



Floatmaster® General Use Guidelines Safe Operation, Proper Handling, and Equipment Care

These guidelines establish the technical standards, safety protocols, and quality expectations for the rental, operation, assembly, and return of Floatmaster sectional barges, spuds, winches, and propulsion units. Strict adherence protects personnel, maintains structural integrity and flotation performance, preserves commercial resale value, and ensures compliance with rental terms. Any deviation may result in additional charges for repairs, cleaning, or extended rental periods.

All operations must prioritize personnel safety, environmental protection, and equipment preservation. Contractors are responsible for providing adequate training, personal protective equipment (PPE), and job-specific risk assessments.

1. Offloading & Initial Barge Handling

A **minimum 100-ton crane** is recommended for safely offloading barges from the truck to the water.

Each barge is equipped with:

- A single-point lifting clevis or shackle at the top center for primary crane attachment.



- Thimble holes around the perimeter for optional four-point lifting with nylon straps or chains.

Critical Safety & Handling Protocols:

- Attach tag lines to both ends of each barge to maintain controlled movement while suspended.



- Verify crane load charts and certifications against the exact Floatmaster model weight (refer to Floatmaster Equipment Specifications).
- All lifting operations must comply with OSHA/ANSI standards, including pre-lift inspections, clear communication, and exclusion zones.
- Personnel must wear hard hats, high-visibility vests, steel-toe boots, and life vests when working near water. Always attach tag lines to control movement while the barge is in the air.

Connecting barges after launching:

1. Position barges in calm water and bring them into initial proximity using tag lines or crane assistance.
2. Align the sections using two trained employees standing safely on the outer edges (or thread a small choker through opposing rope thimbles and apply slight crane lift to draw bottoms together).
3. Ensure the bottom edges mate fully and evenly before proceeding.
4. Carefully engage the lockbar mechanism while keeping hands and fingers clear of all pinch points.
5. Verify full engagement by visual inspection and gentle pressure testing.
6. Install any required spuds or additional connections per project-specific stability analysis.



Safety Note: Never attempt assembly in high winds, strong currents, or low-visibility conditions. Use additional tag lines and spotters. Improper alignment or forced engagement can cause structural stress and permanent damage.



2. Operating Equipment on Barges – Mat Requirements

To prevent deck damage from steel crawler tracks or rubber tires:

- **Hardwood crane mats (8" to 12" thick)** must be used under all cranes, excavators, or other heavy equipment.



- Any damage caused by operating without mats will be repaired at the contractor's expense.
- Photos of damage plus a repair estimate will be provided for your review before work begins. Equipment remains on rent during repairs.

Pro tip: Advanced notice of potential damage allows us to coordinate repairs efficiently and avoid extra freight or downtime charges.

Quality & Care Protocols:

- Inspect mats daily for wear or shifting.



- Distribute loads evenly to avoid concentrated stress on deck plating.
- Advanced notification of potential overload or hard-digging conditions allows Floatmaster to recommend alternative configurations or additional spuds.

3. Damage Definitions & Assessment Criteria

Damage is defined as any defect that:

- Structurally impairs the barge’s ability to provide flotation or perform its intended duty, or
- Materially degrades the commercial resale value beyond normal wear and tear for the project duration, duty cycle, and type of work performed.

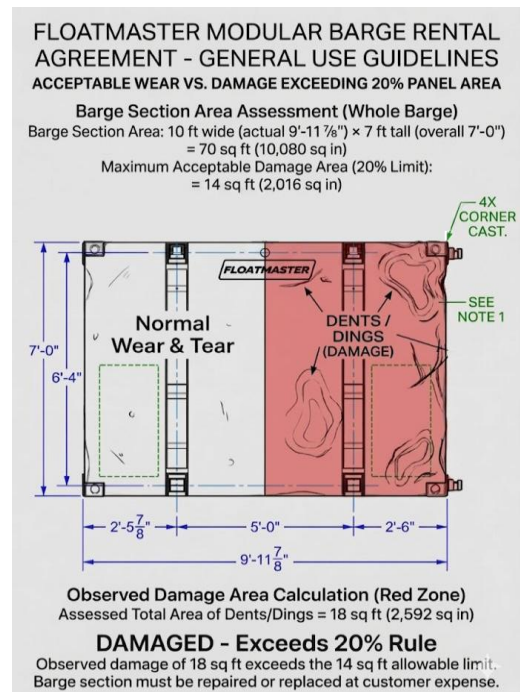
Third-party audits are permitted at contractor expense but must follow Floatmaster standards; equipment remains on rent during evaluation.

Specific Damage Criteria (Sides, Ends, Decks, Bottoms)

- Any structural member (angle, channel, formed pocket, casting, rope thimble) deformed by **¼” or greater**.
- Any plate section deformed by **½” or greater** (regardless of size).
- Any plate section deformed by **¼” or greater** when the defect covers **20 % or more of the panel’s square area**.
- Any hole or tear that punctures the steel.

