



March 10, 2025

Boat Identification Numbers

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Boat Identification Numbers

Reference Number: CTAS-690

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) issues certificates of number for boats. The TWRA also may authorize the county clerk to issue certificates of number for boats. The TWRA issues to the county clerk, a block of numbers and certificates, and upon issuance, the county clerk is entitled to a fee of twenty-five cents (25¢) for each certificate issued. All registration monies, except the twenty-five cents (25¢) fee allowed, must be remitted monthly to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission, on or before the 10th of each month. T.C.A. § 69-9-208.

All vessels propelled by sail or machinery, or both, on the waters of Tennessee are required to be numbered, except those set out in T.C.A. § 69-9-206:

1. A vessel with a valid document issued by the United States Bureau Of Customs or any successor federal agency must be registered with the TWRA but is not required to display numbers;
2. A vessel with a valid number issued by pursuant to federal law or a federally-approved numbering system of another state, unless Tennessee has become the state of principal use and the vessel has been in this state for more than sixty (60) days;
3. A vessel from another country temporarily using the waters of this state;
4. A vessel used in public service and owner by the United States government or a state or political subdivision thereof;
5. A ship's lifeboat;
6. A motorboat belonging to a class of boats which has been exempted by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission;
7. A vessel owned by a volunteer rescue squad and used solely for emergency or rescue work.

All exempt vessels must prominently display identification by name on the vessel. T.C.A. § 69-9-206. A violation of the boat registration laws is a Class C misdemeanor. T.C.A. § 69-9-219.

Certificates are valid for one (1) year, or upon application of the owner, up to three (3) years. The fees for certificates of number are set out in T.C.A. § 69-9-207.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission issues rules and regulations governing the numbering of boats, including regulations for the issuance of special registration numbers for use by boat manufacturers and dealers for demonstration and transportation purposes, and the issuance of special numbers to the owners of fleets of boats for hire or rent. T.C.A. § 69-9-209.

Source URL: <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/boat-identification-numbers>