Coded Wire Tags: Formats and Reading Instructions

Contents

Introduction

The Coded Wire Tag (CWT) is produced in five formats. The numbers on the tag are written in decimal characters. Appendix A shows the appearance of each decimal digit. A triangular flag is used to designate the starting point for reading the code on all formats.

The NMT Coded Wire Tag Demonstrator is available from NMT. This program allows one to view each tag format and see what a tag would look like at different cutting sites. If you need help reading a tag, please call NMT at +1-360-468-3375 or email techsupport@nmt.us.

NMT uses the first two digits of every code to designate the agency, country, or group using the tags. These two digits are known as the Agency Code.

Standard Tag

Standard Coded Wire Tags are 0.042 inches (1.1 mm) long and 0.010 inches (0.25 mm) in diameter. The code is 6 digits written on a single side of the tag and read from left to right. For reliability and ease of use, the code is replicated on four sides of the wire with the starting point offset by two character positions. This redundancy makes a tag readable no matter where the wire is cut.

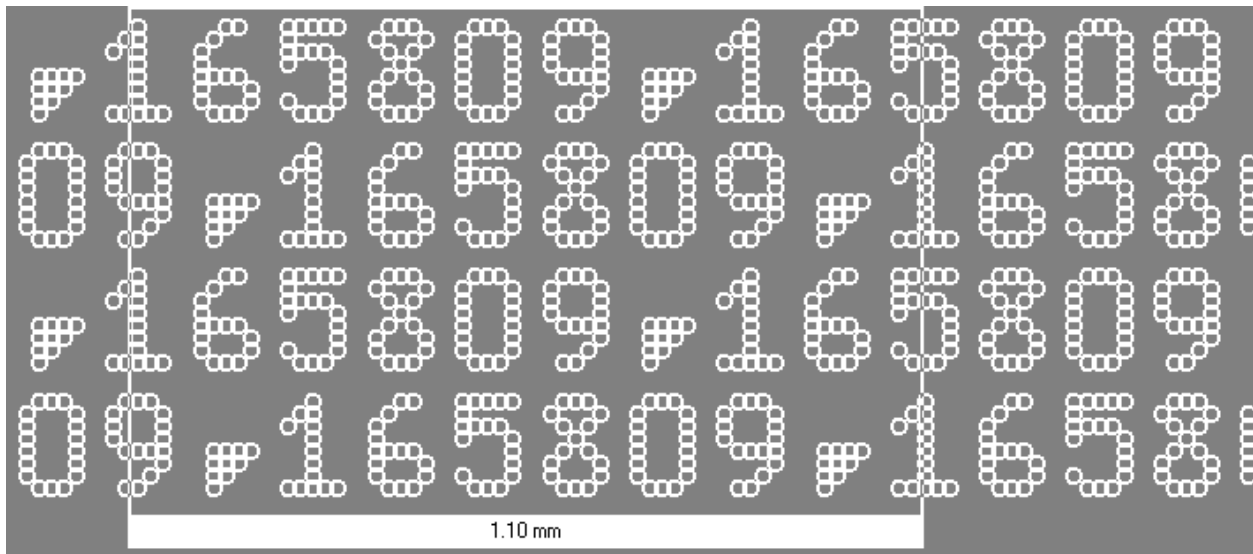Standard Coded Wire Tags are not readable if cut shorter than 1.1 mm.

Figure 1: A sample of Standard tag wire that has been "unrolled". The triangular flag is pointing to the first digit in the code. The code (165809) is read from left to right. The white lines in the figure show the length of a Standard tag, and one possible cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, the Standard tag has three words: Agency, Data 1 and Data 2. The tag in Figure 1 is Agency = 16, Data 1 = 58 and Data 2 = 09. Note the inclusion of the leading zero for Data 2 is to ensure that each data word has two digits.

