



MARINE VESSEL THEFT AND FRAUD: ***Dock It and Lock It***

The Facts

Boat theft and fraud are big business costing their owners and insurance companies millions of dollars annually. Like stolen motor vehicles, stolen boats are frequently sold on the black market or to unsuspecting consumers.

Every recreational marine vessel made or imported for sale in the United States after August 1, 1972 is required to have a Hull Identification Number (HIN). These 12-character identifiers contain a wealth of information for manufacturers, law enforcement agencies and organizations like the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) involved in stopping fraud and theft.

With very few exceptions, all motorboats must have a registration number located on the forward part of the boat. While every state requires vessels to be registered before they can legally operate on their waters, not all states require vessels to be titled prior to registration. Non-titling states create an opportunity for vessel insurance and title fraud. Check with your insurer to determine if your state requires a vessel title prior to registration.

Fraud Indicators

- Before purchasing a boat, make sure its HIN exactly matches the HIN listed on the registration and/or title.
- A vessel registered or titled as a home-built boat should have no manufacturer brand markings.
- Carefully review the vessel and its ownership paperwork for these fraud indicators:
- The boat has been rebuilt, previously reported stolen, sunk or recovered.
- The title or proof of ownership is a duplicate issue or from out of state.
- Registration numbers appear altered or are not uniform.
- The asking price is well below the market value.
- Do not purchase any vessel if the seller is unable to produce title or proof of ownership.

Fraud and Theft Prevention Tips

- Install a kill switch in the ignition system.
- Install an alarm system especially designed for boats.
- Secure your boat to the dock with a locked steel cable.
- Use a trailer hitch lock after parking a boat on its trailer.
- Park your trailer in a locked garage, secured boat storage facility or well lit, fenced area
- Park the trailer so that the hitch is difficult to reach.
- Use a high-quality chain and lock to secure boat and trailer to a fixed object, such as a tree.
- Chain and lock detachable outboard motors to the boat.
- Take photos or videotape of your boat and equipment for documentation.
- Ensure your marine insurance policy includes your equipment, boat and trailer.
- Maintain a copy of your registration and boat title.
- Remove keys and registration papers when leaving the boat.
- Remove expensive equipment when the boat is not in use.
- Lock cabins, doors and windows when the board is not in use.

IF YOU SUSPECT INSURANCE FRAUD OR THEFT, SPEAK UP! CALL THE NICB TOLL-FREE HOTLINE...1.800.TEL.NICB (1.800.835.6422). YOUR CALL IS FREE. YOUR CALL CAN BE ANONYMOUS. YOU COULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR A REWARD.