



Docks, Piers, and Gangways

Bulletin 47

Division of Building Safety and Inspection for 2018 International Codes

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the requirements for piers, docks, and gangways for permitting requirements accessory to Single Family Dwelling on a shoreline.

Type of Structure	Building Permit	Shoreline Review, PCC Title 18S Development Policies and Regulations - Shorelines	Environmental Checklist WAC 197-11 , PCC Title 18D
Float (Free float - not attached to land or a dock)	NO	YES See PCC sections: 18S.40.140 – Water Access, Shoreline Substantial Development (SD), 18S.60.020.C. – SD Exemptions, and Table 18S.60.030-1 Shoreline Permit Table	YES
Dock and Pier More than 30” above grade at the OHWM	YES	YES	YES
<u>Less than or equal to 30”</u> above grade at the OHWM	NO	YES See PCC sections: 18S.40.140 – Water Access, Shoreline Substantial Development (SD), 18S.60.020.C. – SD Exemptions, and Table 18S.60.030-1 Shoreline Permit Table	
Gangway More than 30” above grade	YES	YES	YES
<u>Less than or equal to 30”</u> above grade	NO	YES See PCC sections: 18S.40.140 – Water Access, Shoreline Substantial Development (SD), 18S.60.020.C. – SD Exemptions, and Table 18S.60.030-1 Shoreline Permit Table	
Deck More than 30” above grade	YES	YES	NO, if it is a minor construction
<u>Less than or equal to 30”</u> above grade	NO	YES See PCC sections: 18S.40.140 – Water Access, Shoreline Substantial Development (SD), 18S.60.020.C. – SD Exemptions, and Table 18S.60.030-1 Shoreline Permit Table	
Bulkhead More than 4’ from the bottom of the footing to the top of the bulkhead.	YES	YES	YES, if a building permit or a shoreline permit is required-
<u>Less than or equal to 4’</u> from bottom of footing to top of the bulkhead	NO	YES See PCC Chapters: 18S.30.070 Shoreline Stabilization, 18S.60.020 2, 18S.60.030-1 Shoreline Permit Table, and 18E.110 , Erosion Hazard Areas.	

Please Note:

- Any regulated activity proposed in Critical Area is also subject to Pierce County Code, [Title 18E](#), Critical Areas
- Within shoreline jurisdiction, definitions on Title 18S supersede all other definitions.
- Where provisions of one code conflict with another code, the most restrictive code applies.

Building Definitions:

- Float: A "Float" is a structure comprised of a number of logs, boards, barrels, etc., fastened together into a platform capable of floating on water, used as a landing or moorage structure for marine transport or for swimming purposes. Floats are either attached to a gangway, pier, or are anchored to the bedlands so as to allow free movement up or down with the rising or falling water levels.
- Dock: A "Dock" is a structure which abuts the shoreline and floats upon the water and is used as a landing or moorage place for marine transport or for recreational purposes. A dock can include a gangway or pier with a float.
- Pier: A "Pier" is a structure which abuts the shoreline and is built over the water on pilings and is used as a landing or moorage place for marine transport or for recreational purposes.
- Gangway: A "Gangway" is a sloping structure which provides access from a pier to a float. A gangway is also considered a "ramp".
- "Gangway" shall also include a sloping structure providing access to a pier, float, or dock from a bank to a shoreline.

Title 18S Definitions:

- **"Float"** means a mooring platform on water located offshore and held in place by anchors, buoys, or piling. They are not meant to lift vessels.
- **"Dock"** means a floating or non-floating mooring platform that connects with the OHWM
- **"Pier"** means a structure which abuts the OHWM and is built over the water on piling and is used as a landing or moorage place for vessels or for recreational purposes.

HANDRAILS/GUARDRAILS:

Guardrails need not be required to meet the spacing requirements in Chapter 3 of the IRC. Handrails need not be required on docks. Floating docks are normally close enough to the water surface that injury from a fall is not a concern. Ramps or gangways steeper than 1 in 12 shall be required to have a handrail. Steep gangways or ramps may be slippery and thus should have adequate handrail for support.

EXCEPTIONS (Building Division added July 1998):

- 3.1 Docks and piers serving a single-family dwelling 6' or less above grade, shall not be required to place guardrails around the perimeter of the dock or pier.
- 3.2 Gangways serving docks and piers serving a single-family dwelling unit shall be required to have 36" high handrails on each side but need not be constructed as a guardrail below or in conjunction with the handrail.

SPECIAL INSPECTION:

Special inspections are required for pilings for private piers, docks, and gangways.

ILLUSTRATIONS

