



## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Pacific Islands  
Regional Office

## Compliance Guide

# Vessel Identification Requirements Western Pacific Pelagic Fishing

revised June 20, 2012

This guide provides information for fishermen on how to comply with revised vessel identification requirements in the western and central Pacific. This information applies only to the final rule published in the *Federal Register* on January 21, 2010 (75 FR 3416), and corrected on February 18, 2010 (75 FR 7204).

Requirements can change. Fishermen must familiarize themselves with recent changes and are responsible to comply with them. Conflicts will be resolved in favor of the requirements published in the *Federal Register* and in the Code of Federal Regulations. This compliance guide is issued in accordance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996: Title II of Public Law 104-121.

### Q1. Who is affected by the requirements?

The requirements directly affect owners and captains of U.S. vessels that are registered by NMFS to fish for pelagic management unit species, and that fish on the high seas in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO).

### Q2. When did the requirements take effect and for how long are they effective?

The requirements are effective from April 21, 2010, until they are revised or removed by NMFS.

### Q3. What are the changes to the requirements?

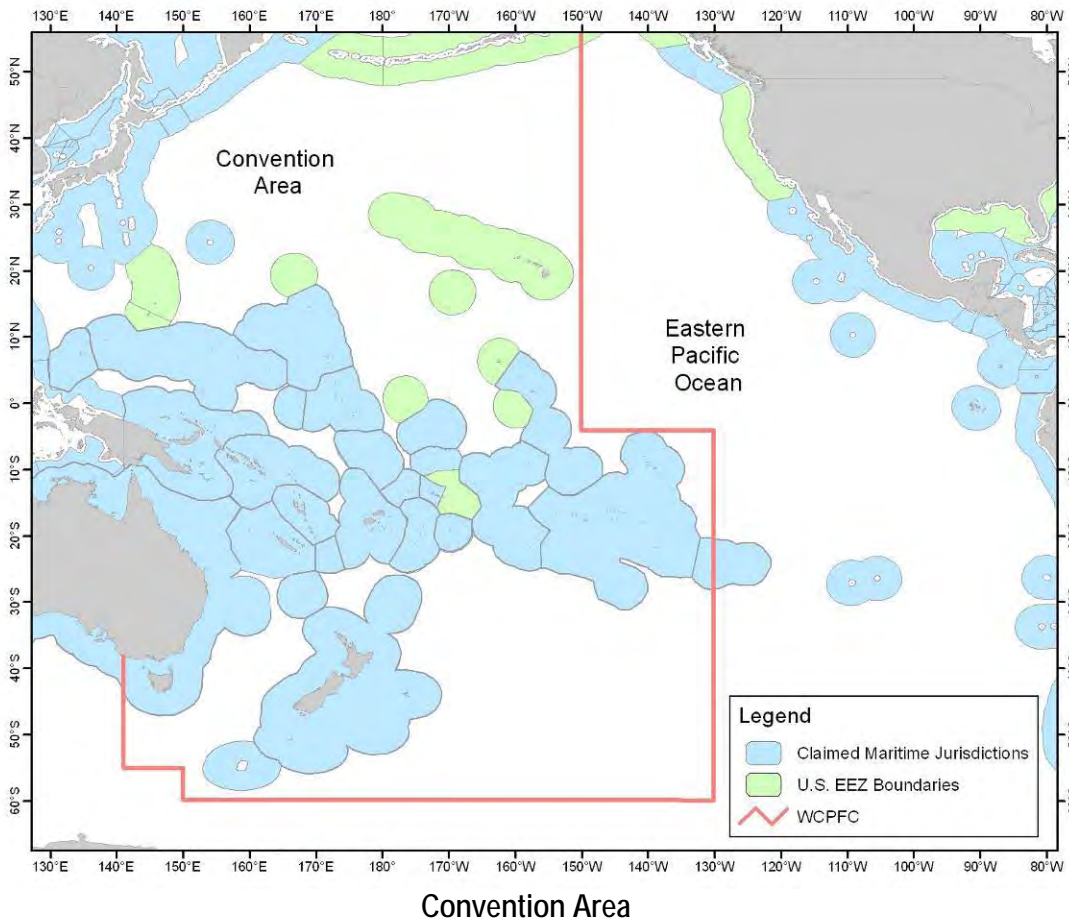
Previously, each federally-registered fishing vessel in the western and central Pacific was required to display its official number (U.S. Coast Guard documentation or other registration number). The new requirements require vessels registered to fish for pelagic management unit species that fish on the high seas within the area of application of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (Convention Area, [see Q5 below](#)) to be identified according to international requirements for the WCPO ([see Q6 below](#)).

