



400 Commonwealth Drive, Warrendale, PA 15096-0001

# SURFACE VEHICLE RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

SAE J272

REV.  
DEC81

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Submitted for recognition as an American National Standard

## VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER SYSTEMS

**Foreword**—This Document has not changed other than to put it into the new SAE Technical Standards Board Format.

### 1. Scope

- 1.1 This recommended practice describes general characteristics of VIN systems. It includes certain specific requirements, supporting definitions, basic content, and examples.
- 1.2 The VIN should be considered in the context of a world manufacturer identifier to establish a unique vehicle identity.
- 1.3 Supplemental reports to this recommended practice establish specific VIN requirements for different types of motor vehicles.
- 1.4 **Purpose**—This SAE Recommended Practice provides direction for uniform content and structure of vehicle identification numbers assigned to each type of motor vehicle.

### 2. References

- 2.1 **Applicable Publications**—The following publications form a part of the specification to the extent specified herein. Unless otherwise indicated, the latest issue of SAE Publications shall apply.

2.1.1 SAE PUBLICATIONS—Available from SAE, 400 Commonwealth Drive, Warrendale, PA 15096-0001.

SAE J853a—Vehicle Identification Numbers  
SAE J1044a—World Manufacturer Identifier

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Vehicle Identification Numbers (VIN)**—The number assigned to a vehicle by the manufacturer primarily for registration and identification purposes. It may consist of numerals, letters, or a combination thereof (see SAE J853a.)
- 3.2 **World Manufacturer Identifier (WMI)**—The first section of the VIN consisting of a code designating the manufacturer of the vehicle (see SAE J1044a).

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**3.3 Vehicle Descriptor Section (VDS)**—The second section of the VIN. It provides information describing the general attributes of the vehicle.

**3.4 Vehicle Indicator Section (VIS)**—The third section of the VIN. It is a combination of characters assigned by the manufacturer, which, in conjunction with the WMI and VDS distinguishes one vehicle from another.

**3.5 Field**—A set of character positions reserved for a specific element of information.

**3.6 Sequential Number**—A production number assigned to the vehicle.

**3.7 Divider**—A symbol, character, or physical border to separate the sections of the VIN or to define the limits (beginning and end) of the VIN.

**4. Requirements**

**4.1 Vehicle Identification Number Basic Content**—The VIN shall consist of three sections: first, the World Manufacturer Identifier Section (WMI); second, the Vehicle Descriptor Section (VDS); and last, the Vehicle Indicator Section (VIS).

**4.2 Vehicle Identification Number Length**—The complete VIN shall be fixed at 17 characters.

**4.3 World Manufacturer Identifier (WMI)**—The WMI shall be the first section of the VIN and consist of three characters pre-assigned to the manufacturer by the National Organization (SAE in the case of U.S. vehicle manufacturers) in accordance with SAE Recommended Practice J1044a, World Manufacturer Identifier.

**4.4 Vehicle Descriptor Section (VDS)**—The VDS shall be the second section of the VIN. It shall consist of six characters. This section shall identify the general descriptive attributes of the vehicle. The coding and sequence of this section is determined by the manufacturer.

**4.5 Vehicle Indicator Section (VIS)**—The VIS shall be the last section of the VIN and shall consist of eight characters, the last four of which shall be numeric. If the manufacturer chooses to designate model year or year of manufacture and/or plant of manufacture in this section, it is recommended that the year be indicated by the first character of the VIS and the plant by the second character. The recommended code to be used when designating year is indicated in the following Table.

TABLE 1—CHARACTERS USED FOR DESIGNATING THE YEAR

Year	Code	Year	Code	Year	Code
1981	B	1991	M	2001	1
1982	C	1992	N	2002	2
1983	D	1993	P	2003	3
1984	E	1994	R	2004	4
1985	F	1995	S	2005	5
1986	G	1996	T	2006	6
1987	H	1997	V	2007	7
1988	J	1998	W	2008	8
1989	K	1999	X	2009	9
1990	L	2000	Y	2010	A

**4.6 Characters**—Only the following arabic numerals and roman letters shall be used in the VIN:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

A B C D E F G H J K L M N P R S T U V W X Y Z

(the letters I, O and Q shall not be used.)

**4.7 Dividers**—A divider shall be used at the limits of each line (as described in 4.8.2 below) and may be used between sections of the VIN on the vehicle only (not on documents). The selection of the specific divider to be used is at the discretion of the manufacturer, but shall not be any character that may be confused with an arabic numeral or roman letter.

**4.8 VIN Display**

4.8.1 The VIN printed on documents shall be shown on one line without blanks.

4.8.2 The VIN shall be displayed on the vehicle or manufacturer's plate on either one or two lines without blanks and with no section being split.

**5. Structure of VIN**—The VIN shall consist of numerals, letters, or combination thereof. These characters shall be legible. Protection against the likelihood of digits being added shall be provided by the appropriate design of the site or the plate on which the VIN number is located or by use of dividers, terminators, or delimiters.

NOTE—This SAE Recommended Practice may not necessarily be consistent with existing national statutory requirements.

**6. Notes**

**6.1 Marginal Indicia**—The change bar (I) is for the convenience of the user in locating areas where technical revisions have been made to the previous issue of the report. If the symbol is next to the report title, it indicates a complete revision of the report.

PREPARED BY THE SAE VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS COMMITTEE