



National Vessel Documentation Center / US Coast Guard News - 2025

By: Katherine Henard

Currently, U.S. Coast Guard processing times are around two months, a significant improvement over the last couple of years. The Coast Guard has added more processors, which has further streamlined processing. However, once you receive your document, be sure to carefully review everything—yes, even the spelling of your name!

Hull numbers should be carefully checked as well. Whether you're purchasing a vessel or already own one, verifying the Hull Identification Number (HIN) on the boat is an important step. Compare what is affixed to the vessel with all ownership documents (including state) - This includes those tricky tenders too!

While processing appears to be seamless and efficient, requesting priority filings for recreational vessels has become more challenging, as the USCG is currently prioritizing commercial vessels. If you plan to travel into foreign waters, make sure to check with the port of entry for each country and obtain a list of required paperwork. Additionally, ensure that your Certificate of Documentation is current and accurate, as you'll need to present that at all ports of entry.

In September, the American Vessel Documentation Association met in Boston, MA, to discuss industry news, NVDC updates, and a range of other topics. One of the key discussions centered around e-notaries and remote notarization. While these tools can be helpful when in-person notarization isn't possible, there is still no clear consensus on their viability. When executed properly and with the right safeguards, the Coast Guard has been known to accept these documents. However, if you need to use them for state purposes—such as title transfers, registration, or tax payments—you may encounter issues. Most states still require documents to be signed with a "wet ink" signature and notarized in person. The best advice for using remote notaries is to ensure that the documents will be accepted wherever and however they are executed.

Like most things, there will always be hiccups. It's our goal to help guide and assist so that when you hit the throttle and go, you are in for a smooth ride.