is the last digit of the year. e.g., 9 for 1989 — Digit 10					
Model year — last 2 digits of the model year. e.g., 90 for 1990. — Digits 11 and 12					

FIGURE 2-1: Hull Identification Number in Current Use

FORMAT #2: Mostly used from the mid 1970s to the end of 1984 although the older format #3 was still used by some builders. Note only the last 4 digits are different from format #1; digits 1 through 8 remain the same.

Format #2 (Before Jan 1985)	MMM	SSSSS	M	84	D
Manufacturer's Identification Code (MIC) e.g., CTY = Catalina, GND = Grand Banks, etc.					
Hull Serial Number					
The 9th character is always M					
Characters 10 and 11 are the model year. 1984 is shown here.					
The last character (12) is the month in which building began: A=Jan B=Feb C=Mar D=Apr E=May F=Jun G=Jul H=Aug I=Sep J=Oct K=Nov L=Dec					

FIGURE 2-2: Hull Identification Number Pre-1985

OPERATOR QUALIFICATIONS

U.S. Qualifications Requirements

At present there are no federal requirements for noncommercial operation of a recreational boat. Some states have enacted licensing requirements that require passing an exam or showing proof of some form of boating education, from organizations such as the U.S. Power Squadrons or the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Most of those states will allow a visitor to operate a boat for up to 60 days before requiring licensing in that state.

States known to require some type of universal boater licensing are Alabama, American Samoa, Connecticut, Indiana, New Jersey, and Oregon (this list may not be inclusive), and many others are in the process of enacting legislation. Many additional states have education and licensing requirements for minors.

If the operator is carrying passengers for hire he must pass a U.S. Coast Guard exam and obtain a license. These licenses vary as to purpose, number of passengers, tonnage, and geographical area.

From the Passenger Vessel Safety Act of 1993:

Passenger for hire means a passenger for whom consideration is contributed as a condition of carriage on the vessel, whether directly or indirectly flowing to the owner, charterer, operator, agent, or any other person having an interest in the vessel.

Consideration means an economic benefit, inducement, right, or profit including pecuniary payment accruing to an individual, person, or entity, but not including a voluntary sharing of the actual expenses of the voyage, by monetary contribution or donation of fuel, food, beverage, or other supplies.

Thus passengers can volunteer to share expenses of a trip and not be considered passengers for hire.

Canada Qualifications Requirements

In Canada the operator requirements are federally mandated and apply in all Canadian waters.

Operator Competency Requirement—Canada

The operator competency requirements are being phased in over time and the following persons are required to show proof of competency.

Required Equipment	U.S. Regulations				Canada Regulations			
	<16ft <5m	16<26ft 5<8m	26<40ft 8<12m	40>65ft 12<20m	<6m <20ft	6<8m 20<26ft	8<12m 26<40ft	12<20m 40>65ft
Licenses	State Registration or documentation required on board, numbers or name on outside of boat.				License or registration required onboard. Numbers or name on outside of boat			
Wearable personal flotation devices (PFDs) or life jackets	One USCG approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD for each person on boat.				One CCG approved PFD or lifejacket for each person on boat.			
Throwable personal flotation devices (PFDs)	One Type IV throwable PFD in addition to the wearable PFD's				One buoyant heaving line > 15 m			
Canada — approved life-buoy diam. is 610 mm or 762 mm with buoyant line > 15 m long								
Fire extinguisher (hand held)	One B-I with enclosed spaces or permanent fuel tanks	Two B-I or One B-II	Three B-I or one B-II plus one B-II	One 5BC if in-board or fixed fuel tanks, or fuel burning appliance	One 5BC if power-driven & one 5BC if fuel burning appliance	One OR approved lifebuoy	AND approved lifebuoy	AND appr. lifebuoy w. light
Ventilation	All gasoline powered vessels with enclosed tanks or engine must have natural ventilation with at least 2 ventilation cowls as well as an approved exhaust blower. See note [2]				One 10BC at each location specified in note [1]			
Backfire flame arrester	On all gasoline engines except outboards				On gasoline engines in enclosed spaces			

TABLE 2-3: Required Equipment (Table 1 of 4)

Pyrotechnic Distress Signals

These are to be marked as U.S. Coast Guard approved and must not be older than the expiration date, although expired signals may be carried but cannot be counted toward the requirement. In table 2-8 the column labelled "Number Required" specifies the number of devices needed to qualify as one signal.

Visual Distress Signals: Canada**Pyrotechnic Distress Signals**

Type of Device	Height	Burn Time
A: Parachute—single red star	300 meters (984 ft)	40 seconds
B: Multi star—two red stars	100 meters (328 ft)	4 seconds
C: Handheld red flare		1 minute
D: Handheld smoke signal		3 minute

TABLE 2-9: *Pyrotechnic Distress Signals: Canada*

Pyrotechnic signals must be less than four years old from the marked date of manufacture. They must be approved by Canada Coast Guard, Transport Canada, or SOLAS. Types of pyrotechnic signals used in Canada are shown in table 2-9.

EQUIPMENT NOT LEGALLY REQUIRED**Essential Equipment**

Some items such as VHF radios are not required in either the United States or Canada on smaller vessels. Others are not required in the United States, although they are required in Canada.

Consider visual distress signals, which generally are not required where the body of water is less than 2 miles wide. It's going to be difficult to attract attention with only a sound signaling device if you are a mile off shore. A 3-foot-square orange flag a mile out isn't going to help much either, even though it meets the daytime visual signal requirement. Table 2-10 lists equipment items that could or should be considered essential equipment.

