



Registration and Licensing of Port Service Providers in Nigeria: Full Guide (2026)

Description

The registration and licensing of Port Service Providers (PSPs) in Nigeria is a critical regulatory framework designed to ensure safe, efficient, and competitive operations within the nation's ports. Governed principally by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), a federal agency established under the Ports Act of 1954, this regime covers a spectrum of service categories, from Shipping Companies and Clearing & Forwarding Agents to Chandlers, Service Boat Operators, Third-Party Towage Companies, Bonded Terminals, and Private Jetties. A robust licensing process not only safeguards port infrastructure and marine safety but also guarantees compliance with national and international standards, fostering investor confidence and facilitating trade growth.

Why Compliance Matters

- **Safety & Security:** Licenses mandate adherence to security protocols (e.g. PFSA/PFSP) and environmental safeguards.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Certified PSPs are better equipped, insured, and vetted, reducing delays and risks.
- **Legal Certainty:** A valid license legitimises operations, minimising enforcement actions and penalties.

- **Competitive Edge:** Licensed operators gain access to prime port facilities and can bid for contracts.

1. Regulatory Authority and Legal Framework

1.1 Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA)

The NPA, under the Federal Ministry of Transportation, regulates port operations, issues licenses, and enforces compliance across all major seaports (Lagos Port Complex, Tin Can Island, Calabar, Delta, Rivers, Onne).

1.2 Governing Statutes

- **Ports Act, Cap P2 LFN 2004:** Empowers NPA to grant, renew, suspend, or revoke PSP licenses.
- **Tariff Regulations (Effective March 1, 2025):** Sets fees for Harbour Dues, Environmental Protection Levies, and service-specific charges.
- **Dues & Rates Regulations (2021):** Details contingency deposits and ancillary levies applicable at private jetties.

2. Categories of Port Service Providers

Category	Regulatory Unit	Key Requirement Highlights	Registration Fee	Validity	Renewal Fee	Timeline
Shipping Company / Agent	GM Marine & Operations (HQ)	CAC Reg. Cert; Mem. & Art.; Bank Ref.; 3-yr TAC	₦200,000.00	1 year	₦100,000.00	6 week

Category	Regulatory Unit	Key Requirement Highlights	Registration Fee	Validity	Renewal Fee	Timeline
Clearing & Forwarding Agent	GM Marine & Operations (HQ)	+ CRFFN Reg. Cert.	₦25,000.00	1 year	₦5,000.00	6 weeks
Chandlers	Port Manager	CAC Reg.; 3-yr TAC; Customs Form C1	₦200,000.00	1 year	₦- (annual)	6 weeks
Service Boat Operator	GM Marine & Operations (Eastern/Western)	NPA Shipping Co. Reg. Cert.; CAC Reg.; 3-yr TAC	₦200,000.00	1 year	₦- (annual)	6 weeks
Bonded Terminals	GM Marine & Operations (HQ)	CAC Reg.; 3-yr TAC; TIN; Insurance Cover	-	-	-	6 weeks
Third-Party Towage Service Provider	Tariff Regulations	USD 20,000.00; Royalty 20% per tug/movement	USD 20,000.00	1 year	USD 20,000.00	-
Private Jetties	Lands & Estates / Private Jetty Ops.	CAC Reg.; PFSA & PFSP; Certified PFSO; Security Equipment; Title Docs	N1,250/m ² (annual)	2 years	N1,250/m ² (annual)	6-8 weeks

Table 1: Summary of PSP Categories, Requirements, Fees, and Timelines.

3. Step-by-Step Application Process

While each category has particulars, the overarching procedure is:

1. Pre-Application Preparation

- Incorporate as a Limited Liability Company (for most categories).
- Secure Tax Clearance Certificates (3 consecutive years).
- Obtain professional/industry-specific certifications (e.g., CRFFN for F&F agents; PFSA/PFSP for jetties).

2. Submission of Letter of Application

- Address: Managing Director or General Manager (Marine & Operations) or Port Manager, as applicable.
- Attach all statutory documents and proof of payment for the prescribed fee.

3. Payment of Fees

- Obtain debit note from NPA.
- Remit fees to NPA revenue account.
- Present payment confirmation/receipt.

4. Document Verification & Inspection

- NPA reviews authenticity of documents.
- For Private Jetties: site inspection, security audit, and structural review.
- For Towage: equipment inspection and vessel surveys.

5. Issuance of Certificate/License

- On successful vetting, NPA issues original Certificate of Registration or Permit.
- Typical turnaround: 1–6 weeks, depending on category.

6. Post-Issuance Compliance

- Renew annually or biennially.
- Maintain up-to-date Tax Clearance and insurance.
- Submit renewal application at least 3 months before expiry (Private Jetties: 2-year validity).

4. Detailed Requirements per Category

4.1 Shipping Companies / Agents

- Certificate of Incorporation (CAC)
- Memorandum & Articles of Association
- Bank Reference Letter
- Three-Year Tax Clearance Certificate
- Letter of Application to GM Marine & Operations

4.2 Clearing & Forwarding Agents

- All Shipping Company documents, plus:
- Evidence of Registration with CRFFN
- Submission to GM Marine & Operations

4.3 Chandlers

- CAC Certificate; three-year Tax Clearance; Customs Form C1
- Application to Port Manager, including insurance proof.

