

CHAPTER 41  
BOATING NAVIGATION AIDS  
[Prior to 12/31/86, Conservation Commission[290] Ch 31]

**571—41.1(462A) Definitions.**

*“A display area”* is the area on a sign or buoy needed for display of a waterway marker symbol.

*“Buoy”* is any device designed to float which is anchored in the water and which is used to convey a message.

*“Regulatory marker”* is a waterway marker which has no equivalent in the U.S. Coast Guard system of navigational aids.

*“Sign”* is any device for carrying a message which is attached to another object such as a piling, buoy, structure or the land itself.

*“State aid to navigation”* is a waterway marker which is the equivalent of a U.S. Coast Guard aid to navigation.

*“Symbols”* are geometric figures such as a diamond, circle, rectangle, etc., used to convey a basic message.

*“Waterway marker”* is any device designed to be placed in, on, or near the water to convey an official message to a boat operator on matters which may affect health, safety, or well being, except that such devices of the U.S. or any agency of the United States are excluded from the meaning of this definition.

**571—41.2(462A) Waterway markers.** Waterway markers used on the waters of this state shall be as follows:

**41.2(1) State aids to navigation.**

*a.* A red-topped white buoy, red buoy or sign shall indicate that side of the channel to be kept to the right side of the vessel when entering the channel from the main water body or when proceeding upstream.

*b.* A green-topped white buoy, green buoy or sign shall indicate that side of the channel to be kept to the left of a vessel when entering the channel from the main water body or when proceeding upstream.

*c.* Buoys or signs described in “*a*” and “*b*” above shall normally be used in pairs and only for the purpose of marking a clearly defined channel.

*d.* State aids to navigation shall be numbered or lettered for identification. Red buoys and signs marking channels shall be identified with even numbers, and green buoys and signs marking channels shall be identified with odd numbers, the numbers increasing from the main water body or proceeding upstream. Buoys and signs indicating the center of a waterway will be identified by letters of the alphabet. All numbers and letters used to identify state aids to navigation shall be preceded by the letters “IA”.

*e.* Letters and numerals used with state aids to navigation shall be white, in block characters of good proportion, and spaced in a manner which will provide maximum legibility. Such letters and numerals shall be at least six inches in height.

*f.* The shapes of state aids to navigation shall be compatible with the shapes established by U.S. Coast Guard regulations for the equivalent U.S. Coast Guard aids to navigation.

*g.* Where reflectorized materials are used, a red reflector will be used on a red buoy, and a green reflector on a green buoy.

**41.2(2) Regulatory markers.**

*a.* A diamond shape of international orange with white center shall indicate danger. The nature of the danger may be indicated by words or well-known abbreviations in black letters inside the diamond shape, or above or below it, or both, on white background.

*b.* A diamond shape of international orange with a cross of the same color within it against a white center without qualifying explanation shall indicate a zone from which all vessels are excluded.

*c.* A circle of international orange with white center will indicate a control or restriction. The nature of the control or restriction shall be indicated by words, numerals, or well-known abbreviations in black letters inside the circle. Additional explanation may be given above or below it in black letters on white background.

*d.* A rectangular shape of international orange with white center will indicate information, other than a danger, control or restriction, which may contribute to health, safety or well-being. The message will be presented within the rectangle in black letters.

*e.* Letters or numerals used with regulatory markers shall be black, in block characters of good proportion, spaced in a manner which will provide maximum legibility, and of a size which will provide the necessary degree of visibility.

**571—41.3(462A) Authority to place markers.**

**41.3(1)** No waterway marker shall be placed on, in, or near the waters of the state unless such placement is authorized by the agency or political subdivision of the state exercising jurisdiction, with respect to regulation of boating, over the area where placed, except that the provisions of this section shall not apply to private aids to navigation under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard.

**41.3(2)** Such agency or political subdivision of the state will, prior to authorizing placement, obtain the necessary clearances of federal and state agencies exercising regulatory authority over the area concerned.

**41.3(3)** The agency or political subdivision of the state authorizing the placement of a waterway marker will inform the department of natural resources of the following:

*a.* Exact location of the marker, expressed in distance and direction from one or more fixed objects whose precise location is known.

*b.* The description and purpose of the marker including its identifying number, if any.

