

# Personal Flotation Device Information



**Personal Flotation Device**



**AQUARIUS**  
S Y S T E M S



# PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES / LIFE JACKETS

## It is only a “life” jacket if you wear it!

PFDs are important potential life saving devices that are required on board the watercraft. Make sure when selecting a PFD that it is approved United States Coast Guard approved and is designed for a person of your size and weight.

Even if not required, every boater should wear a PFD when in dangerous conditions. Dangerous conditions include high boat traffic, severe weather, dangerous water conditions, dangerous local hazards, distance from shore, operations at night and boating alone. Any time you feel you are in danger or simply apprehensive about situations remember the following: when in doubt, get it out and put it on.

Putting on a PFD while on land or in a stable boat can be a simple task. However, donning a PFD while in the water can be a very difficult task. You do not have the same leverage or balance you would normally have. Although you should have on a PFD prior to entering the water, you should practice putting on a PFD while in a pool or in shallow water to experience first hand what it would be like.

## How many Life Jackets do you need?

One wearable PFD for each person aboard is required and they should be stowed in a location that is readily accessible. In addition to a wearable PFD for each person, one Type IV throwable device (e.g., cushions, ring buoys), which should be immediately available, is also required on all vessels 16 feet or larger.

Federal regulations require all children 13 years of age and younger to wear a life jacket unless they are below deck or in an enclosed cabin. State laws may vary in terms of age; be sure to check your state’s boating safety regulations.

## Choosing a Life Jacket

There are four basic life jacket types, but not all life jackets are suitable for all activities. Choose your life jacket based on your planned activities and anticipated water conditions. Always look for the United States Coast Guard approval number before you purchase any life jacket. Above all, remember, **the best life jacket is one you will wear.**

Most adults need only an extra 7–12 pounds of buoyancy to keep their heads above water. A life jacket can give you that “extra lift” until help comes. Keep in mind that life jackets are not “one-size-fits-all” garments. How much “extra lift” you need in the water is determined by body weight and fat, lung size, clothing and water conditions (rough or calm). In general, the more physically fit you are, the more “lift” you need. Check your life jacket label to be sure it is made for your weight and size. In the event of an emergency— DO NOT PANIC! Relax, put your head back and let your life jacket help you come out on top.

The following is a list of types of PFDs and their intended use.

### DESCRIPTIVE TYPES OF PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDs)



**A TYPE I PFD, or OFFSHORE LIFE JACKET** provides the most buoyancy. It is effective for all waters, especially open, rough, or remote waters where rescue may be delayed. It is designed to turn most unconscious wearers in the water to a face-up position. The TYPE I comes in two sizes: Adult size provides at least 22 pounds of buoyancy, the child size, 11 pounds, minimum.



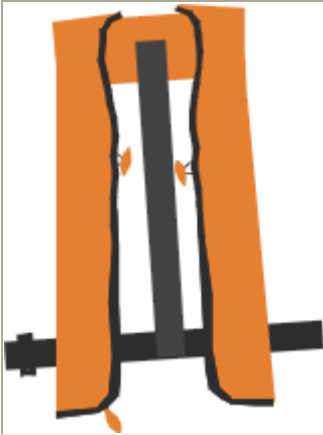
**A TYPE II PFD, NEAR-SHORE BUOYANT VEST** is intended for calm, inland water or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. This type will turn some unconscious wearers to a face-up position. The turning action is not as pronounced nor as effective as a TYPE I. An adult size provides at least 15.5 pounds buoyancy, a medium child size provides 11 pounds. Infant and small child sizes each provide at least 7 pounds buoyancy.



**A TYPE III PFD, or FLOTATION AID** is good for calm, inland water, or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. It is designed so that wearers can put themselves in a face-up position in the water. The wearer may have to tilt their head back to avoid turning face down. TYPE III has the same minimum buoyancy as a TYPE II PFD. Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed for various water sports are examples. Some Type III PFDs are designed to be inflated upon entering the water.



**A TYPE IV PFD, or THROWABLE DEVICE** is intended for calm, inland water with heavy boat traffic, where help is always present. It is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped and held by the user until rescued. It is not designed to be worn. Type IV devices include buoyant cushions, ring buoys, and horseshoe buoys.



**A TYPE V PFD, or SPECIAL USE DEVICE** is intended for specific activities and may be carried instead of another PFD only if used according to the approval condition on the label. Some Type V devices provide hypothermia protection. Varieties include deck suits, work vests, board sailing vests, and Hybrid PFDs. **A TYPE V HYBRID INFLATABLE PFD** is the least bulky. It contains a small amount of inherent buoyancy and an inflatable chamber and must be worn when underway to be acceptable. This type is designed to automatically inflate upon entering the water.