Half-length Tag

Half-length tags are 0.021 inches (0.5 mm) long and 0.010 inches (0.25 mm) in diameter. They are designed for use when fish size (less than approximately two grams) cannot accommodate a larger tag. The code is 6 digits long, and written on two longitudinal rows. The row with the flag character contains the first three digits of the code which is read from left to right. Aligned directly below are the last three digits of the code. The code is repeated once and offset to gain reliability.
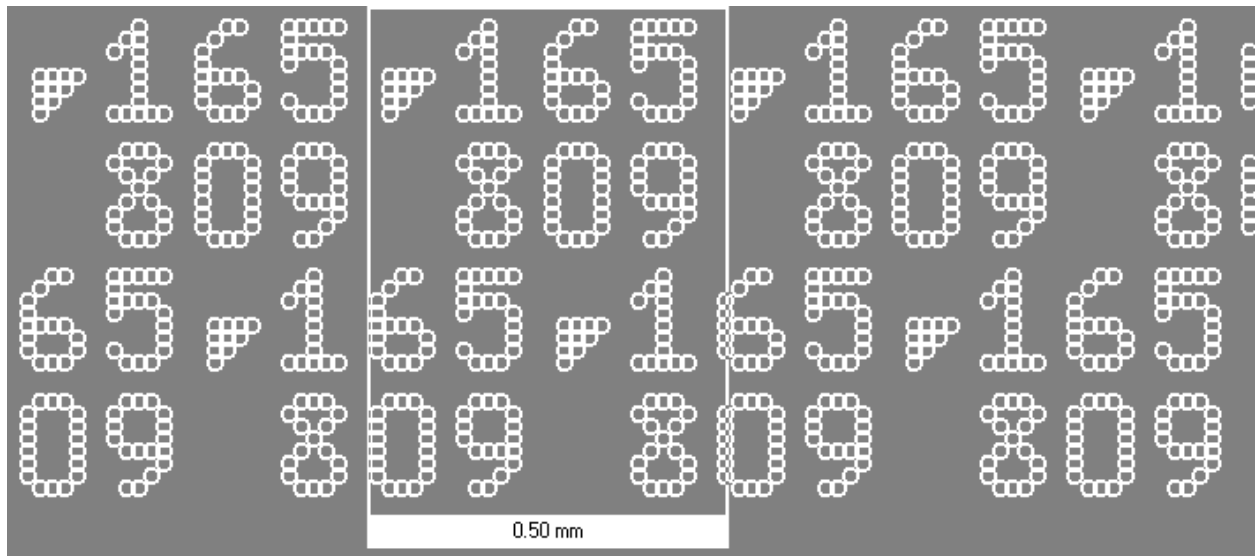

Figure 2: An example of the Half-length tag wire that has been "unrolled", with code 165809. The white lines in the figure show the size of the half-length tag, and one possible tag cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, For agencies using this convention, the Half-length Tag has five words (Agency, Data 1, Data 2, Data 3, and Data 4). The Agency word is two digits and the four data words are two digits each. Figure 2 shows Agency = 16, Data 1 = 05, Data 2 = 08, Data 3 = 00 and Data 4 = 09. Half-length tags must be reported as 10 digits to RMPC.

1½-Length Tag

1½-length tags are 0.062 inches (1.6 mm) long and 0.010 inches (0.25 mm) in diameter. This tag is designed for use in larger specimens or to enhance magnetic detection. The code is 6 digits and read from left to right.

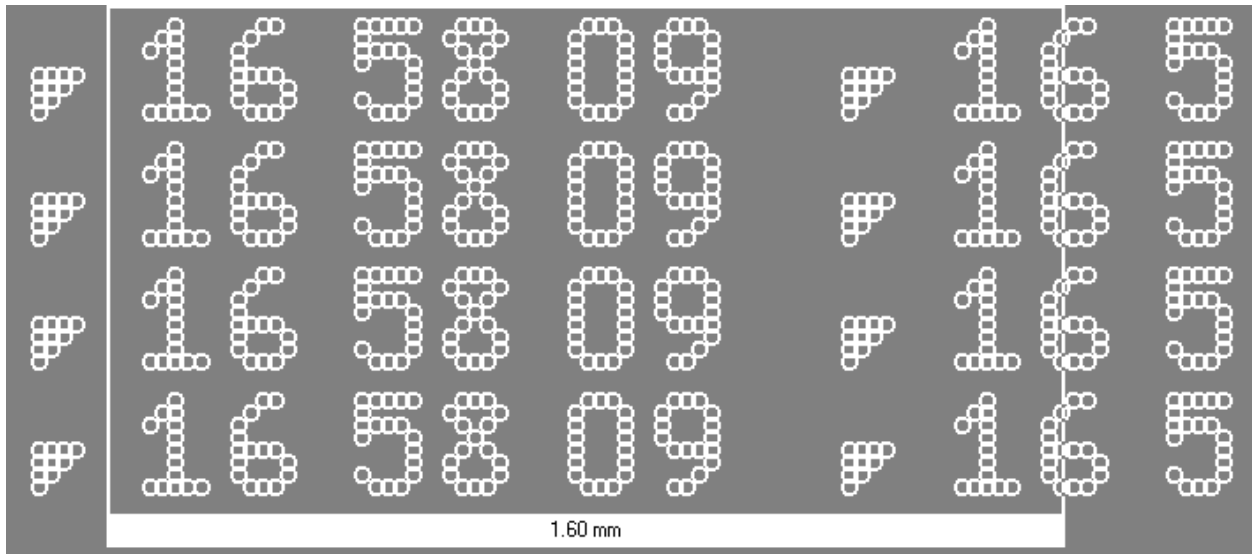1½–length tags are not readable if cut shorter than 1½-length.