Equipment	Comments
VHF Radio	Acquire a VHF radio regardless of vessel size or type if you are operating in an area where VHF is in use. Even Kayakers have been rescued only because they had a hand held VHF with which to call for help.
First Aid Kit	Size and comprehensiveness depend on the nature of the voyage.
Orange Smoke Signals	For daytime use these will attract attention from a long way off far better than a flag.

and any means of discharge disconnected. Portable toilets are not permitted on Ontario waters.

CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

ENTERING AND LEAVING THE UNITED STATES

Entering the United States

Boats entering the United States must clear U.S. Customs and Immigration at a *Port of Entry* (POE). All persons aboard must present themselves and must have proof of citizenship identification, such as a passport or birth certificate. Driver's licenses are usually unacceptable.

Alternative means of reporting include using the OARS system, or having an I-68 Canadian Border Boat Landing Program form or having a NEXUS member proximity card. All three of these alternatives are described below.

Any vessel over 30 feet (9.1 m) must also have or must purchase a *customs decal* that is good for one year. Cost is \$25 for the year. At some ports vessels less than 30 feet may be required to purchase the decal since local rules can apply for customs as well as immigration.

Customs decals may be obtained by completing form CF-339V which can be obtained by:

- Calling Decal Inquiries at (317) 298-1200, ext. 1245
- From a local U.S. Customs port
- By downloadable form via the forms links on the right side of the web page: <http://www.customs.gov/travel/travel.htm>
- You can also apply online at the same website

It's a good idea to get the decal in advance since you could be subject to considerable delays getting one while entering at a POE. Also, you must have the decal if you plan on using the I-68 program or OARS system (both described below) for travel between the United States and Canada.

Leaving the United States

It is a little known fact that the captain of a boat leaving the United States must clear the vessel and all guests out of the country. In particular, any non-U.S. citizens aboard must be cleared by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization service. Failure to do so may result in the foreign citizen not being allowed to re-enter the United States and can also result in a large fine for the captain. Here is some wording from the regulation:

Lake Champlain, Champlain, POE Highway I87	518-298-7900
Lake Champlain, Rouses Point, POE Route #11	518-297-7521
Lake Champlain, Swanton, POE Highway I89	802-868-3349
Maine	
Border NB, Houlton, Route 95	207-532-2906
Vermont	
Border QB, Derby Line, I-91 South	802-373-3316

U.S. Canadian Border Outlying Area Reporting Stations (OARS)

The *Outlying Area Reporting Station (OARS)* was developed as an alternative to the I-68 program described above. Currently the OARS system is available only in INS regions east of Minnesota.

The OARS system allows persons arriving by boat from Canada to clear U.S. immigration by using one of approximately 30 videophones located at various docks and marinas. All persons on board the vessel must present themselves for inspection and clearance at the videophone. The applicant and the immigration officer can see and converse with each other and documents are presented to a document camera.

The OARS program uses videophones, typically located at public docks or marinas, which boaters may use to report to U.S. immigration inspectors.

The OARS system is suspended when the alert level is Orange or higher.

U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States, Canadian citizens, Landed Commonwealth Residents of Canada, and nationals of designated Visa Waiver Pilot Program countries with a valid, stamped I-94 or I-94W, Arrival/Departure Record are eligible to participate in this program. These locations change with time so call ahead to a nearby POE to verify the location still exists.

Locations of OARS Videophones

Minnesota—Lake of the Woods	
Northwest Angle	Grumpy's Resort
Northwest Angle	Young's Bay
Northwest Angle	Jim's Corner (Drive In)
Rainey Lake	Bohman's Landing (Land)
Michigan—Lake Huron	
Mackinac Island	Mackinac Island (not operational 15Aug03)
Ohio—Lake Erie	
Ashtabula	Ashtabula City Dock
Cleveland	East 55th Street Marina

for recreational boaters is that it allows boaters to enter the United States or Canada by placing a phone call in lieu of reporting in. All persons on board must have a NEXUS card for this to work, otherwise the boat must report in at a port of entry.

All the language quoted below is taken from a document titled Pleasure Boat Fact Sheet available at the Department of Homeland Security/Customs and Border Protection website at www.cbp.gov.

The NEXUS alternative inspection program allows pre-screened, low-risk travelers to be processed with little or no delay by United States and Canadian border officials. Approved applicants are issued a photo-identification/proximity card. Participants cross the border in a dedicated lane, where they present their membership identification and proximity card, and make a declaration. They are then released, unless chosen for a selective or random secondary referral.

A NEXUS member will have the benefit of the expedited processing in both marine and highway modes. Becoming a member of the NEXUS alternative inspection program simplifies border crossings for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. As NEXUS members, recreational boaters have the privilege of entering the United States from Canada for recreational purposes with only the need to report their arrival to CBP by placing a telephone call. Boaters can use their NEXUS membership in lieu of the I-68 for reporting purposes.

Who Qualifies for NEXUS?

Individuals may qualify to participate in NEXUS if they are a citizen or permanent resident of the United States or Canada, or are a non-permanent resident who can demonstrate a need to use the NEXUS lanes. However, individuals may not qualify if they:

- Are inadmissible to the United States or Canada under applicable immigration laws;
- Provide false or incomplete information on their application;
- Have been convicted of a criminal offense in any country for which they have not received a pardon;
- Have been found in violation of customs or immigration law; or
- Fail to meet other requirements of the NEXUS program.

To participate, an individual's application must be approved by both the United States and Canada. If an individual does not meet the requirements of the program, their application will be denied.

What are the Benefits of NEXUS?

Individuals approved to participate in NEXUS receive an identification card to use at the border that allows them to: