

## Storm & Drought Prep for Your Dock and Boathouse

*A free DockSmarts guide for lakefront homeowners in Texas and the South*

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Your lake won't always behave. A storm can push the water up and bring high winds, and a drought can pull the water down. A little preparation for both can protect your dock, your boathouse and your boat.

After more than 30 years in marine construction, here's what I'd do when the weather turns.

### Water Levels Are the Key

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When it comes to storm and drought considerations, **water levels are a key component**, especially if you keep a **boat on a lift inside a boathouse**.

- **Expecting high water?** The boat may need to be **lifted to the highest position available** so it can't float out.
- **Low water?** You may need **additional length of cable or straps** so the boat can still reach the water.

### Before a Storm: Secure the Deck

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In stormy weather with high winds, deck items like **chairs, umbrellas and barbecue pits** need attention. **Secure them, or put them away until after the storm**, so they don't become hazards in the water.

### During a Drought: Floating Docks

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If you have a floating structure, a drought brings its own problems. **It may become necessary to push the dock, if you're able to, to deeper water** so you can maintain accessibility and not damage the dock.

Keep an eye on the bottom, too. When lake levels drop, **rocks or debris on the bottom can damage your structural flotation**.

### During a Drought: Fixed Docks

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Fixed docks can't follow the water down, so low water hits them differently:

- **Structural distortion.** Water levels that go low enough can cause distortion in the overall structure.
- **Dredging.** Drought periods may call for maintenance like **dredging to keep the boat lift accessible**.

### If Your Lake Freezes

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Most Southern lakes rarely freeze, but if yours does, plan for it. On floating docks where winters may see freezing conditions, **it may be necessary to take off your boathouse portion and remove your boat over the winter** so it doesn't damage the dock itself.

## Storm & Drought Checklist

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### Before a storm or high water

1. Raise the boat on its lift to **the highest position available** so it can't float out.
2. **Secure or put away** chairs, umbrellas and barbecue pits until after the storm.

### During a drought or low water

3. Add **extra cable or strap length** if the boat needs it to reach the water.
4. Floating dock: **push it to deeper water**, if you're able to, to keep access and avoid damage.
5. Watch for **rocks or debris on the bottom** that could damage floats.
6. Fixed dock: watch for **distortion** in the structure.
7. Plan for **dredging** if it's needed to keep the boat lift accessible.

### If your lake freezes

8. Floating dock: plan to **remove the boat and the boathouse portion** over the winter.

#### Still Choosing Your Dock?

How your dock handles storms and droughts starts with the type you build. My free guide "**Floating or Fixed? Choosing the Right Dock for Your Lake**" walks you through how your lake's water levels, bank slope and water depth should shape that choice.

#### Get More Straight Talk on Docks

This is one of four free DockSmarts guides. Join the **DockSmarts newsletter at [docksmarts.com](https://docksmarts.com)** for practical tips on permits, choosing your dock, hiring a builder, and more, straight from someone who's spent a career on the water.

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*Disclaimer: This guide is general information only. Every lake and dock is different. Follow local weather warnings and put safety first. Don't go out on your dock in dangerous conditions.*

### Before a storm / high water

- ☐ Boat on a lift: raise it to the highest position available so it can't float out
- ☐ Secure chairs, umbrellas and barbecue pits, or put them away until after the storm
- ☐ Loose deck items can become hazards in the water

### During a drought / low water

- ☐ Boat on a lift: you may need extra cable or strap length so the boat can still reach the water
- ☐ Floating dock: if you're able to, push it to deeper water to keep access and avoid damage
- ☐ Watch for bottom rocks or debris that can damage floats
- ☐ Fixed dock: low water can distort the structure
- ☐ Dredging may be needed to keep the boat lift reachable

### Lakes that freeze

- ☐ Floating dock: you may need to remove the boat and the boathouse portion over the winter so they don't damage the dock

**Safety first. Follow local weather warnings.**  
**Don't go out on the dock in dangerous conditions.**

General info only. Every lake and dock is different.

*Print this page: what to do before a storm, during a drought, and on lakes that freeze.*