

Frequently Asked Questions on Documented Boats

What are documented boats?

A vessel must measure at least five net tons and must be wholly owned by a citizen of the United States and be registered with the U.S. Coast Guard.



How do I know if the vessel measures five net tons?

Net tonnage is a measure of a vessel's volume. It should not be confused with a vessel's weight. Most vessels more than 25 feet in length will measure five net tons or more.

Is a documented vessel exempt from state jurisdiction?

No, all documented vessels must comply with the laws of the state in which they are operated. The document must be shown to state law personnel upon their demand. States may require documented vessels to be registered (but not numbered) and to display state decals showing that they have complied with state requirements.

Are Documented Boats tax exempt?

No. Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 132.020 State Ad Valorem Taxes section (13) states, "An ad valorem tax for state purposes of one and one-half cents (\$0.015) per one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed value shall (i.e., MUST) be paid on federally documented vessels not used in the business of transporting persons or property for compensation or hire, or for other commercial purposes." In addition, KRS 132.200 Property subject to state tax only. "all property subject to taxation for state purposes shall also be subject to taxation in the county, city, school, or other taxing district in which it has a taxable situs except ... and the following classes of property, which shall be subject to taxation for state purposes only: (20) Federally documented vessels not used in the business of transporting persons or property for hire or other commercial purposes, if an exemption is approved by the county, city, school, or other taxing district in which the federally documented boat has its taxable situs;

How long is the certificate of documentation good?

A Certificate of Documentation is valid for one year from the date of issue, provided there are NO CHANGES other than a change of owner's address. The Certificate must be renewed on an annual basis. There is no fee for an annual renewal.

Where did you get the information to assess my documented boat?

The “Merchant Vessels of the United States” (CG 408) lists the names of U.S. merchant and recreational vessels documented under the laws of the United States. It provides vessel dimensions, tonnage, build (if available), and ownership information.

What are the Vessel Name and Hailing Port marking requirements?

Documented boats do not display their official numbers on the outside of the hull, but are identified by the name and hailing port. The application for documentation must include a name for the vessel composed of letters of the Latin alphabet or Arabic or Roman numerals and may not exceed 33 characters. There is no rule against duplication of names for documented vessels, so hailing ports are helpful in identifying vessels.

To find out more about documented boats, double click on the United States Coast Guard logo below.

