

Boat Registration in Florida

By Keith Wohltman U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 95

MARCO ISLAND, FL – Registering a boat is like registering a car. In Florida, all motorized boats used on Florida's public waterways must be registered. There are few exemptions, such as U.S. Government owned boats; boats used strictly as lifeboats; and non-resident boats used for 90 days or less on Florida's public waterways. Other exemptions are non-motorized boats that are less than 16 feet; non-motorized kayaks, canoes, racing shells, or rowing skulls of any length; and boats used exclusively on private lakes or ponds.



The Florida Certificate of Registration and Validation Decal to are issued by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. You have 30 days from the time you purchase a boat to obtain the registration. During that period, you must carry the purchase receipt with you when operating the boat.

Registration is done in person or by mail by submitting the required information and fee to your county tax collector's office. On Marco Island, the tax collector's office is located at 1040 Winterberry Drive. Hours of operation are Monday - Friday 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. You need a completed registration application, a manufacturer's statement of origin (MSO) or equivalent, a sales receipt showing you paid any required sales tax and a fee payment. The MSO will be included with your boat's papers if buying a new boat. That information will be included on the previous owner's title if you are purchasing a used boat and transferring the title. The MSO includes the Hull Identification Number (HIN), similar to a car's VIN, and the engine serial numbers.

You must keep the Certificate of Registration on board whenever you operate the boat.

Displaying your registration and validation decal:

- You must display the registration numbers on the left and right sides of the bow (forward part) of your boat.
- These numbers must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise attached to the boat.
- They must be maintained in legible condition.
- The numbers must read from left to right on both sides of the boat.
- Numbers must be at least 3 inches high in bold **BLOCK** lettering in a color that contrasts with the background color of your boat.
- Letters must be separated from the numbers by a hyphen or a space equal to one letter width, as displayed here: **FL 1234 AB** or **FL-1234-AB**.
- The validation decal, from your registration, must be attached to the port (left) side of the boat within 6 inches of the registration numbers.



Image courtesy of boaterexam.com

Other important points to know:

- Boats must be registered and numbered within **30 days** of purchase.
- The Certification of Registration is valid for one or two years. Renewal period begins on the first day of the owner's birth month.
- The owner of a registered boat must notify the county tax collector within 30 of a change in address.
- The owner of a registered boat must notify the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles within 30 days if the boat is sold, stolen, lost,

abandoned or destroyed. Form **HSMV 82050** must be submitted if you sell your boat. The form is available at the Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles website <https://www.flhsmv.gov/>

- If your boat has a current registration in another U.S. State or territory, you may operate it in Florida for **90 days** before you are required to register it here.
- Larger recreational boats (5 tons or over) have the option of being documented by the US Coast Guard. Documented boats operating on Florida waters must have a current boat registration from Florida or another state. To be documented a boat must be owned by an American citizen or an American corporation. The captain and officers must be American citizens also. Crew members do not have to be citizens.

For more information about safe boating courses Joe Riccio, (239)-384-7416 or CGAUXCOURSES@GMAIL.COM.

To schedule your **FREE** Vessel Safety Check, please call: **John Moyer**, (239)-248-7078 or Coast Guard Auxiliary Station – Flotilla 95, (239) 394-5911 or email John at jmoyer1528@aol.com.

For those interested in joining Flotilla 95, USCG Auxiliary, please call Bob Shmihluk at (215) – 694-3305

Staff Officer John Moyer from Flotilla 95 checks the boat registration during a free Vessel Safety Inspection - photo by Keith Wohltman