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## Boat Rack Storage — An Added Income Alternative

### *Temporary Racks, What Are They Good For?*

By Dale Gilbert



It is possible to realize additional income from the same amount of land within any storage operation. A commonly used product in marinas and boatyards is the portable or temporary boat rack. Portable free standing racks can be used to quickly double your storage area. Designed as 4 boat modules (2 high 2 wide) or 6 boat modules (2 high 3 wide). The modules can easily be picked up with a fork truck and moved to various places (i.e. parking lots, winter storage). They can be placed end to end with common columns. This method of use will decrease the cost materials per boat slightly, but also robs you of flexibility, if the racks need to be moved.. The footplate for the racks does not require a foundation, which generally means a building permit is not needed.

In years past, the storage industry gave a quick look at racking boats and shied away. Too much trouble. Most all operations are affiliated with marinas, because boat handling requires special marine forklift equipment. Today, however, many parameters have changed forcing a second look. The demand for boat storage has significantly increased in almost every region in the country. The older population has more discretionary income to spend on recreation. Zoning and planning regulations make it increasingly more difficult to park even small boats at home. There is a large 'used' market for marine forklifts, and even new machines have cost effective lease packages. New boat rack designs allow the boat and trailer to be stored together, solving the problem of trailer storage. These dynamics make racking boats a very attractive income alternative.

One advantage standard storage operations have over marina storage is the expectations of the boater. Traditionally, boat owners will call the marina, and have their boat removed from the rack and launched into the water. Similar to a valet service. After use, the boat is removed from the water, cleaned and placed back in the rack. Standard storage systems will remove the boat from the rack and place it on a trailer for launching 'off-site', which eliminates the need for a 'negative lift' fork truck.

Another, and by far the most important advantage for standard storage consideration, are zoning and parking classifications. Because a standard storage operation is off the water, and does not provide launching, the parking requirements are significantly different, conserving more area for income producing storage.

The cost of temporary racks will vary slightly from area to area based upon the 'boat inventory'. Simply stated, pricing is factor of the amount of steel used for the rack. Heavier boats and wider spans between columns require more steel, and more cost. A typical temporary rack will cost approximately \$800 to \$1,000 per boat. An expense typically recouped in less than 2 years. As the popularity of racking boats grows, an understanding of temporary racks becomes all the more acute. The marine industry treats temporary/portable racks as an accessory product — a glorified boat stand., but the racks are the most versatile, money making pieces of equipment in a marina's arsenal. Any existing space, where you now store boats or trailers can double its revenue.

Here's a quick review of temporary/portable rack uses:

**The Starter Kit** - You are a new drystack developer, unfamiliar with operations and unsure whether people want their boats moved and launched with a forklift. Temporary racks with a leased forklift will have you operational in about a month's time with very little capital commitment. Now you can test the market.

**Teaching Racks** - Your market studies and demand are not an issue. Planning and permitting are progressing, but the actual structure is months away. Neither you nor anyone in the area has experience with operating marine forklifts. Temporary racks will help you determine exact layout requirements, aisle widths and boat handling logistics. Now you can train personnel, and make money while you wait.

**Winter Storage** - Probably the most common use for temporary racks is to fill space normally used during the season. The aisle space in your structure is a prime target for storing additional boats during the winter. Many cold climate areas shrink wrap boats on outside temporary racks.

**Parking Lots** - Examine your parking lot. How much additional income could you generate if boats were stacked above the cars. Temporary racks can be designed to allow parking cars on the first level and boats above.

For ongoing operations temporary racks can increase income, for new projects the racks create an inexpensive test and training ground. No profit conscientious storage operation should operate without temporary racks.

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