

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

H

1

HOUSE BILL 845

Short Title: Reduce Drowning Risk/Public Docks. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Helfrich, Setzer, Torbett, and Rhyne (Primary Sponsors).  
*For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.*

Referred to: Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 10, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE INSTALLATION AND USE OF WATER SAFETY RESCUE  
EQUIPMENT AT PIERS AND PUBLIC WATER ACCESS FACILITIES OWNED BY  
STATE AGENCIES AND UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 75A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new  
Article to read:

"Article 5.

"Water Safety Rescue Equipment at Public Docks and Piers.

**"§ 75A-60. Title.**

This Article shall be known as and may be cited as the State Waters Rescue Equipment Act.

**"§ 75A-61. Definitions.**

In addition to the definitions set forth in G.S. 75A-2, the following definitions apply to this  
Article:

- (1) Access point. – An area of shoreline of a waterbody that is intended to  
facilitate direct public access to the water.
- (2) Covered water access facility. – A pier or access point that is (i) open to the  
public and (ii) owned or operated by the Commission, any other State agency,  
or a unit of local government.
- (3) High-incident drowning area. – An area within 100 feet of a pier or access  
point where more than one fatal drowning incident has occurred in the span  
of five years.
- (4) Pier. – A man-made, raised structure extending into waters of this State for  
use as a landing or mooring place for watercraft or as a promenade or to  
protect or form a harbor.
- (5) Public rescue equipment. – Includes a range of water rescue devices available  
for public use in case of emergency, such as ring life buoys, throw bags, rescue  
tubes, and rescue poles.

**"§ 75A-62. Public rescue equipment on covered water access facilities.**

(a) The owner or operator of a covered water access facility located in or adjacent to  
waters of this State shall install public rescue equipment, including, at a minimum, ring life buoys  
meeting the requirements of subsection (c) of this section, on each covered water access facility  
located in waters of this State. The ring life buoy must not be permanently secured in any way to  
the station, rack, or pier. Each ring life buoy must be stowed inside a station to protect it from



\* H 8 4 5 - V - 1 \*

constant weather exposure. The station must be a bright orange or yellow color for high visibility and to allow for quick access to the ring.

(b) The owner or operator of the covered water access facility shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the public rescue equipment and shall also provide public education regarding the public rescue equipment.

(c) Ring life buoys installed as required by this section must meet the following requirements:

(1) The ring life buoy shall meet the requirements of 46 C.F.R. Part 160, Subpart 160.050 or 46 C.F.R. Part 160, Subpart 160.150 for SOLAS-approved equipment or successor standards issued by the United States Coast Guard.

(2) A buoyant line of at least 100 feet in length with a breaking strength of at least 5 kilonewtons must be attached to each ring life buoy. The end of the line must not be secured to the shore or the pier.

(3) Each ring life buoy must be marked with type II retroreflective material meeting the requirements of 46 C.F.R. Part 160, Subpart 164.018.

(4) Each ring life buoy shall be placed at a distance not to exceed 200 feet from the shoreline at each access point and be available for emergency rescue operations.

(5) Each pier shall have a ring life buoy installed with appropriate signage alerting the public to its availability and use."

**SECTION 2.** The sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year is appropriated from the General Fund to the Wildlife Resources Commission to comply with the requirements of this act and to provide grants of no more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) to units of local government located in economic tier one areas of the State to comply with the requirements of this act.

**SECTION 3.** Section 2 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2025. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.