#### Q4. What is the purpose of the requirements?

The requirements make federal vessel identification requirements consistent with international requirements for the WCPO, which are based on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations “Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels,” which is emerging as the standard around the world. The United States must ensure that U.S. pelagic fishing vessels operating in the Convention Area comply with the provisions of the Convention.

#### Q5. What is the Convention Area?

The Convention Area comprises the majority of the western and central Pacific Ocean. For a complete description, see the definition of “Convention Area” at [50 CFR 300.211](#).



#### Q6. How do I know which vessel identification requirements to follow?

Use the following key. Answer each question and follow the links to end up at the appropriate set of requirements.

##### 1. What type of western Pacific federal fishing permit do you have?

- Pelagic (longline, squid jig, PRIA troll & handline)..... Go to 2.
- Other (bottomfish, crustacean, precious coral, coral reef) ..... See requirements under 3.A.

2. Do you fish on the high seas of the Convention Area?

- No .....See requirements under 3.B.
- Yes.....See requirements under 3.C.

3. Vessel identification requirements:

3.A. Non-WCPO	3.B. Option	3.C. High seas in WCPO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The vessel’s official number must be displayed on port and starboard sides of deckhouse or hull, and on an appropriate weather deck, to be visible from enforcement vessels and aircraft.</li> <li>○ For fishing and receiving vessels 19.8 m (65 ft) or longer, official number must be displayed in block Arabic numerals at least 45.7 cm (18 inches) high. Exception: vessels in precious coral fisheries 19.8 m (65 ft) or longer must be marked in block Arabic numerals at least 35.6 cm (14 inches) high.</li> <li>○ For all other vessels, official number must be displayed in block Arabic numerals at least 25.4 cm (10 inches) high.</li> <li>○ Official number must be clearly legible and in good repair, and no part of vessel, rigging, or fishing gear may obstruct view of official number from enforcement vessel or aircraft.</li> <li>○ Markings must be legible and of a color that contrasts with background.</li> <li>○ See <a href="#">Q10 for exemptions</a>.</li> <li>○ See <a href="#">50 CFR 665.16</a> for detailed requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vessel may be identified according to requirements in either 3.A (Non-WCPO) <u>or</u> 3.C (High seas in WCPO).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The international radio call sign (IRCS), if one has been assigned to the vessel, must be displayed. If IRCS has not been assigned, the official number preceded by the characters “USA” and a hyphen (i.e., “USA-”) must be displayed.</li> <li>○ Markings must be on port and starboard sides of hull or superstructure, and on a deck surface.</li> <li>○ The vessel name, hailing port, and required identification markings are the only letters and numbers allowed on the hull and superstructure.</li> <li>○ Block lettering and numbering must be used.</li> <li>○ Markings must be:               <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;"> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px 10px; display: inline-block;"><b>WHITE ON BLACK</b></div>                      or  <div style="background-color: white; color: black; padding: 2px 10px; display: inline-block;"><b>BLACK ON WHITE</b></div> </div> </li> <li>○ <a href="#">See Q7 for detailed size requirements for marking</a>.</li> <li>○ Markings and background must be maintained in good condition at all times.</li> <li>○ Markings must not extend below the waterline, be obscured by fishing gear, and be clear of flow from scuppers or overboard discharges.</li> </ul>

