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Vehicle Identification Number Systems—SAE J272a

SAE Recommended Practice
Last Revised February 1977

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VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER SYSTEMS—SAE J272a

SAE Recommended Practice

Report of Vehicle Identification Numbers Committee approved May 1972 and last revised February 1977.

1. **Purpose**—This SAE Recommended Practice provides direction for uniform content and structure of vehicle identification numbers assigned to each type of motor vehicle.

2. Scope

2.1 This recommended practice describes general characteristics of VIN systems. It includes certain specific requirements, supporting definitions, basic content, and examples.

2.2 The VIN should be considered in the context of a world manufacturer identifier to establish a unique vehicle identity.

2.3 Supplemental reports to this recommended practice establish specific VIN requirements for different types of motor vehicles.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Vehicle Identification Number (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 J853).

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).

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	Year	Code
1971	1	1981	B	1991	M	2001	1
1972	2	1982	C	1992	N	2002	2
1973	3	1983	D	1993	P	2003	3
1974	4	1984	E	1994	R	2004	4
1975	5	1985	F	1995	S	2005	5
1976	6	1986	G	1996	T	2006	6
1977	7	1987	H	1997	V	2007	7
1978	8	1988	J	1998	W	2008	8
1979	9	1989	K	1999	X	2009	9
1980	A	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, Q and Q shall not be used.)

4.7 **Dividers**—A divider may be used at the limits of each line (as described in 4.8.2 below) and 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. **Character of Numbers**—The VIN may consist of numerals, letters, or combination thereof. The digits shall be legible. Protection against the likelihood of digits being added shall be provided by the appropriate design of the site of the plate on which the number is located or by use of terminators of delimiters.

NOTE: Secondary Characteristics—Any field coding of the VIN may reflect more than the required characteristics.