4.4 Service Boat Operators

- CAC Certificate; NPA Shipping Co. Reg. Cert.; three-year Tax Clearance
- Letter to GM Marine & Operations (Eastern/Western Ports).

4.5 Bonded Terminals

- CAC Certificate; three-year Tax Clearance; TIN; Insurance Cover
- Submission to GM Marine & Operations

4.6 Third-Party Towage

- Application per Tariff Regs; proof of vessel ownership; insurance
- Fee: USD 20,000 annual; 20% royalty per movement.

4.7 Private Jetties

- Corporate Profile; CAC Certificates (Forms CO2, CO7)
- PFSA & PFSP; Certified PFSO Engagement
- Security Equipment (per BSI 1722 pt.10): perimeter fence, access control, CCTV, speed barriers, lighting
- Evidence of land title; architectural & structural drawings; geotechnical report
- Payment: ₦1,250/m² annual; sand winning ₦120/m³; bunkering ₦13/ton

5. Cost Breakdown & Comparative Analysis

Below is a comparative summary of registration and renewal costs for the major PSP categories:

Category	Registration Fee	Renewal Fee
Shipping Company / Agent	₦200,000.00	₦100,000.00
Clearing & Forwarding Agent	₦25,000.00	₦5,000.00
Chandlers	₦200,000.00	₦- (annual renewal)
Service Boat Operator	₦200,000.00	₦- (annual renewal)
Third-Party Towage	USD 20,000.00	USD 20,000.00
Private Jetty (per m ²)	₦1,250.00 (annual)	₦1,250.00 (annual)

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is the validity period for a Port Service Provider license?

A: Most PSP licenses (Shipping Co., Clearing & Forwarding, Chandlers, Service Boats) remain valid for **one year** from the date of issuance; **Private Jetty**

licenses are valid for **two years**, renewable three months before expiry.

Q2: Can a foreign-owned company register as a PSP?

A: Yes, provided it is duly incorporated in Nigeria as a Limited Liability Company and meets all statutory prerequisites (CAC registration, Tax Clearances, etc.).

Q3: How long does NPA take to process a PSP application?

A: Standard processing timelines range from **1 working hour** (for immediate certificate issuance upon payment confirmation for Shipping Co., per PDF) to **6 weeks**, depending on category and site inspections.

Q4: What happens if I fail to renew on time?

A: Late renewal may incur penalties, suspension of license, and forfeiture of operational privileges until rectified.

Q5: Are there additional levies for environmental protection?

A: Yes. A **5% Contingency Deposit** on Harbour Dues & Environmental Protection Levy applies at Private Jetties under the 2021 Dues & Rates Regulations.

Q6: Do I need separate licenses for multiple ports?

A: No. A single national license from NPA covers operations across all designated ports, though local port managers may require site-specific clearances.

7. Common Misconceptions

1. **“One license fits all PSP categories.”**

Each category, from Shipping Agents to Service Boat Operators, has distinct requirements and fees; a generic certificate is not interchangeable.

2. **“Renewal is automatic.”**

Renewal requires proactive application, fee payment, and often fresh inspections,

particularly for Private Jetties.

3. **“Foreign firms can operate without Nigerian incorporation.”**

Nigerian law mandates local incorporation and Nigerian tax compliance before licensing.

4. **“Fees never change.”**

NPA periodically revises fees (e.g., Tariff Regulations effective March 2025); always refer to the latest schedule.

5. **“Site inspections aren’t required.”**

Private jetties, bonded terminals, and towage companies undergo mandatory NPA inspections before license issuance and renewal.

8. Best Practices for Applicants

- **Early Engagement:** Contact the relevant NPA divisional head to clarify document checklists.
- **Document Completeness:** Ensure all certificates (CAC, Tax, CRFFN, PFSA/PFSP, Insurance) are current and stamped.
- **Financial Readiness:** Budget for both registration and renewal fees, including ancillary charges (sand winning, bunkering).
- **Regulatory Monitoring:** Regularly check NPA **Port Tariffs** and **Dues & Rates Regulations** for updates.
- **Professional Support:** Engage legal or maritime consultants to navigate technical drawings (for jetties) and compliance audits.

Conclusion

Securing and maintaining a valid license as a Port Service Provider in Nigeria is indispensable for legal, safe, and competitive port operations. By meticulously following the NPA's procedures; submitting complete documentation, timely fee payments, and passing requisite inspections, stakeholders can avoid operational disruptions and foster sustainable growth. With ports serving as the gateway to the Nigerian economy, adherence to these regulatory frameworks not only ensures compliance but also elevates service quality, drives investor confidence, and positions your enterprise at the forefront of maritime trade.

For authoritative guidelines, always consult the **Nigerian Ports Authority** website (<http://nigerianports.gov.ng>) and the latest **Tariff Regulations**

Category

1. Industry Insights