**Q7. What are the size requirements for letters and numbers in required vessel identification markings for the high seas in the WCPO?**

- The height (*h*) of the letters and numbers marked on decks must be at least 0.3 m (11.8 inches).
- The height (*h*) of the letters and numbers marked on the hull or superstructure must be in proportion to vessel size, as follows:

Vessel Length	Minimum Height of Letters and Numbers
Over 25 m (> 82 ft).....	1.0 m (39.4 inches)
20-25 m (65.5 – 82 ft) .....	0.8 m (31.5 inches)
15-20 m (49.2 – 65.5 ft) .....	0.6 m (23.6 inches)
12-15 m (39.4 – 49.2 ft) .....	0.4 m (15.7 inches)
5-12 m (16.4 – 39.4 ft) .....	0.3 m (11.8 inches)
Under 5 m (< 16.4 ft).....	0.1 m (3.9 inches)

- The length of any hyphen must be half the height ( $h/2$ ) of the letters and numbers.
- The stroke width for all letters, numbers, and hyphens must be  $h/6$ . (There is no requirement for the overall width of letters or numbers.)
- The space between letters and/or numbers must not exceed  $h/4$  nor be less than  $h/6$ .
- The space between adjacent letters having sloping sides must not exceed  $h/8$  nor be less than  $h/10$ .
- The background must extend to provide a border around the markings of no less than  $h/6$ .

Note: Please see the two figures at the end of this guide for examples.

**Q8. If my vessel’s hull is black, do I need a border around the white markings?**

No. White markings on a black hull or superstructure, or black markings on a white hull or superstructure, meet the requirements without additional borders.

**Q9. Is my radio call sign the same thing as an IRCS?**

Yes. Your radio call sign, issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), begins with “W” or “K” and usually contains a mix of letters and numbers. This is your IRCS. If your radio call sign changes for any reason, the vessel identification will need to be re-marked. See the [FCC web site](#) for more information about radio licensing.

**Q10. Are any federally-permitted fishing vessels exempt from the vessel identification requirements?**

The following vessels are exempt from federal western Pacific vessel identification requirements: Main Hawaiian Islands non-commercial bottomfish vessels that comply with State of Hawaii bottomfish vessel registration and marking requirements, and CNMI commercial bottomfish vessels that are less than 40 ft (12.2 m) and comply with CNMI bottomfish vessel registration and marking requirements.

Q11. If I follow the international vessel marking requirements for the WCPO, do I need to change the markings on my fishing gear?

No. For longline vessels, there is no international WCPO requirement for gear identification, and the non-WCPO requirements did not change. Therefore, you must continue to mark your longline floats and buoys with the vessel's official number.

Q12. Where can I obtain additional copies of this guide or more information on the requirements?

Sustainable Fisheries Division  
Pacific Islands Regional Office  
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service  
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110  
Honolulu, HI 96814  
Phone: (808) 944-2200  
[www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD\\_regs\\_2.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_regs_2.html)

