

**HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS:  
17 CHARACTERS TO BE STUDIED  
ON A TRIAL BASIS**

A National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC) subcommittee has been established for the purpose of studying the feasibility of changing the present 12 character Hull Identification Number (HIN) format to an HIN consisting of 17 characters.

The five additional characters would indicate boat length, hull material, principal form of propulsion, boat configuration and a check digit to make alteration of any characters in the HIN more difficult. Like the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) displayed on automobiles, many in law enforcement consider the proposed 17 character HIN a useful tool in tracing stolen boats.

The American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) agreed to develop a 17 character HIN standard and incorporate it into the NMMA certification program on a trial basis for the 1990 model year. The trial program will provide the Coast Guard with specific information concerning whether calculation of the extra digits is reasonable and practicable at the factory level and the additional time required to determine an HIN for each boat. The trial program will also introduce the 17 character HIN concept to the industry and provide a sound basis for public comment at a later date.

Most Federal regulations which prescribe labelling requirements are considered "information collections" under the Paperwork Reduction Act. Each "information collection" must be approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The trial program will also help the Coast Guard estimate possible costs to and burdens of a longer HIN: data which must be obtained before seeking OMB approval for an amendment to the regulations.

Under the existing Hull Identification Number format, each HIN must be 12 consecutive characters with no spaces, hyphens or slashes between them. The existing regulations do not prohibit a manufacturer from displaying a 17 character HIN. However, as with any additional information displayed within two inches of the HIN, the five additional characters would have to be separated from the 12 character HIN by means of borders or on a separate label.

*ABYC Standard T-10 - Hull Identification Numbers* will be published as a final standard in approximately four months. Persons interested in obtaining a copy should send \$3.00 (which

covers postage and handling) to: American Boat and Yacht Council, Inc., P.O. Box 747, Millersville, MD 21108.

**COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY  
VESSEL SAFETY ACT OF 1988**

Commercial fishing is now one of the most dangerous industries in the United States. On the average, 84 fishermen die and 250 fishing vessels are total losses each year. The Coast Guard investigates 1100 marine casualties involving fishing vessels each year. A lack of comprehensive regulatory safety requirements has been perceived as a contributing cause of this high casualty rate. Commercial fishing is the only major marine commercial industry for which inspection, licensing, operation and equipment regulations, other than for basic safety equipment, are essentially non-existent.

On September 9, 1988, 46 U.S.C. 45 (Uninspected Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels, Sections 4501 through 4508) was amended by the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-424). The Act requires safety regulations, studies of licensing and inspection issues, and the establishment of a Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Advisory Committee, all provided in an effort to greatly improve safety in this dangerous industry.

On the surface, the fact that the Act was passed should not have any bearing in the area of recreational boating. However, some recreational boaters do, in fact, use their vessels as "occasional commercial fishing vessels," and in doing so, subject themselves to the applicable provisions of the new Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act. Also, vessels that alternate between recreational use and commercial use must comply with the requirements for the service in which they are engaged. Manufacturers of vessels that may be used in commercial fishing operations should be aware of the various safety provisions incorporated into the Act.

On December 29, 1988, the Coast Guard published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in the Federal Register [53 FR 52735] requesting comments on proposed standards for Uninspected Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels. The comment period closed February 27, 1989 (before this issue of the Boating Safety Circular was published). However, a copy of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act and a copy of the ANPRM may be obtained from Commandant (G-MFH), Room 1218, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 2100 2nd Street SW, Washington, DC 20593-0001.

# CONSUMER AFFAIRS

## U.S. CUSTOMS SMUGGLING AWARENESS PROGRAM

BOATERS AND MARINA OWNERS CAN HELP STOP DRUG SMUGGLING. The U.S. Customs Service has established a program to encourage the marine community to have a heightened awareness of drug activities. The program provides local citizens an easy method and opportunity to give information about smuggling to Customs while remaining anonymous by calling 1-800- BE-ALERT.

## CASH AWARDS

Customs will pay cash awards ranging from \$250 to \$2,500 for anonymous information, or up to \$250,000 to a documented confidential source, for information leading to the arrest and conviction of drug smugglers or to the seizure of illegal drugs or conveyances used in drug smuggling.

