

Facts on Drowning

Most drowning victims are 10 feet or less from a safe place. In most drowning situations, the person never intended to enter the water. Drowning occurs rapidly and soundlessly, averaging 20 seconds in small children and less than a minute in adults. To untrained bystanders, a drowning person may appear to be waving, clowning around or splashing. In cold water, even experienced swimmers quickly weaken and become helpless. The three best ways to prevent drowning while boating include: always wear your life jacket; learn to swim; don't drink alcohol.

Selecting the Proper Life Jacket

Life jackets, also called personal flotation devices (PFDs), come in a variety of shapes, colors, sizes and materials.

Life jackets are classified according to types and come in different styles. Select the type and style you need based on the boating activities you enjoy. Check the label for information on proper use and to make sure the life jacket is United States Coast Guard (USCG) approved.

Choose a properly sized life jacket that is comfortable and allows free movement while swimming, walking and sitting. Try it on and fasten all zippers, belts and snaps. Pull up on the shoulders to ensure that it does not ride up and interfere with movement or breathing. Inspect your jacket frequently and make sure that there are no rips or tears, the seams are intact, and that all fasteners work properly.

NOTE:

Most people who drowned in boating accidents had a life jacket available but were not wearing it when they entered the water.



To learn about which life jackets are best suited to certain boating activities, visit the **Personal Flotation Device Manufacturers Association** (PFDMA) Web site: www.pfdma.org



For more information on life jacket boating laws in the area where you boat, visit the **National Association of State Boating Law Administrators** (NASBLA) Web site: www.nasbla.org



For more information on boating safety, visit the **National Safe Boating Council** (NSBC) Web site: www.safeboatingcouncil.org

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The National Safe Boating Council would like to remind you to...



WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!

Care for Your Life Jacket

DO...

- Dry it before storing
- Store it in a cool, well-ventilated area
- Keep it where it can be easily retrieved
- Replace it when signs of wear appear

DON'T...

- Alter the device
- Dry clean or use harsh cleansers
- Use direct heat to dry or leave in the sun indefinitely
- Use as a cushion, kneeling pad or boat fender

Test Your Life Jacket

Life jackets, also called personal flotation devices (PFDs), come in a variety of shapes, colors, sizes and materials.

While wearing your life jacket, walk into water up to your chest in a supervised area. Draw your feet up off of the bottom, tilt your head back and allow your body to float in a relaxed manner. Your mouth and nose should be out of the water and you should comfortably float with no effort. If the jacket rides up, secure it more tightly to your body. If it continues to ride up, try a smaller size life jacket or a different style. A child's life jacket must fit snugly, and a child should not "grow into" it! To check for a good fit, securely place the life jacket on the child. Pull up on the life jacket at the shoulders. If it fits correctly, the child's chin and ears will not slip through.

WHAT'S

HOLDING YOU UP?

Inflatable Life Jackets

Traditional life jackets use naturally buoyant materials to stay afloat. Inflatable jackets rely on inflation chambers to provide buoyancy. All inflatable life jackets use a CO2 filled cylinder to inflate the device once triggered. They contain a backup oral inflation tube that also serves as the deflation tube. When not inflated, these life jackets are less bulky than other life jackets.

Inflatable devices come in a variety of USCG-defined life jacket performance types. The specific type of life jacket is determined by specific characteristics such as the amount of buoyancy, its in-water performance and the type of inflation mechanism. To understand the details of your life jacket, read the attached label and owner's manual. Consult your dealer if necessary.

Types of Inflatable Mechanisms

Automatic mechanisms use a water-soluble capsule attached to the inflation unit. Its mechanism pierces the CO2 cylinder and releases the gas when submerged. Units with automatic inflation mechanisms may also be manually inflated by using a ripcord.

Advantages of Inflatables

- High visibility when inflated
- Turns some wearers face-up faster than traditional life jackets designed with this feature
- Will keep most unconscious users face-up
- More comfortable than inherently buoyant life jackets
- Superior in-water performance

Disadvantages of Inflatables

- Some require multiple steps to deploy
- Unsuitable for non-swimmers
- Not approved for individuals under 16 years of age
- Not appropriate for activities that involve frequent water entry or high-speed boating activities (e.g., personal watercraft use, racing, sail boarding, whitewater paddling)
- Require frequent inspection and maintenance
- Do not protect against hypothermia



uninflated



inflated

Boat Smart. Boat Safe. WEAR IT!