



National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Policy Position on Harmonizing Data Terminology

Date: September 8, 2008

Committee: Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling

Background

Title 46 of the United States Code contains provisions, in chapter 123, for the numbering of undocumented vessels equipped with propulsion machinery of any kind, which primarily include recreational boats and some types of commercial vessels. Vessels must carry an identification number issued in compliance with the Standard Numbering System (SNS) maintained by the U. S. Coast Guard. All states administer their own numbering programs if those programs comply with SNS requirements and receive Coast Guard approval.

At the direction of Congress, the Coast Guard developed a vessel identification system (VIS) to share individual states' vessel information as well as information on federally documented vessels. With such a system, the Coast Guard and state law enforcement officials are more effectively able to identify information on vessels in our nation's ports and waterways — the need for which has heightened since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Under the authority of Title 46, United States Code, the Coast Guard has the responsibility to collect, analyze and publish annual statistical information obtained from recreational vessel numbering and casualty reporting systems.

While the three data collection systems use similar information, there are differences in terminology among them.

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Policy

NASBLA supports a rulemaking that would amend the Coast Guard's rules on states' numbering of undocumented vessels and on the reporting of accidents to harmonize terminology governing the Standard Numbering System, the Vessel Identification System, and the Casualty or Accident Report. This uniformity would assist with better collection of data, allow users to process the data more efficiently, and improve the user's ability to analyze the data to more effectively to prevent boating accidents.

Policy References

NASBLA Model Act for Vessel Titling