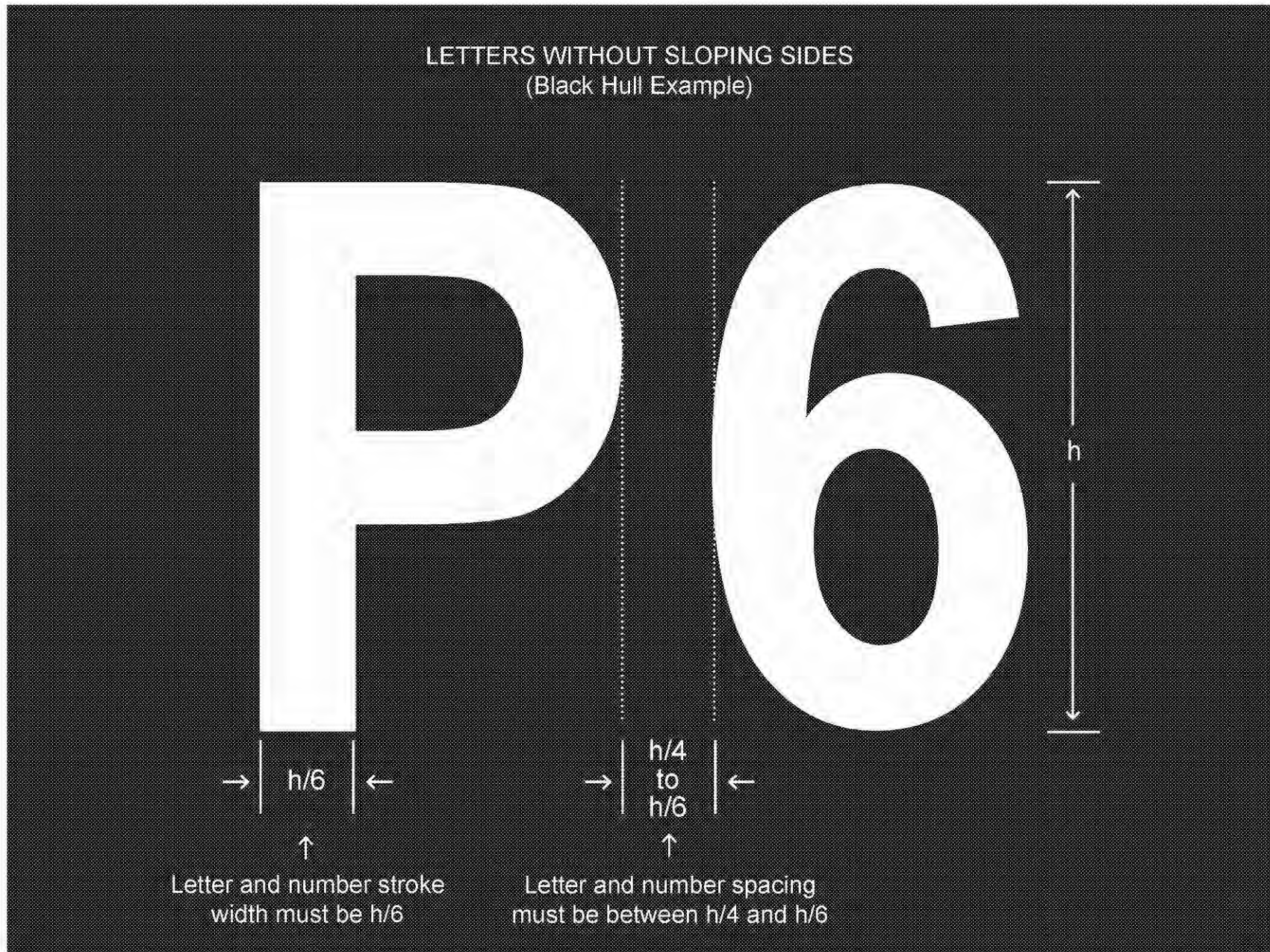
You can read the notice for this rule in the *Federal Register*, vol. 75, page 3416 (January 21, 2010), and vol. 75, page 7204 (February 18, 2010). For the official requirements, see Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts [300](#) and [665](#).

