



Uniform State Waterway Marking System & Intracoastal Waterway Markers

UNIFORM STATE WATERWAY MARKING SYSTEM

In this article we continue our review of aids to navigation and waterway marking systems. The Uniform State Waterway Marking System is no stranger to inland and near-coastal boaters. It utilizes white buoys with very distinct orange colored bands on the top and bottom and between these bands there can be only one of four symbols, each with a different meaning. Let's look at the different symbols used.

Diamond with a cross in the middle – A buoy with this symbol is used to mark areas that boats should **NOT** enter. Its most common use is to mark swimming areas, however they are also found before a waterfall or environmentally sensitive areas where boat traffic could harm migrating or nesting animals or lead to erosion of the shoreline.

Diamond— The letter 'D' in diamond stands for danger and that's exactly what this marker symbolizes. They are usually found marking rocks, reefs, obstructions or any possible danger to boaters.

Circle — This symbol is a regulatory marker indicating that some regulation is in effect. Its most popular use is for speed limits and no-wake zones, but it may be used to mark a ski zone or for any regulation.

Square — The square is used to deliver information. It can indicate a distance or tell you where the nearest on-water pizza or hot dog stand is located.

Not all Uniform State Waterway Marking System markers are buoys, sometimes they are signs. If they are in the form of a sign, they will still have the orange paint around the border as well as one of the four above named symbols displayed. The markers of the Uniform State

Waterway Marking System are maintained by the State or by marinas, yacht clubs, harbor masters or beach associations. The bottom line is, whoever took out the permit to display the buoy has the obligation to maintain it.

INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY MARKERS

The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) begins in Southern New Jersey, travels down the Atlantic coast, hooks around Southern Florida and follows the coast of the Gulf of Mexico ending in Brownsville, Texas. It consists of a chain of local channels and fairways linked together to provide a protected inland route for vessels making coastwise passages.

The channels that make up the ICW system are marked with yellow symbols that are displayed on the channel buoys. That means these buoys are serving two purposes. They are a navigational aid for the lateral system as well as an ICW marker. The symbols that mark the ICW consist of yellow squares or triangles. Here's how it works. Beginning in New Jersey and traveling in a clockwise direction South and then on to Texas, any marker showing a yellow triangle should be passed by keeping it on the starboard side of the boat. If the marker has a yellow square on it then it should be passed by keeping it on the port side. No matter what its basic shape, any aid of any shape carrying a yellow triangle should be passed to starboard when following the ICW from north to south and on the Gulf coast.

In our next article, we'll take a look at proper fueling of your vessel.

Until then....Safe Boating

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