Figure 3: A sample of the 1½-length tag wire that has been "unrolled". The triangular flag points to the first digit of the 6 digit code (165809). The white lines in the figure show the size of the tag, and one possible cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, the 1 ½-length tag has 3 words, Agency, Data 1 and Data 2. Figure 3 shows Agency = 16, Data 1 = 58 and Data 2 = 09.

Sequential Tag

Sequential Tags are 0.042 inches (1.1 mm) long and 0.010 inches (0.25 mm) in diameter. They have a batch code written along the axis of the tag in two rows and three columns, followed by a sequence number written around the circumference. The formatting of the Sequential Tag ensures that one entire sequential number is on each tag, no matter where the wire is cut. The sequential numbers are staggered by three digits around the circumference of the wire. This allows for greater reliability if a tag is scratched.

To resolve the ambiguity created when two complete sequential numbers are readable, the convention is to use the lesser number. Sequential Coded Wire Tags are not readable if cut shorter than 1.1 mm.
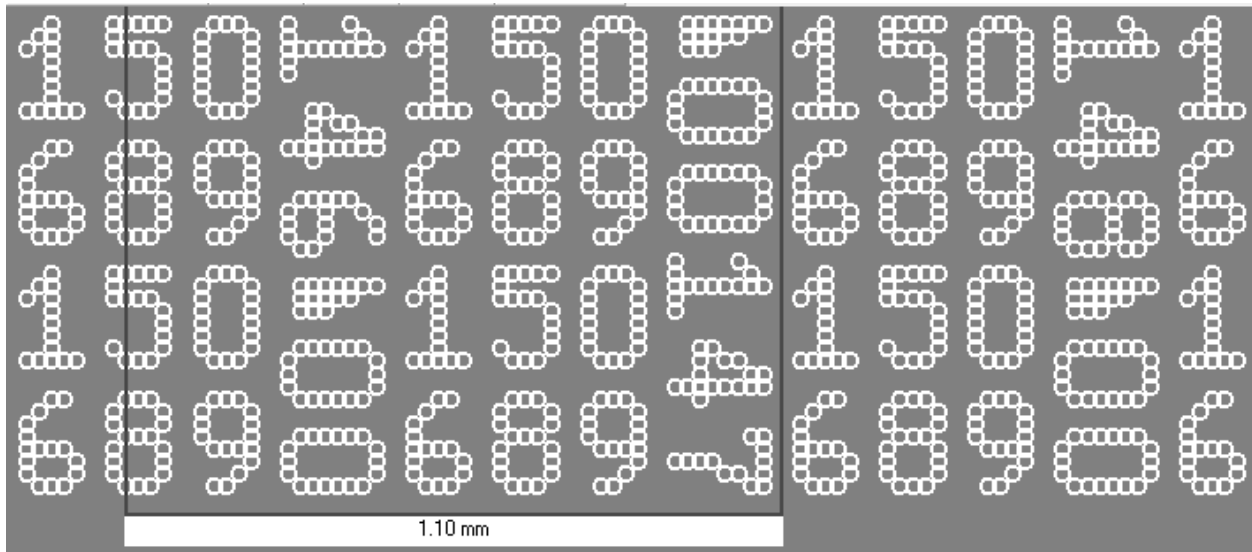

Figure 4: A sample of a Sequential Tag wire that has been "unrolled". The triangular flag points to the first digit in the batch code (165809) and in the sequential code (00146). The white lines in the figure show the size of the tag, and one possible cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, the Sequential Tag has three static words (Agency, Data 1, and Data 2) and a sequential number. Figure 4 shows Agency = 16, Data 1 = 58, Data 2 = 09, and sequence = 00146 (the lesser of the 2 sequence numbers on the tag).