Search the *Federal Register* [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr)

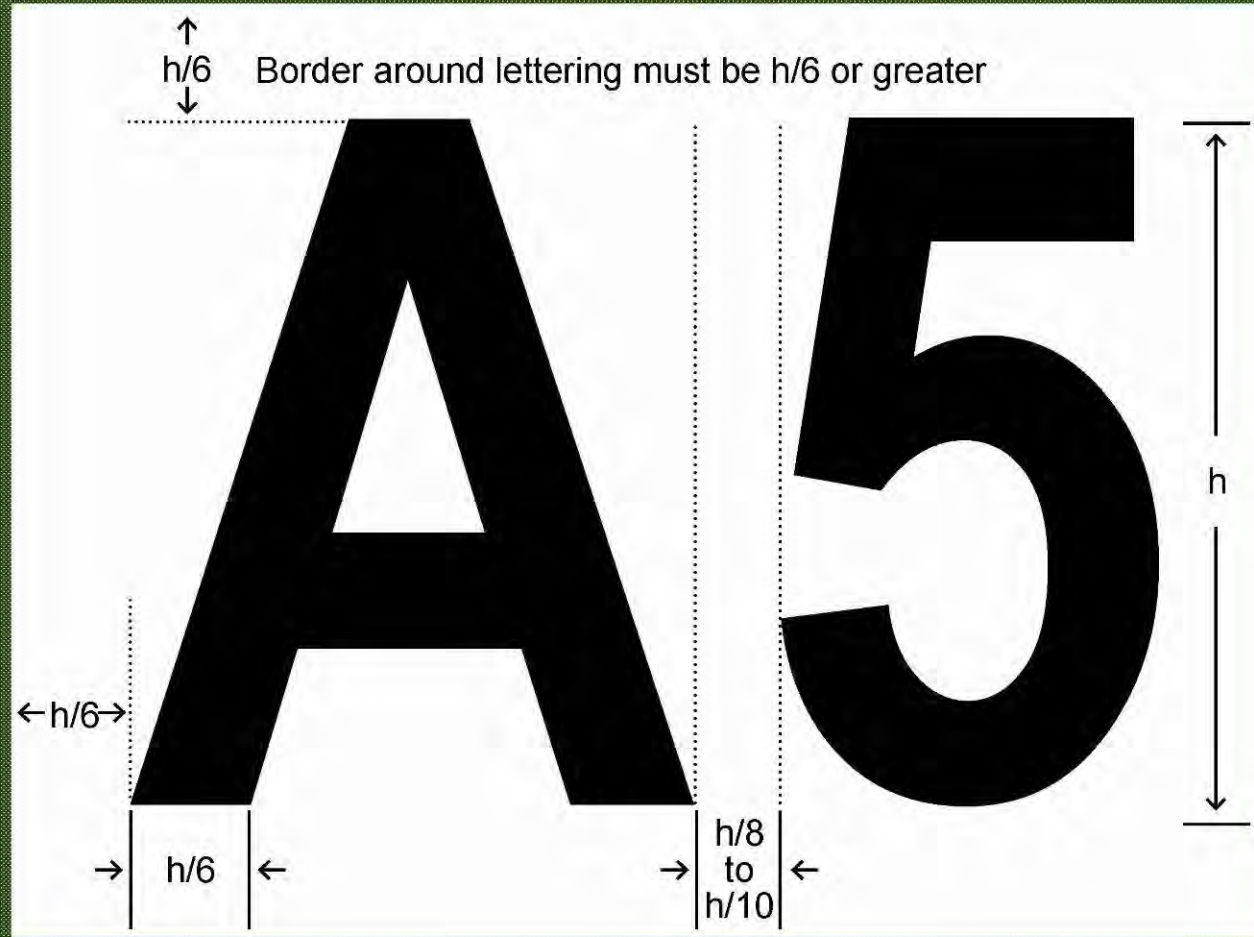
Browse the Code of Federal Regulations [ecfr.gpoaccess.gov](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov)

Find information about radio licensing: [wireless.fcc.gov/services/index.htm?job=licensing&id=ship\\_stations](http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/index.htm?job=licensing&id=ship_stations)

Examples of vessel markings:



LETTERS WITH SLOPING SIDES  
(Hull Color Example)



↑  
Letter and number stroke  
width must be  $h/6$

↑  
If letter has sloping side,  
spacing must be between  
 $h/8$  to  $h/10$