

Be Aware of Third Party Documentation Service Providers

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A recreational boat, owned by a U.S. citizen, may (at the option of the owner) be documented if it has a displacement of 5 or more net tons. The main benefit of documentation, versus numbering, is that a documented vessel may be the subject of a Preferred Ship Mortgage under 46 United States Code Chapter 313. This makes financing easier. Another benefit is that the certificate of documentation may make customs entry and clearance easier in foreign ports. Documentation does not get you out of any taxes.

There is a scam going on where a third party claims to renew documentations for two years. A Certificate of Documentation is valid for one year from the date of issue, providing there are NO CHANGES other than a change of owner's address. The Certificate must be renewed on an annual basis. Even though it is up to the owner to assure the document does not expire, the Coast Guard will send a Notice of Renewal to the managing owner approximately 45 days prior to expiration.

The U.S. Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center (NVDC), located in Falling Waters, West Virginia, is the only entity authorized to issue Certificates of Documentation (CODs), Form CG1270, valid for a period of one year from date of issuance. This document is required for vessels engaged in Commercial trade and is optional for vessels five net tons and over engaged in recreational use/activities.

The NVDC is aware that there are commercial entities that offer to manage the certification/renewal process on behalf of vessel owners for a fee. The Coast Guard does not endorse any of these companies, and the companies do not operate on behalf of the Coast Guard in any way. Any fees charged beyond the \$26 renewal fee, to include other fees found in Title 46 CFR 67.550, or other agreements offered by such companies are in no way associated with the NVDC certification process. In addition, these companies are not authorized to issue any form of documentation, including travel letters and/or permits that authorize operation of ANY vessel.

If you are interested in conducting business directly with NVDC you should visit the official Coast Guard website at: <http://www.uscg.mil/nvdc/>. NOTE: The only legitimate Coast Guard website offering documentation uses a ".mil" domain name. Web domains using ".us," ".com," ".org" are not authorized.

To obtain official forms, visit the USCG NVDC website or contact NVDC at (800) 799-8362 or (304) 271-2400. Phone hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; phones are not manned on Thursdays. Application packages and documents eligible for filing (in .pdf format) can be e-mailed to nvdc.pdf.filing@uscg.mil or faxed to (304) 271-2405. COD Renewal requests (Form CG-1280) are accepted via vdc-pf-nvdc renewals@uscg.mil with credit card payment of \$26.00 via Form CG-7042.

You can order the following products online: Renewals (Form CG-1280), Late Renewals (Form CG-1280), Abstract of Title (Form CG-7043) and Certified Copy of COD (Form CG-7043) requests. From the main page, follow the "Order Products Online" link. The Fee Schedule can be found here: <http://www.uscg.mil/nvdc/instr/fee%20sch.pdf>

You are encouraged to register to receive notices and updates via e-mail by utilizing NVDC's email subscription service. From the main page, follow the "Subscribe to NVDC Information" link. Please report any issues to the NVDC Webmaster. Customer complaints regarding false service providers can be made through the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) website at <http://www.ftc.gov/>.

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