



NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region

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Compliance Guide International Maritime Organization (IMO) Number Requirements

Updated January 10th, 2023

NMFS issued regulations under the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950 (TCA), as amended, to implement IMO requirements in Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-18-06¹ (*Resolution (Amended) on a Regional Vessel Register*). The final rule with the regulations to implement C-18-06 was published in the *Federal Register* on December 20, 2019 ([84 FR 70040](#)), and the regulations became effective on June 10, 2020 ([85 FR 35379](#)). NMFS previously implemented IMO numbering requirements for larger vessels in a final rule issued on January 14, 2016, and effective on February 13, 2016 ([81 FR 1878](#)).

These regulations apply to U.S. vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). These regulations are codified in the *Code of Federal Regulations* at [50 CFR 300.23\(b\)](#).

This guide provides a summary of how owners and operators of affected entities can comply with these regulations.² These regulations are necessary for the United States to satisfy its obligations as a member of the IATTC.

¹ Read IATTC Resolution [C-18-06](#)

² 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. Regulations are

subject to change, so this guide may become out of date. Any discrepancy between the contents of this guide and regulations will be resolved in favor of regulations published in the *Federal Register* and codified in the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

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Area of Application

Q1. Where do these IMO number regulations apply?

These regulations apply in the IATTC Convention Area (**Figure 1**). The IATTC Convention area is defined as waters of the Pacific Ocean extending from the west coast of the Americas to 150° W longitude, bounded by 50° N and 50° S latitudes.