20 % Panel Area Rule Example Section area = **10 ft wide** × **7 ft tall** = **70 sq ft (10,080 sq in)** 20% of section area = **14 sq ft (2,016 sq in)**

If the total enclosed area of dents/dings (measured by enclosing the damaged area in a square) exceeds **14 sq ft**, the panel is considered damaged and not normal wear and tear.





Common examples of chargeable damage:

- “Rolled tops” or wash-boarding (typically from operating without hardwood mats).
- Damaged corners or panels from excavator buckets or aggressive tugboat contact.

Immediate action if damage occurs: Take dated photos as soon as you realize the equipment has been hit. Notify your insurance carrier and your Floatmaster Territory Manager right away. Addressing issues early is always easier and less costly.

Welding / attachments: You may weld temporary iron or clamps to secure equipment. Before return:

- Remove all added material.
- Grind remaining fragments flush to the original surface (maximum 3/16” protrusion).
- Spray Red/Brown rust inhibiting paint to ground areas.

4. Spud Handling & Safety

- **Never pound** on the top of a spud with an excavator bucket—this will damage the spud and result in chargebacks.
- Raise/lower spuds only with a crane line or approved hydraulic winch.
- 5/8” steel cable must be properly rigged through the sheave at the bottom of the spud pocket.
- If cable is run across open water to shore, attach bright orange vinyl ribbons for visibility to other watercraft.

5. Insurance, Training & Liability

- Rental rates do **not** include insurance.
- You must provide a Certificate of Insurance naming **Floatmaster as “Additional Insured”** under your general liability policy and as “Loss Payee” under your equipment floater policy **before** equipment ships.
- Adequate operator training is **your responsibility**.
- Floatmaster is not liable for accidents caused by unsafe weather (high winds, thunderstorms, heavy rain, high wake, ice, snow) or improper operation.



Minimum platform width & spud requirements For dredging in hard materials (sand, clay, rock), discuss soil conditions with your Floatmaster Territory Manager in advance. Hard digging may require a **minimum of 4 spuds** and careful operator technique to avoid damage. If you observe excessive wear, contact us immediately to evaluate alternatives.

Static stability analysis Floatmaster offers free static stability analysis for floating crane operations. Provide: crane make/model, boom length, working radius, pick weight, and any additional equipment weight/type for accurate recommendations.

6. Hydraulic Equipment, Winches & Propulsion Units

Daily maintenance (critical for safety and warranty):

- Check oil/fluid levels daily.
- Idle engines **30–90 minutes** (depending on air temperature) to warm hydraulic oil before full operation. Cold oil can cause seal failures and spills.
- Our systems use DTE25 / 46-weight hydraulic oil.

Winch-specific:

- All wire rope must be removed before return.
- Fill fuel tank and secure wedges to drums with duct tape.
- Failure to remove wire rope will result in chargeback.

Thrustmaster Propulsion Units:

- Inspect hoses daily for kinks or leaks.
- If the propeller strikes an object, stop immediately and inspect for damage.
- Oil leaks from the propeller shaft seal require immediate shutdown—contact Thrustmaster for repairs.





7. Preparation for Return – Cleaning & Ballast

Mandatory Pre-Return Preparation All barge sections must be returned in “like-new” condition regarding cleanliness and structural integrity. Failure to comply will result in cleaning/repair charges plus extended rental fees.

Comprehensive Cleaning Requirements:

- Remove **all** live marine growth, algae, slime, and dirt.

Marine growth on barge hull (example of what must be removed)



- Scrape thoroughly, followed by high-pressure steam cleaning to kill residual organisms
- If Floatmaster must perform cleaning, you will be invoiced (photos of pre-cleaning condition will be provided).

Ballast water removal:

- Drain **all** ballast and condensation water before lifting barges out of the water.
- Use air compressor through top-corner plugs or pump it out.
- Optional: Drill a ½” drain hole ½” from the bottom plate near each end (notify your Territory Manager so repairs can be planned).



- Residual water causes unsafe weight shifts, uneven lifting, and potential truck transport hazards.

Final Quality Inspection:

- Remove any welded attachments and refinish as specified.
- Ensure all surfaces are free of debris that could become environmental hazards during transport.
- Conduct a joint walk-through inspection with Floatmaster representative when possible.

Securing equipment for transport: Winch and propulsion units must be lifted using **four long chokers** attached to the eyelets on top of the unit frames. The crane line must support the units **before** the truck driver removes securing chains/straps. Units must remain level during lifting.



Thank you for renting Floatmaster equipment. By following these guidelines you help us maintain the highest quality fleet, keep your project on schedule, and avoid unexpected repair or cleaning charges.

If you have any questions or need clarification on any item, contact your **Floatmaster Territory Manager** immediately. We're here to help you succeed safely and efficiently on the water.

Floatmaster – Built for the job. Handled with care.