

Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats

Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)

All recreational boats must carry one wearable PFD (Type I, II, III or Type V PFD) for each person aboard. A Type V PFD provides performance of either a Type I, II, or III PFD (as marked on its label) and must be used according to the label requirements. Any boat 16ft and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also carry one throwable PFD (Type IV PFD).

PFDs must be

- *Coast Guard approved,*
- *in good and serviceable condition, and*
- *the appropriate size for the intended user.*

Accessibility

- Wearable PFDs must be readily accessible.
- You must be able to put them on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency (vessel sinking, on fire, etc.).
- They should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments or have other gear stowed on top of them.
- The best PFD is the one you will wear.
- Though not required, a PFD should be worn at all times when the vessel is underway. A wearable PFD can save your life, but only if you wear it.
- Throwable devices must be immediately available for use.

Inflatable PFDs

- Inflatable PFDs may be more comfortable to wear.
- The best PFD is the one you will wear.
- Inflatable PFDs require the user to pay careful attention to the condition of the device.
- Inflatable PFDs must have a full cylinder and all status indicators on the inflator must be green, or the device is NOT serviceable, and does NOT satisfy the requirement to carry PFDs.
- Coast Guard Approved Inflatable PFD's are authorized for use on recreational boats by person at least 16 years of age.

Child PFD Requirements

Some states require that children wear PFDs

- applies to children of specific ages
- applies to certain sizes of boats
- applies to specific boating operations

Check with your state boating safety officials.

Child PFD approvals are based on the child's weight. Check the "User Weight" on the label, or the approval statement that will read something like "Approved for use on recreational boats and uninspected commercial vessels not carrying passengers for hire, by persons weighing ___ lbs". They can be marked "less than 30", "30 to 50", "less than 50", or "50 to 90".

PFD requirements for certain boating activities under state laws

The Coast Guard recommends and many states require wearing PFDs:

- For water skiing and other towed activities (use a PFD marked for water skiing).
- While operating personal watercraft (PWC) (use a PFD marked for water skiing or PWC use).
- During white water boating activities.
- While sailboarding (under Federal law, sailboards are not "boats").

Check with your state boating safety officials.

Federal law does not require PFDs on racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks; state laws vary.

Check with your state boating safety officials.

If you are boating in an area under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers, or a federal, state, or local park authority, other rules may apply.

PFD Flotation

There are three basic kinds of PFD flotation in the five types of PFDs with the following characteristics:

Inherently Buoyant (primarily Foam)

- The most reliable
- Adult, Youth, Child, and Infant sizes
- For swimmers & non-swimmers
- Wearable & throwable styles
- Some designed for water sports

Minimum Buoyancy		
Wearable Size	Type	Inherent Buoyancy (Foam)
Adult	I	22 lb.
	II & III	15.5 lb.
	V	15.5 to 22 lb.
Youth	II & III	11 lb.
	V	11 to 15.5 lb.
Child and Infant	II	7 lb.
Throwable: Cushion Ring Buoy	IV	20 lb. 16.5 & 32 lb.

Inflatable

- The most compact
- Sizes only for adults
- Only recommended for swimmers
- Wearable styles only
- Some with the best in-water performance

Minimum Buoyancy		
Wearable Size	Type	Inherent Buoyancy
Adult	I & II	34 lb.
	III	22.5 lb.
	V	22.5 to 34 lb.