**571—41.4(462A) Maintenance of waterway markers.**

**41.4(1)** Waterway markers will be maintained in proper condition or be replaced or removed.

**41.4(2)** Zoned areas shall extend not less than 50 feet nor more than 400 feet from shore.

**41.4(3)** Buoys delineating the restricted speed zone shall be placed no more than 400 feet apart through the length of the affected portion of the channel.

This rule is intended to implement the provisions of Iowa Code sections 462A.17, 462A.26, 462A.31, and 462A.32.

**571—41.5 and 41.6** Reserved.

**571—41.7(462A) Display of waterway markers.**

**41.7(1)** A waterway marker may be displayed as a sign or a fixed support, as a buoy bearing a symbol on its surface, or as a sign mounted on a buoy.

**41.7(2)** When a buoy is used to carry a symbol on its surface, it will be white, with bands of international orange on the top, and at the bottom above the water line.

**41.7(3)** A buoy whose sole purpose is to carry a sign above it will be marked with three bands of international orange alternating with two bands of white, each band occupying approximately one-fifth of the total area of the buoy above the water line, except where the sign itself carries orange bands; however, nothing in these rules shall be construed to prohibit the mounting of a sign on a buoy which has been placed for a purpose other than that of carrying a sign.

**41.7(4)** When symbols are placed on signs, a suitable white background may be used outside the symbol.

**571—41.8(462A) Specifications for waterway markers.**

**41.8(1)** The size of a display area shall be as required by circumstances, except that no display area shall be smaller than 1 foot in height. The size shall increase in increments of 6 inches; provided, however, that this specification for increase in increments shall not apply to markers in existence prior to the adoption of this rule.

**41.8(2)** The thickness of the symbol outline shall be one-tenth of the height of the display area.

**41.8(3)** The outside width of the diamond, the inner diameter of the circle, and the average of the inside and outside widths of a square shall be two-thirds of the display area height.

**41.8(4)** The sides of the diamond shall slope at a 35 degree angle from the vertical on a plane surface. Appropriate adjustments for curvature may be made when applied to a cylindrical surface.

**41.8(5)** Materials. Waterway markers shall be made of materials which will retain, despite weather and other exposures, the characteristics essential to their basic significance, such as color, shape, legibility and position. Reflectorized materials may be used.

**571—41.9(462A) Waterway marking devices.** All waters under the jurisdiction of the natural resource commission.

**41.9(1)** Mooring buoys shall be white with a 2-inch blue reflectorized band clearly visible above the water; the buoy shall extend a minimum of 12 inches above the surface of the water, and shall have at least 1 square foot of surface visible from any direction.

**41.9(2)** Placement of mooring buoys shall be within 250 feet of shore, except under certain circumstances the natural resource commission may require them to be placed at a lesser distance. Requirements for mooring buoys may be waived by the director under special circumstances.

**41.9(3)** Permanent race course marker buoys shall be white with a ball of international orange, of at least 12 inches in diameter. The buoy shall extend a minimum of 2 feet above the surface of the water and shall be at least 16 inches in diameter, and shall be lighted during periods of low visibility, and during the hours of darkness.

**41.9(4)** Markers such as mooring buoys and race course markers will be processed in the same manner as waterway markers, and authorization for their placement will be obtained from the agency or political subdivision of the state exercising jurisdiction with respect to regulation of boating, and such agency or political subdivision will ensure that proper clearances for their placement are obtained from state and federal agencies exercising regulatory authority over the area concerned.

**41.9(5)** Such markers shall not be of a color, shape, configuration or marking which could result in their confusion with any federal or state aid to navigation or any state regulatory marker, and shall not be placed where they will obstruct navigation, cause confusion or constitute a hazard.

**571—41.10(462A) The diver's flag.**

**41.10(1)** A red flag with a white diagonal running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner (from mast head to lower outside corner) and known as the "diver's flag" shall, when displayed on the water, indicate the presence of a diver in the water in the immediate area.

**41.10(2)** Recognition of this flag by regulation will not be construed as conferring any rights or privileges on its users, and its presence in a water area will not be construed in itself as restricting the use of the water area so marked.

**41.10(3)** Operators of vessels will, however, exercise precaution commensurate with conditions indicated.

**41.10(4)** This flag shall be displayed only when diver activities are in progress, and its display in a water area when no diver activities are in progress in that area will constitute a violation of this rule and of Iowa Code chapter 462A.

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