NOTE: If you find a Sequential Tag with a different sequence format than described above, please see Appendix B. The format of Sequential Tags was changed in 2012.

Agency Only Tag

Agency Only tags are 0.042 inches (1.1 mm) long and 0.010 inches (0.25 mm) in diameter. They are batch coded with two digits. The Agency Only tag is designed for projects where the information required is related to the presence or absence of a tag in a fish.
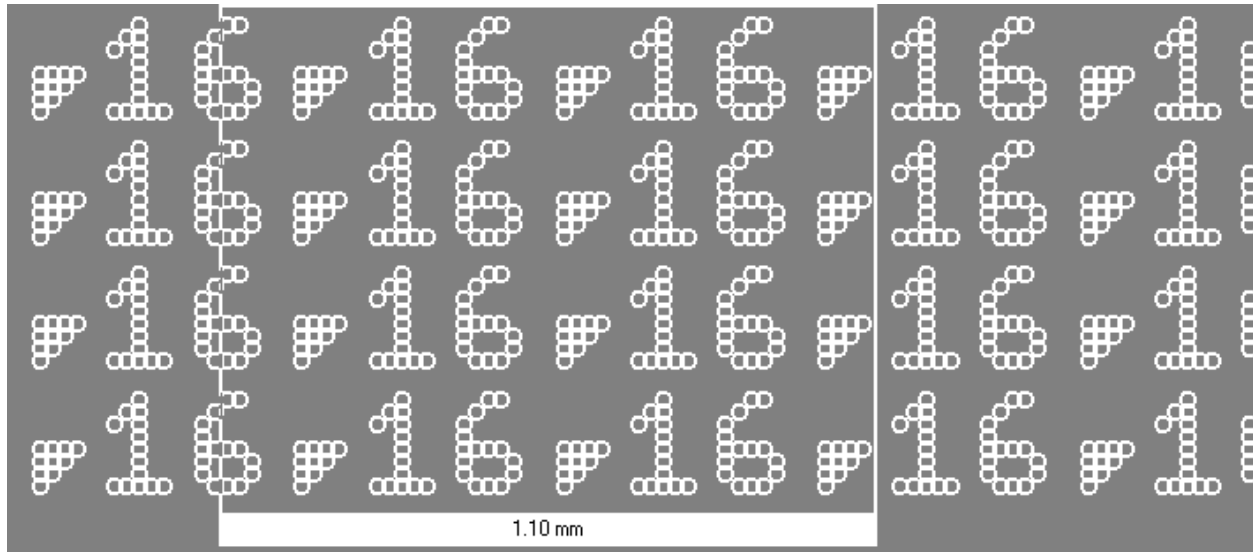

Figure 5: A sample of Agency Only tag wire that has been "unrolled". The triangular flag designates the start of the code and it is read from left to right (16). The white lines in the figure show the size of the tag and one possible cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, the Agency Only Tag is only one word. Figure 5 shows Agency = 16. This code should be reported to RMPC as tag type 16 "pseudo tag, blank wire".

