

# Avoid Being a Boat Fraud Victim

Boat theft is a crime of opportunity in which thieves often score big profits by selling stolen vessels to unsuspecting consumers. Just like other types of scams perpetrated by criminals against the general public, you usually end up on the losing end of the deal. If you are purchasing a boat, the NICB offers the following tips to help you avoid being a victim of these stolen vessel scams by recognizing some common red flags of fraud:

- 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.
  - Be suspicious if someone offers to sell you a boat or equipment at a price that's well below the market value. If the price is too good to be true, it's probably a scam.
  - Do not purchase any vessel if the seller is unable to produce title or proof of ownership.

To report suspicious boat theft activities, contact the NICB in one of three easy ways:

1. Text "FRAUD" and your tip to TIP411 (847411).
2. Call 1-800-TEL-NICB (1-800-835-6422).
3. Submit a form on [www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org).

Your tip can be anonymous.

## For More Information

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to leading a united effort of insurers, law enforcement agencies and representatives of the public to prevent and combat insurance fraud and crime through data analytics, investigations, training, legislative advocacy and public awareness.

You can learn more about boat theft and related fraud scams, and obtain a boat theft prevention checklist on the NICB's Web site at [www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org).



1111 E. Touhy Ave., Suite 400  
Des Plaines, IL 60018  
1.800.447.6282  
[www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org)



## Boat Theft Leave Thieves in Your Wake

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# Apply Your Land Logic to the Water

Protecting your car from vehicle thieves is probably second nature to you. You use common sense by locking your doors, removing the key from the ignition, installing alarm systems and even installing vehicle immobilizer or tracking systems.

But what about protecting your boat from theft? Unfortunately, criminals target them as well. Like cars and trucks, boats offer thieves an enticing opportunity to make huge profits.

More than 500 watercraft are stolen each month in the United States — costing you, your insurer and other insurance companies millions of dollars annually. Although thefts generally peak during the summer months, your boat can be stolen anytime throughout the year. However, by applying much of the same logic you use to ward off car thieves to your boat, you can help protect it and sink criminals who are intent on stealing your maritime investment.



# Start With Common Sense

Have you ever noticed people who leave their unattended cars running when they dash into a store or gas station? With this reckless behavior, they can easily become car theft victims.

It's no different for boat owners. Start with common sense. Do not leave your keys in the boat, and always shut the engine off when disembarking. You may think it's a nuisance to turn off your engine, but it's an even bigger hassle and inconvenience if your boat is stolen.

Criminals typically avoid boats that take too much time to steal or create too much noise in the theft process. Make their jobs harder and protect yourself from theft by following these prevention tips:

- Dock your craft in well-lit areas.
- Secure your boat to the dock with a locked steel cable.
- Remove expensive equipment from your boat when not in use.
- Lock the boat's cabin, doors and windows when not in use.
- Remove registration or title papers in the craft.
- Disable the boat when not in use by shutting off fuel lines, removing the battery or distributor cap.
- Install an alarm system and a kill switch in the ignition system.
- 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.
- Ensure your marine insurance policy includes your equipment, boat and trailer.

# Identification Can Help Keep You Afloat

Your boat is more than just a recreational craft...it's an investment as well. Anchoring your investment includes marking and identifying your boat and equipment. Since August of 1972, every marine vessel made or imported for sale in the United States is required to have a Hull Identification Number (HIN). All motorboats, with very few exceptions, must also display a registration number on the forward part of the boat. If your boat or equipment is stolen, the HIN and other registration identification will help police in the recovery effort.

- Mark your boat and equipment with the vessel's (HIN). The HIN is a 12-character serial number that identifies your boat. While these characters may simply look like a long string of numbers, they contain information that can help law enforcement quickly recover stolen boats.
- Take photos or video of your boat, its HIN and equipment for documentation and identification in case of a theft.