## HOW TO DETECT A SMUGGLER

United States Customs wants the local marine community to be on the lookout for potential drug smugglers. It lists the following characteristics, found to be common among marine smuggling operations, that are worthy of arousing suspicion:

- Boats purchased with large cash payments.
- Immediate demands for electronics equipment or repairs without regard to cost.
- Loading or unloading activity dockside at unusual hours.
- Boats changed in internal configuration, i.e., raised decks, no access to bilges, fuel tanks added or modified, construction of concealed compartments, or modified bulkheads.
- Immediate repairs or modifications demanded without regard to cost.
- A false water line.

- Improper or false registration.
- Tow vehicle equipped to haul excessive loads or modified with heavy duty bracing and tires.
- Tow vehicle and trailer coming from somewhere other than the normal designated parking areas.
- Communications between a boat and a shore vehicle by unusual means, i.e., lights, flags, etc.
- Boat riding excessively low in the water.



**YOU  
CAN HELP!  
REPORT  
DRUG SMUGGLING  
TO  
U.S. CUSTOMS  
1 (800) BE ALERT**

## TO REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY—CALL 1-800-BE-ALERT

By taking these few simple steps to report suspicious activity to Customs, boaters will not only remain anonymous but also perform a great service to preserve and protect the marine community. Customs advises:

**Be Alert!** Write down the date, time, and location of activity. Take extra care to note any registration numbers or distinctive features of the suspects.

**Be Accurate!** Call Customs toll free number - 1-800-BE ALERT—any day—24 hours a day. Tell the officer that you have information about narcotics smuggling. Ask for a special caller identification code number which will protect your identity. Give an accurate account of your information to the Customs Officer.

**Follow Through!** Call Customs again at 1-800-BE-ALERT ten days after your initial contact. Identify yourself by your assigned code. At this time you can learn if any action resulted from your information and if so, you can arrange for payment of your cash reward.

## INDIVIDUALS CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Each person can make a difference. Participation in this vital program can be a big first step in securing a safe, drug-free marine community.

## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDUSTRY

With the number of recreational boats rising every year, the need for boater education is more apparent than ever. Here is where marine dealers and marina owners can make a difference and make friends.

Dealers are the first point of contact, especially with the new boater. This is the time to suggest a boating safety course and a courtesy marine examination. If you are a dealer or marina owner, you are encouraged to contact the Coast Guard Auxiliary about sponsoring an Auxiliary BOATING SKILLS AND SEAMANSHIP or SAILING AND SEAMANSHIP course.

The Auxiliary courtesy marine examination (CME) is another form of boating education which dealers can recommend. A CME is a check of the required boating safety equipment — PFD's, flares, and so forth. If a boat fails there is no penalty. Only the boater is told so the craft can be brought into compliance. If it passes it gets a widely-recognized Auxiliary Seal of Safety decal.

Or perhaps you would like to participate in the Auxiliary Marine Dealer Visitation program. An Auxiliary will visit your showrooms quarterly to tell you about the latest boating safety developments in regulations and programs — and to keep you supplied with boating safety literature to share with your customers. Your name and address will be placed on the Coast Guard master mailing list and you'll receive such helpful publications as the BOATING SAFETY CIRCULAR and all CONSUMER FACT SHEETS. You will also receive a colorful "Cooperating Marine Dealer" decal for your window or door to show your concern and your special boating safety knowledge.

If you would like to sponsor a class or a CME station, or become a Participating Marine Dealer, contact your local Auxiliary unit or call the Coast Guard Boating Safety Hotline toll free: 800-368-5647.

### RECALL OF "CAT TRAX" CATAMARAN BEACH DOLLIES

Florida Sailcraft, Inc., 1601 N.E. 18th Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida is recalling approximately 600 of its "Cat Trax" catamaran beach dollies due to defective tires which may explode if they are over inflated. The "Cat Trax" product, which is designed to ease launching a catamaran sailboat from soft sand, mud or rocky shores, consists of two all-terrain rubber tires mounted on an axle with plastic bearings. The wheels on "Cat Trax" products manufactured between April 28, 1987 and March 7, 1988 are mounted on eight inch aluminum pins. The tires on these particular wheels may explode if they are over inflated.

Owners of "Cat Trax" products who want to find out whether a particular unit is defective and subject to recall, may call the manufacturer at 1-800-292-9777 (In Fla. the number is 305-561-9777).