

# REGISTRATION

## General Guidelines

California law requires all vessels to be registered and numbered except:

- Boats propelled manually
- Boats eight feet or less in length propelled solely by sail
- Certain vessels owned by public agencies
- Vessels documented by the Coast Guard
- Foreign vessels
- Ship's lifeboats used solely for lifesaving purposes
- Vessels having valid registration in the state of principal use and not remaining in California over 90 consecutive days
- Sailboards

These guidelines include vessels that are moored, whether or not they are used.

## How to Register

Application to register a vessel may be made at any office of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Upon receipt of the required information and fees, DMV will issue you a Certificate of Number and Certificate of Ownership. The boat registration number is the number (beginning with CF) shown on the certificates.

**Certificate of Number:** The Certificate of Number, or temporary Certificate of Number, must be available for inspection on the vessel whenever it is being used on the water. You are required to properly display the current registration stickers on your vessel next to the CF number to permit enforcement officers to determine, without boarding, that the vessel is currently registered.

**Mussel Fee:** California registered recreational vessels using fresh water bodies within the state are required to display a "Mussel Fee Paid" sticker on the hull next to the current registration sticker. Paying the Mussel Fee does not entitle vessels to bypass inspections or fees for inspections conducted by individual reservoir owners or managers.

**Certificate of Ownership:** Keep your Certificate of Ownership in a safe place—this is your evidence of title to the vessel. Certificates issued will also contain the boat's identifying number (known as the hull identification number), which is the number permanently marked on the transom by the manufacturer or builder, or the number assigned by DMV and marked on the transom by the owner. An application for transfer of ownership can be found on the reverse side of the Certificate of Ownership.

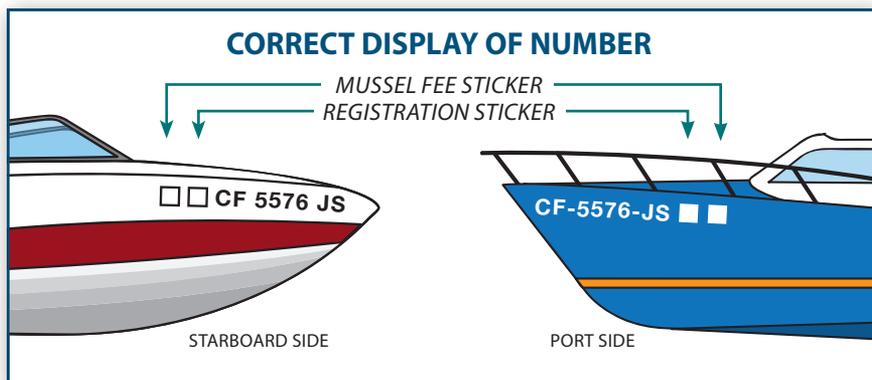
**Taxes:** After you register, your vessel may be subject to a use tax based on the purchase price if it was acquired out of state or from a private party. For additional information regarding use taxes, contact your local Board of Equalization or DMV office.

Although DMV is responsible for the collection of biennial vessel registration fees, boat owners may still be subject to annual local or county taxes. Boats are subject to personal property taxes assessed by the assessor in the county where your boat is principally located. Failure to pay personal property taxes assessed on a boat may result in the nonrenewal of your boat's registration. Questions concerning taxes on boats should be directed to your county assessor. Registration fee information can be found at [dmv.ca.gov/vr/fees/vessels.htm](http://dmv.ca.gov/vr/fees/vessels.htm).

## Display of Numbers and Stickers

Along with your boat registration number, DMV will also issue you a set of registration stickers. Numbers and stickers issued at the time of registration must be placed on each side of the forward half of the vessel, usually on the bow (see the figures below). Registration stickers must be securely affixed three inches aft of, and in line with, the registration numbers. The number must be visible from each side of the vessel. No other numbers, letters or devices may be placed in the vicinity of the state-assigned number.

- To separate the numerals from the letters, spaces the width of the letter "C" or hyphens may be used between the prefix and the number, and between the number and the suffix.
- Letters and numerals must be block characters at least three inches high. Choose a color for the letters and numbers that will contrast well with the hull or backing plate color of your vessel. In determining height and contrast, any border, trim, outlining or shading around the number shall not be considered.
- If placement on a flared bow would make the number difficult to read, it should be affixed on some other part of the forward half of the vessel where it can be easily read.
- For PWCs, the numbers and stickers must also be affixed on each side of the forward half of the vessel on a non-removable portion of the hull.
- On inflatable boats or vessels so configured that a number will not properly adhere or cannot be clearly seen, it should be painted on or attached to a backing plate, along with the registration sticker.



**PERSONAL WATERCRAFT**

## NUMBERS AND STICKERS



The law also requires that a set of carbon monoxide warning stickers be placed on the transom and helm of all new and used motorized boats sold in California. For more information, see the section on carbon monoxide on page 16 of this booklet.

**Emission Standards**

New vessels purchased in California with sterndrive or inboard spark-ignition marine engines below 500 horsepower manufactured on or after Jan 1, 2008, *and* vessels with engines of any rated power output manufactured on or after Jan 1, 2009, must have a permanently affixed label indicating that the engine meets or exceeds specified 2008 California emissions standards. These engines are also required to be accompanied by a hang tag that must be submitted with the initial application for a number by either the retail seller or the purchaser in order to receive a number from DMV.

**Notification Requirements**

You are required to notify DMV in writing whenever any of the following takes place:

1. Your vessel has been destroyed or abandoned. This notice must be given within 15 days and be accompanied by the Certificate of Number and Certificate of Ownership.
2. Your address has changed. This notice must be given within 15 days.
3. You sell your vessel. This notice must be provided within five calendar days and must include the date of sale, a description of the vessel, and the name and address of the new owner. Registration forms may be obtained from any local DMV office or authorized registration agent or by writing:

**California Department of Motor Vehicles**  
**Attn: Registration Processing Units**  
**P.O. Box 942869**  
**Sacramento, CA 94269-0001**