## Caring for your Life Jacket

Make sure your PFDs are in good condition before leaving the dock. Ultraviolet sunlight, rough handling and improper storage make it necessary to ensure that your PFD is in serviceable condition; this is a United States Coast Guard requirement. Check your PFD for rips, tears and holes and make sure seams, straps and hardware are okay. Make sure there is no sign of water logging, mildew odor or shrinkage of the buoyant materials. Check and replace spent cartridges in inflatable PFDs. Follow these tips to keep your life jacket in good condition:

1. Do not alter your life jacket. If yours does not fit, get one that does. An altered life jacket is no longer United States Coast Guard approved and may not save your life.
2. Do not put heavy objects on your life jacket or use it for a kneeling pad or boat fender. Life jackets lose buoyancy when crushed.
3. Exposure to sunlight and moisture can deteriorate them rapidly. Let your life jacket drip dry thoroughly before putting it away. If your PFD has been in saltwater, rinse it thoroughly with freshwater. Stow your PFDs in a well ventilated place.
4. Do not leave your life jacket on board for long periods when the boat is not in use.
5. Never dry your life jacket on a radiator, heater or any other direct heat source.
6. Put your name on your life jacket if you are the only one who wears it.

## Proper Fit of your Life Jacket

To ensure the proper fit of a PFD have the wearer put on a PFD and adjust the straps as necessary to ensure a snug fit. Have the wearer raise his or her arms above their head. With his or her arms raised above their head, pull up firmly on the upper straps of the PFD. A properly fitted PFD will not ride higher than the ears or mouth of the wearer.

**Note** - This fitting procedure is not applicable to inflatable PFDs. For inflatable PFDs, the retaining strap should be adjusted loosely to allow for the inflation of the device.

## Inflatable Life Jackets

Inflatable PFDs are now available in Types III and V. However, the characteristics of inflatable PFDs are different than inherently buoyant PFDs. Inflatable PFDs are not inherently buoyant and will not float without inflation. Although inflatable PFDs are considered one of the most comfortable PFDs to wear when temperatures are hot, inflatable PFDs require regular maintenance and are **not** recommended for children or individuals who cannot swim. Inflatable PFDs are not for use where water impact is expected such as when waterskiing, riding personal watercraft, or whitewater paddling.

An inflatable PFD requires regular maintenance - the owner's manual should be read and kept as reference. To insure proper operation make sure that:

- The armed indicator is showing green
- The inflation cartridge is not cross-threaded (make sure it is screwed in properly to avoid leaks)
- Check for punctures and wear
- Manually inflate the air bladder periodically to insure it is in good condition
- Lack of proper maintenance will render the inflatable PFD useless.

## Personal Flotation Device Labels

Manufacturers include valuable information about each PFD on the product label. The label will give you information about what uses the jacket was intended for, along with information about the size of person it will fit, care instructions, and how to wear or 'don' the jacket. Keep in mind that using the jacket outside of its listed restrictions and intended use is illegal, and can result in receiving a ticket - or, more importantly, the loss of a life. The picture to the right shows what you would find on a typical life jacket.



## The Cold Facts

Cold water (less than 70° F) can lower your body temperature, causing hypothermia. If your body temperature drops too low, you may pass out and then drown. The human body cools 25 times faster in cold water than in air. Water temperature, body size, body fat percentage and movement in the water each play a part in cold-water survival. Small people cool faster than large people; children cool faster than adults.

### How Hypothermia Affects Most Adults

Water Temperature (Degrees Fahrenheit)	Exhaustion or Unconsciousness	Expected Time of Survival
32.5	Under 15 min.	Under 15 to 45 min.
32.5 to 40	15 to 30 min.	30 to 90 min.
40 to 50	30 to 60 min.	1 to 3 hrs.
50 to 60	1 to 2 hrs.	1 to 6 hrs.
60 to 70	2 to 7 hrs.	2 to 40 hrs.
70 to 80	2 to 12 hrs.	3 hrs. to indefinite
Over 80	Indefinite	Indefinite

Life jackets can help you survive cold water. They let you float without using energy and some insulate your body from cold water. A snug-fitting life jacket is better than a loose-fitting one. When you boat in cold water, use a flotation coat or deck suit-style life jacket because they cover more of your body and will help protect you from the cold water better than vests.

## Life Jacket Checklist

**When preparing for an outing, ask yourself:**

- Do I have United States Coast Guard approved life jackets?
- Have I read this pamphlet to increase my chances of survival?
- Have I selected the proper life jacket for my boating activity?
- Is my life jacket the right size according to the label, and does it fit correctly?
- Have I trial-tested my life jacket in shallow water?
- Does my life jacket keep my chin above the water and allow me to breathe easily?
- If my life jacket is an inflatable, have I checked the status of the inflator and made sure that the CO2 cylinder is not punctured?
- If my life jacket is an inflatable, have I checked it for leaks in the last two months?
- If I am a boat operator, have I checked my passengers' life jackets?