Appendix A - CWT Digits
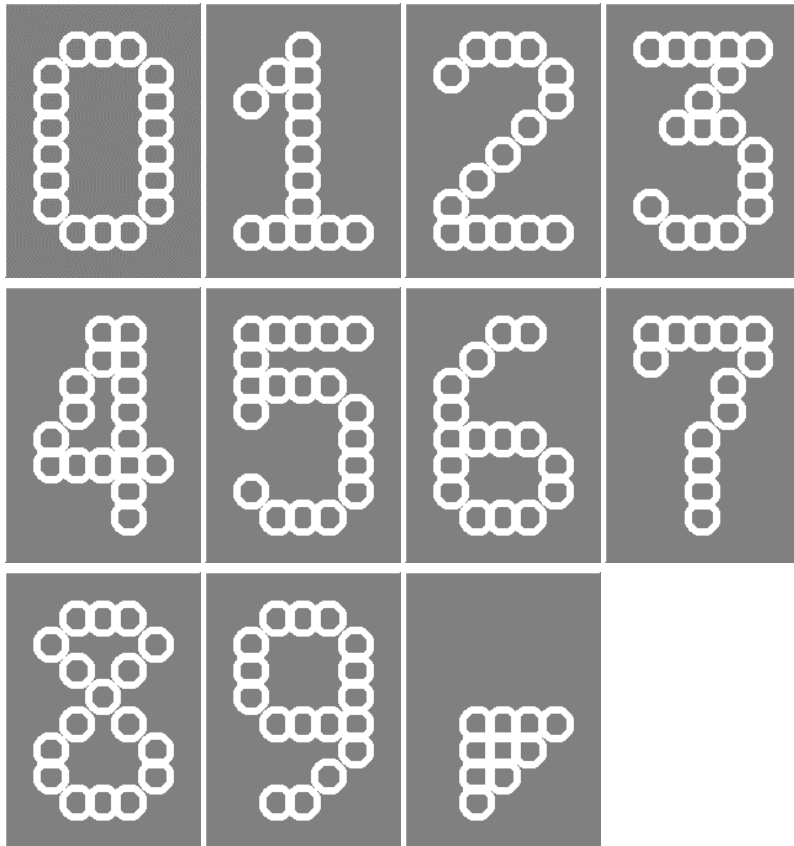
Appendix B - Sequential Tags made before Apr 2012

In 2012, NMT redesigned the Sequential Tag to enhance reliability if the tag was damaged. Sequential tags made before April 2012 did not have the sequential numbers offset around the circumference of the wire.

1.10 mm
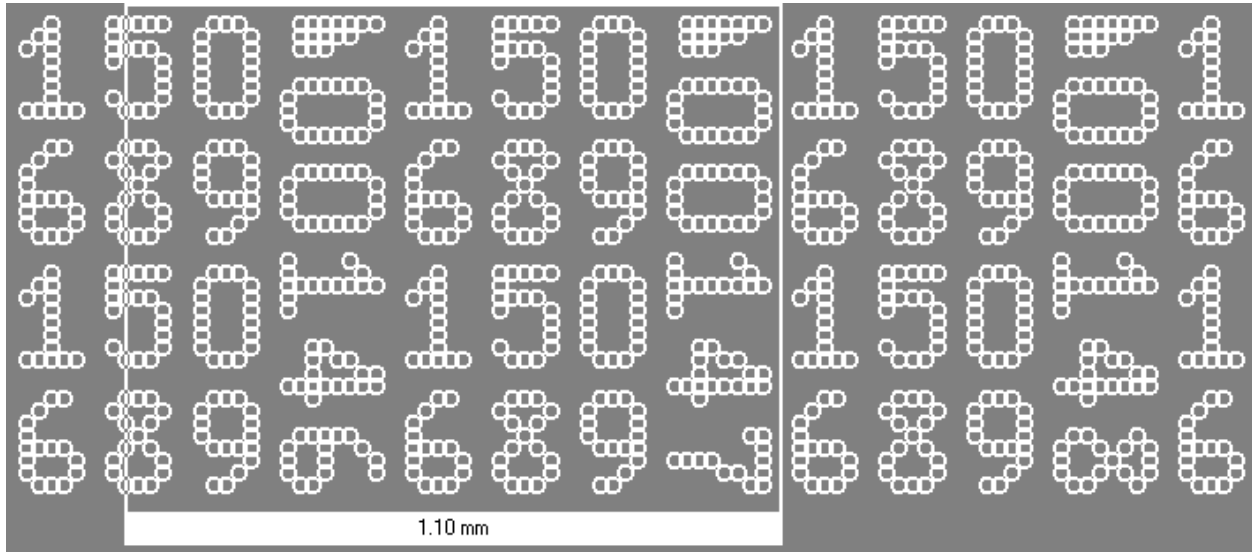
The figure above shows a sample of "unrolled" Sequential Tag wire before April 2012. The triangular flag points to the first digit in the batch code (165809) and in the sequential code (00146). The white lines in the figure show the length of the tag and one possible cut.

For agencies using the traditional data conventions, the Sequential Tag has three static words (Agency, Data 1, and Data 2) and a sequential number. The figure above shows Agency = 16, Data 1 = 58, Data 2 = 09, and sequence = 00146 (the lesser of the 2 sequence numbers on the tag).