

Mooring and Pick Up Buoys

A visual guide to what's legal and what isn't in Vermont



Unencapsulated Polystyrene Foam

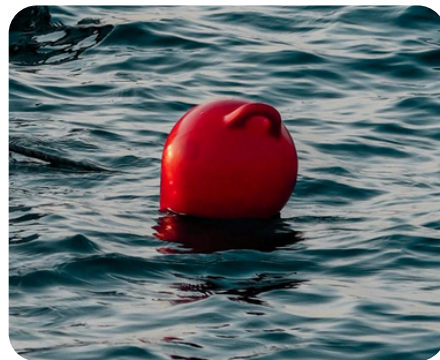


Photos by Vince Franke

- Prohibited by VT's Flood Safety Act.
- Erodes over time polluting waterways



Vinyl and Hard Plastic Mooring Buoys



- Plastic shells are often vinyl or polyethylene
- Durable and impact-resistant
- Can be air-filled or polystyrene foam-filled

NOTE: Foam pool noodles are often used along the pennant line of mooring buoys. While not regulated by the VT legislation, foam pool noodles are not durable and can disintegrate into small pieces that spread in the water. Consider using pickup buoys instead.

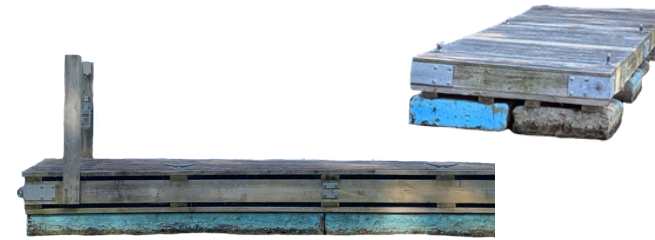
Photo credit (from left to right): A. Patrick from Pexels, E.F. Yarar from Pexels, P. Dietz from Pixabay

Dock Floats

A visual guide to what's legal and what isn't in Vermont



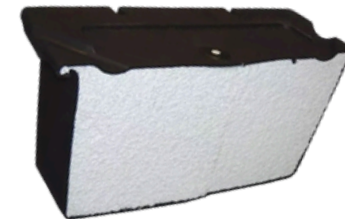
Unencapsulated Polystyrene Foam



- Prohibited by VT's Flood Safety Act.
- Erodes over time polluting waterways and reducing float longevity.
- Come as solid pink, blue, or tan blocks or molded foam made from white beads.



Encapsulated Polystyrene Foam



This is a section of an encapsulated polystyrene foam float

- Floats filled with polystyrene foam completely covered by a protective shell
- Materials used to encapsulate is designed to provide protection to the foam for at least 10 years
- Secured by fasteners resistant to corrosion and decay.



Air-Filled Dock Floats and Barrels



- Alternative options to prevent foam pollution
- Multiple types – non modular, modular and barrels



Scan the QR code to view a
Dock Float Systems
Comparison Table

All pictures on this page are a courtesy of the Conservation Law Foundation and Sea Grant.

Floating Structures

What's legal and what isn't in Vermont



Scan the QR Code to visit the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for a full list of frequently asked questions.

The Vermont's Flood Safety Act passed in 2024 requires that polystyrene foam be encapsulated when used in floating structures on or in Vermont waters. This brochure will help you understand this law.

What is the purpose of this regulation?

Wind, waves, sunlight, heat, and organisms can cause uncovered polystyrene foam used in floating structures to break apart. In turn, small pieces of foam can spread, polluting waterbodies and the environment. This pollution can harm wildlife and pose health risks for people. This regulation aims to prevent pollution by polystyrene foam in Vermont waterways.

What are considered floating structures?

Floating structures include docks, mooring buoys, anchor buoys, and navigation markers. They also include objects in or on the water that are secured in place by a piling or mooring anchor such as boathouses, fueling structures, floating homes, marinas, walkways, and boarding platforms.

To whom does the law apply?

The law applies to any individual or company that owns, distributes, or sells foam docks, buoys, or other floating structures in Vermont.

What are the encapsulation requirements?

Polystyrene foam used in floating structures on or in Vermont waters must be encapsulated by a protective covering that:

- Completely covers the foam to keep it isolated from the water
- Will maintain its protective qualities for at least 10 years
- Is secured by fasteners that are resistant to corrosion and decay.

Small gaps for ballast holes are permitted in the covering, provided that they are no larger than 0.75-inch in diameter and represent 0.1 percent or less of the square footage of the floating structure.

Can I use garbage bags, shrink wrap, hardware cloth (metal mesh), or plywood to protect uncovered polystyrene foam floats?

No, because these coverings are not expected to last more than the required 10-year period. Better alternatives for protective coverings are those made of hard plastic (at least 0.15-inches thick), concrete, aluminum, or steel.

What does enforcement look like?

Unencapsulated polystyrene foam used as a flotation in Vermont waters, including in any dock system, float, mooring system, or buoy, is declared a nuisance and a public health hazard and may be prosecuted as provided in the Vermont Law.

How do I dispose of my old foam floats?

You must dispose of unencapsulated foam floats in an approved manner. This includes bringing them to an authorized waste transfer station, the Coventry landfill, or working with a permitted waste hauler. If temporary storage is needed before disposal, keep floats indoors to prevent the polystyrene from disintegrating into smaller pieces.

How can I get involved with pollution prevention and cleanup?

The Lake Champlain Basin Marine Debris Coalition helps volunteers track and clean up marine debris in Lake Champlain. If you'd like to get involved, check out our website: <https://www.uvm.edu/seagrant/lake-champlain-basin-marine-debris-coalition>