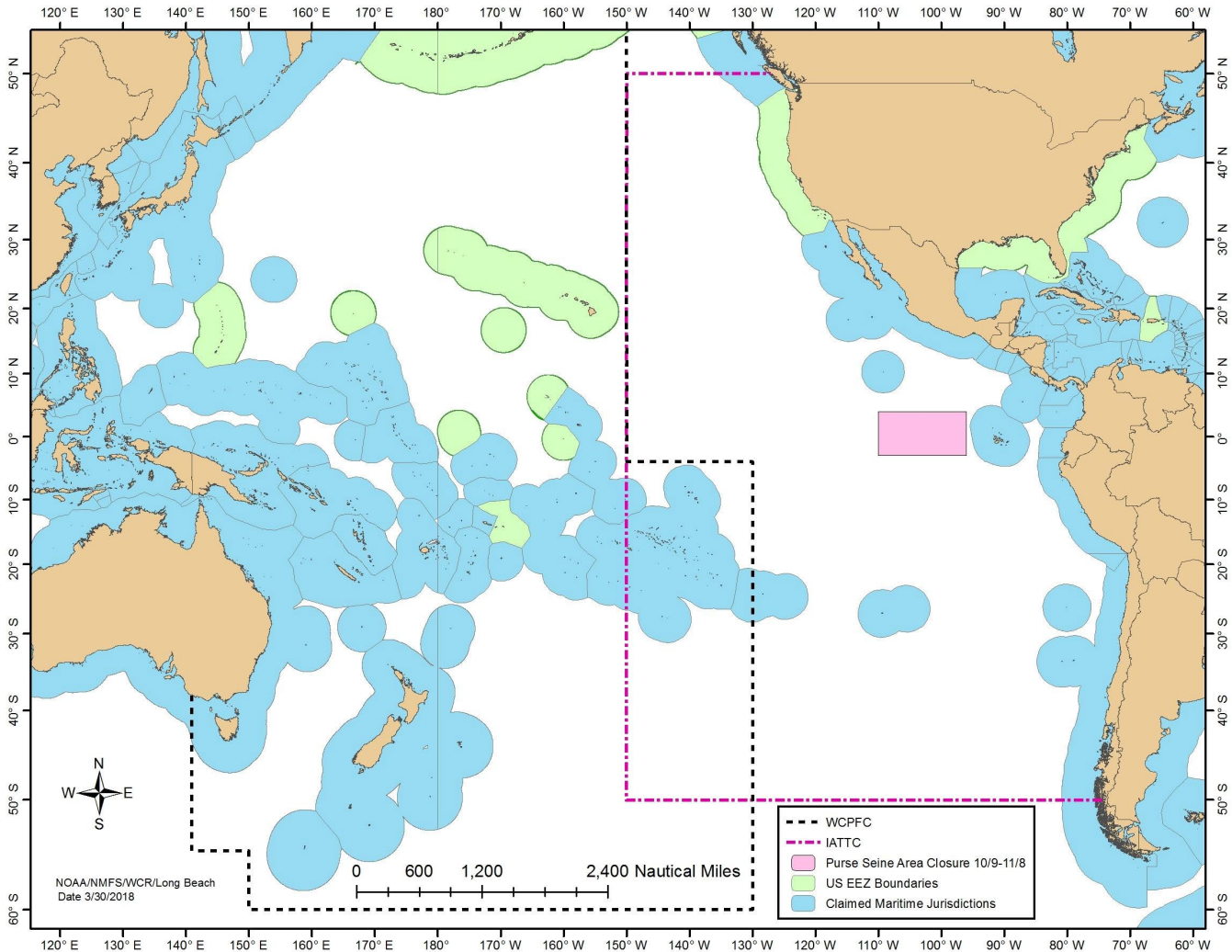


Figure 1. This figure is a map of the Pacific Ocean that shows the IATTC Convention Area encompassed by the purple dashed line and the west coast of the Americas.

Background

Q2. What is an IMO number?

An IMO number, or Lloyd's register number, is a unique vessel identifier issued for a vessel under the ship identification number scheme adopted by the International Maritime Organization and managed by IHS Markit, formerly known as IHS Maritime.

The IMO number is permanently associated with the vessel hull. It remains the same, even if the vessel name or ownership changes, or if the vessel is reflagged to another nation. For those reasons, IMO numbers can be useful in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

IMO Procedures

Q3. Who needs an IMO number?

Under these regulations ([50 CFR 300.23\(b\)](#)), the owner of a U.S. vessel fishing for tuna or tuna-like species in the IATTC Convention Area, and for which a high seas fishing permit under [50 CFR 300.333](#) is required, shall ensure that an IMO number has been issued for the vessel if the vessel's total internal volume is:

- less than 100 gross registered tons (GRT); or less than 100 gross tons (GT), but
- equal to or greater than 12 meters in overall length
- Or, the equal to or greater than 100 GT or 100 GRT

Vessel measurements are based on the vessel's Certificate of Documentation issued under [46 CFR part 67](#) or State documentation.

Q4. What are the steps to attain an IMO number?

1. IHS Markit issues IMO numbers on behalf of the IMO. You will need to register with an IHS Markit account at <https://imonumbers.ihs.com>.
2. Ensure you have the shipbuilding information needed for the application to request an IMO number (e.g., length overall, beam, molded depth, etc.).
3. Complete the online request process for an IMO number. The request can be made at no cost.

Q5. Do I need to submit my IMO number to NMFS?

To minimize the burden on affected U.S. businesses, NMFS is NOT requiring that vessel owners report the IMO numbers associated with their vessel to NMFS. NMFS will collect that information from IHS Markit directly and via data available from the United States Coast Guard.

Q6. Do I need to display the IMO number on the hull of my vessel?

Displaying a clearly visible IMO number on the hull of the vessel helps authorities to more quickly check for compliance with IMO regulations and identify vessels that may be IUU fishing. However, NMFS does not currently require vessels subject to these regulations to display the IMO number on their vessel. Although regulations pertaining to high seas vessel marking in [50 CFR 300.108\(a\)](#) are not specifically for IMO numbers, these can be used as guideline for marking vessels.

Q7. What if I am unable to attain an IMO number?

In the event that a vessel owner is unable to attain an IMO number after following the instructions, the fishing vessel owner may request an exemption ([50 CFR 300.23\(b\)\(4\)](#)) from the NMFS West Coast Regional Administrator. The request must be sent by mail to NMFS HMS Branch, West Coast Region, 501 W Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802, or by email to wcr.hms@noaa.gov, and must include the vessel's name, the vessel's official number, a description of the steps taken to request an IMO number, and a description of any responses from the administrator of the IMO ship identification number scheme.

Upon receipt of a request for an exemption, NMFS will assist the vessel owner in requesting an IMO number. If NMFS determines that the vessel owner has followed all appropriate procedures but is unable to obtain an IMO number for the fishing vessel, NMFS will issue an exemption from the requirements for the vessel and its owner and notify the owner of the exemption. NMFS may limit the duration of the exemption. NMFS may rescind the exemption at any time. If NMFS rescinds the exemption, the vessel owner must follow the instructions to request an IMO number within 30 days of being notified of the rescission. If the ownership of a fish vessel changes, an exemption issued to the former fishing vessel owner becomes void.

For Your Information

Q8. Where can I find regulations on IMO numbers?

NMFS regulations for IMO numbers can be found at [50 CFR 300.23\(b\)](#).

Q9. Who do I contact if I need assistance?

Vessel owners may contact Stuart Emery at IHS Markit for assistance in attaining an IMO number. He can be reached via email at stuart.emery@ihsmarkit.com.

List of Contacts

For Questions on IMO Requirements

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