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## **An Uplifting Experience**

There's more than one way to lift a boat out of the water. If you own a boat and have a home located on a lake or other body of water, you typically are going to use a boat lift to store your vessel out of the water. For years it has been the best way to prevent maintenance problems that can occur when the boat sits in the water for extended periods of time.

What type of boat lift should you use? There are several options and features to consider.

One of the first things you need to know before you purchase a boat lift is the weight of your boat. That way you can make sure to buy a boat lift with enough weight capacity to easily lower and raise your boat.

"A very common mistake people make is to buy a boat lift that doesn't have enough weight capacity for the boat they want to store," said Lonnie Bennigsdorf, sales and customer service representative for ShoreStation® Lakefront Systems. "Overloading the boat lift could cause damage. Also consider what your long-term capacity needs may be. If you think you may get a bigger boat in the future, it's much cheaper to buy a bigger boat lift now than having to replace one that is too small."

The method in which a boat lift raises a boat out of the water is another key consideration. Some lifts use a vertical lift system in which the lifting platform goes straight up and down. Others rely on a cantilever lift system where the lifting platform moves from back to front while raising and vice-versa when lowering.

“In my years of experience, I have seen fewer problems with vertical boat lifts because they don’t put the strain on the lifting mechanisms like a cantilever system can,” Bennigsdorf said. “Because they pull straight up, vertical lift boat lifts also tend to work better in low-water conditions than the cantilever types.”

A V-shaped platform also makes it easier for a boat lift to raise a boat in low-water conditions. In addition, the V-shape makes it easier to center the boat on the lift when docking and launching.

There are three basic drives that are used on boat lifts to raise and lower boats: hydraulic, electric and manual.

Hydraulic boat lifts offer the most quiet and convenient method of lifting a boat because they have fewer moving parts and don’t have the wheel ratcheting associated with manual and electric models. The cables in hydraulic boat lifts do not wind up on drum as in most lifts, so cable lift is greatly extended. Hydraulic boat lifts typically have the fastest lift time.

“One of the biggest advantages hydraulic boat lifts offer is the ability to operate them using either a wireless remote or a remote switch mounted on the lift,” Bennigsdorf said. “That means you can press a button and then walk away or pull away in your boat. You can’t do that with a manual or electric-driven boat lift.”

Because most of the hydraulic operating parts can be placed on one side of the boat lift, these models often allow much easier access in and out of the boat.

Like hydraulic boat lifts, electric operated models offer the convenience of no manual labor when raising or lowering the boat. Some electric boat lifts also have a wheel drive that can be used as a manual backup to raise or lower a boat during electric power failures.

Manual, wheel-driven lifts have been around for years. They are the most economical and incorporate a geared winch for easier lifting. They remain a popular option for many boat owners but are not always practical for larger boats.

Here are some features Bennigsdorf suggests buyers should consider when looking at any type of boat lift:

- Be sure the lift frame uses a combination of aluminum and galvanized steel in the construction for added strength in a lightweight package
- Adjustable corners for level placement on uneven lakebeds
- Adjustable bunks that conform to the boat's hull and also keep the boat centered during launching and loading

For more information on boat lifts for all types of boat and personal watercraft models, visit [www.shorestation.com](http://www.shorestation.com) or call 1-800-859-3028. ShoreStation is a division of Midwest Industries, Inc., located in Ida Grove, Iowa. Midwest Industries also manufactures ShoreLand'r<sup>®</sup> boat and powersports trailers.