

Legacy HIN Survey

What is a legacy HIN?

A legacy HIN is any hull identification number associated with a given boat that is different from what is recorded on its current registration. A legacy HIN could be a HIN that was incorrectly assigned by the manufacturer; a HIN incorrectly entered on a prior registration and/or title document; or even a valid HIN that has since been replaced with a state-issued HIN.

Why this this important

As you know, a boat's hull identification number (HIN) is a critical piece of information that enables boat manufacturers, registration & titling professionals, insurance companies and law enforcement to identify a specific vessel regardless of where it is located or who owns it. Like an individual's social security number, it is a distinct ID intended to remain with a boat throughout its lifetime.

Provided a boat's HIN is recorded correctly and consistently, one can accurately track a boat from the time it is first put in service to the time it is scrapped, even if it has had multiple owners in different states. Among other things, having correct HINs helps to reduce theft and fraud. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For instance:

- Some manufacturers have assigned invalid HINs to their boats. Others may have assigned valid HINs but they were not permanently affixed to the hull and have since fallen off.
- Some HINs have been removed either intentionally (to hide their identity) or unintentionally (someone refurbishing a boat might remove its HIN not realizing its importance).
- A state may have issued a state-assigned HIN not realizing the boat already had a valid HIN.
- The primary culprit is human error. With 12 alpha-numeric characters, some of which are easily confused, typos and transposition errors are very common when HINs are entered into registration systems.

In an ideal world, there would be no legacy HINs but since we know they exist, we need a means by which to establish a link between a boat's current (presumably correct) HIN and any prior HINs associated with that boat. Knowing what, if anything, your state does to record legacy HINs, will help us to better understand what the challenges are and how to best address them.