

Update on Dock Permits

It has been over 8 years since the Q&A on Boat Lifts & Docks was published and, after spot checking docks in August, it is time to freshen up our understanding of the [571-Chapter 16](#) dock regulations.

What must be covered by a Dock Permit?

Any structure over public water must be covered by a permit. Chapter 16 regulates docks, hoists, lifts, slips, racks, mooring buoys, swim platforms, swim trampolines, and 'other structures'. Swim pads, paddleboats, etc., must be included in your dock permit unless you pull them onto shore after each use.

- **Docks** are platform type structures extending from shoreline property.
- **Dock structure** includes anything attached to or placed next to the dock. When determining offsets, the outside edge of your structure – whether it is a catwalk, lift, moored boat, etc. – must be no closer than 10 feet to the edge of the next structure.
- **'Hoists'** and **'lifts'** store boats partially or fully out of the water. Each lift or hoist in the water must be covered by a dock permit.
 - 571-16.1 allows for a hoist designed to store multiple small vessels, such as PWCs, to be treated as a single hoist.
 - The hoist must be *manufactured* for multiple vessels.
 - Hoists or floats manufactured as single units are counted separately. Each hoist or float must be covered by the permit. If you attach two singles together, you still have *two* lifts.
- **Slips** are where you tie a vessel remaining in or over the water. Whether you fasten your boat to the dock, seawall or a tree, it must be covered as a slip under a dock permit. General rule of thumb: *If you leave it over the water—it must be covered by a dock permit.*
- A **rack** may store multiple small watercraft such as kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, or swim pads. Each rack counts as one (1).



A lift *manufactured* to hold multiple small watercraft may be permitted as 1 lift.



Single floats manufactured to be used alone or in conjunction with others are counted as separate lifts. The photo above must be permitted as 2 lifts.

- Note: Storage of stand-up paddleboards on racks placed above the platform of a dock do not need to be included in your dock permit [571-16.1].
- If the paddleboard rack is over the water, it must be included in the dock permit.
- This exemption applies *only to stand-up paddle-*



The paddleboard rack on the left does not need to be included in the dock permit as long as it is over the dock. The paddleboard rack on the right that stores paddleboards over the water must be included in the dock permit as a 'rack'.

boards. It does not apply to swim pads, kayaks, canoes, paddleboats, etc., that are stored on or over the dock, or slides hanging out over the water. These must be identified and included in your dock permit.

- **Mooring buoys** shall be white with a 2-inch blue reflectorized band clearly visible above the water. The buoy shall have at least 1 square foot of surface visible from any direction, extend a minimum of 2 feet above the surface of the water, be at least 16 inches in diameter, and shall be lighted during periods of low visibility and during hours of darkness.
 - Milk jugs, floats, and other structures may *not* be used to mark rocks, direct watercraft away from an area, or used to tie swim pads to.
 - All [mooring buoys](#) must be covered under a Class 3 dock permit.
- **Swim rafts, swim platforms, trampolines, or other structures** shall be permitted under a Class 3 dock permit. Other structures may include slides that extend out over the water, large inflated toys left over the water after use, paddleboats, etc. This is not a complete list.
 - If you have a swim pad or toy that you use and pull *onto shore after each use*, you do not need to include it in your dock permit.
 - If you leave it in the water or store it on top of your dock, it must be included in your dock permit. You must have a Class 3 permit.
 - Class 1 permits do not allow for any anchored or floating structure, such as a swim raft, unless it is removed from the water after each use.
 - Swim pads, swim rafts, etc., must adhere to the 10-foot offset between it and the next structure.
- **General Items:**
 - **Swim areas** – It is against the law to rope off a private swim area on public water or to build or configure your structure to trap water.
 - A **5-foot offset** from your structure to the projection of the property line is required unless your neighbor agrees to make up your lack of offset completely on their side of the property line. At any time they may cancel this agreement and you will need to move your structure to maintain the 5-foot offset.
 - **Update your dock permit BEFORE making any changes or additions to your dock!**
 - **Signs** must be updated whenever you change your permit classification. Signs must be placed on the water's edge of the dock and include the current permit number, 911 address and city. All signs must be maintained and repaired or replaced when damaged.
 - **Transfer** the dock permit immediately after purchasing a home. As a seller, please remind the realtor to notify the new owners.
 - **Winter removal** is required for docks located in areas subject to destruction or damage by ice movement. If your dock is damaged by ice flows, it must be removed by December 15. *Docks left in overwinter must have reflective material visible from all directions.*
 - **Contact Information** – When you change your email or phone numbers, *Update* your contact information in the Dock Program at www.iowadnr.gov/boatdocks.



Most dock permits on Lake Delhi expire December 15, 2020. You may renew your dock permit beginning **December 1, 2020**. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Iowa DNR for further information or review Chapter 16 which can be found in the Help Center.

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