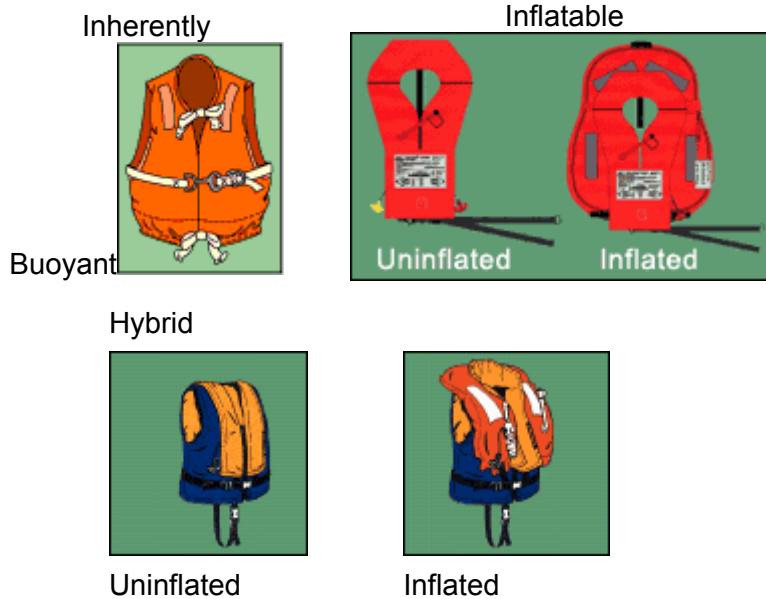
Hybrid (Foam & Inflation)

- Reliable
- Adult, Youth, and Child sizes
- For swimmers & non-swimmers
- Wearable styles only
- Some designed for water sports

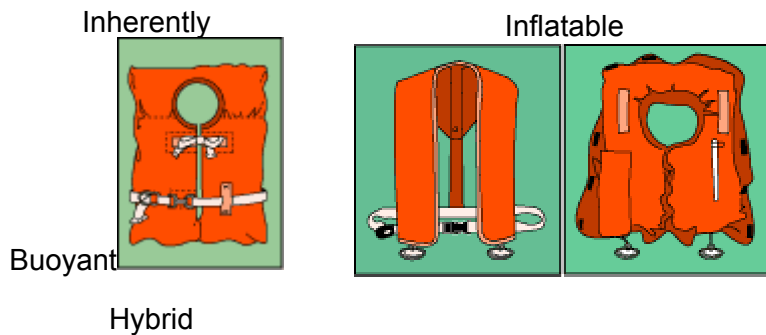
Minimum Buoyancy			
Wearable Size	Type	Inherent Buoyancy	Inflated Total Buoyancy
Adult	II & III	10 lb	22 lb.
	V	7.5 lb.	22 lb.
Youth	II & III	9 lb	15 lb.
	V	7.5 lb.	15 lb.
Child	II	7 lb.	12 lb.

Types of PFD's

A TYPE I PFD, or OFF-SHORE 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.



A TYPE II PFD, NEAR-SHORE BUOYANCY VEST is intended for calm, inland water or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. Inherently buoyant PFDs of this type will turn some unconscious wearers to a face-up position in the water, but the turning is not as pronounced as a Type I. This type inflatable turns as well as a Type I foam PFD.





Uninflated



Inflated

A TYPE III PFD, FLOTATION AID is good for conscious users in calm, inland water, or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. It is designed so wearers can place themselves in a face-up position in the water. The wearer may have to tilt their head back to avoid turning face-down in the water. The Type III foam vest has the same minimum buoyancy as a Type II PFD. It comes in many styles, colors, and sizes and is generally the most comfort-able type for continuous wear. Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed with features suitable for various sports activities are examples of this type of PFD. This type inflatable turns as well as a Type II foam PFD.

Inherently Buoyant



Inflatable



Hybrid

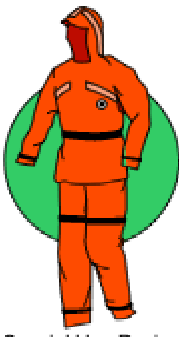


A TYPE IV PFD, THROWABLE DEVICE is intended for calm, inland water with heavy boat traffic, where help is always present. It is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped and held by the user until rescued—It is not designed to be worn. Type IV devices include buoyant cushions, ring buoys, and horseshoe buoys. There are no inflatable type IV devices.



Throwable Devices

A TYPE V PFD, SPECIAL USE DEVICE is intended for specific activities and may be carried instead of another PFD only if used according to the approval condition(s) on its label. A Type V PFD provides performance of either a Type I, II, or III PFD (as marked on its label). If the label says the PFD is "approved only when worn" the PFD must be worn, except for persons in enclosed spaces and used in accordance with the approval label, to meet carriage requirements. Some Type V devices provide significant hypothermia protection. Varieties include deck suits, work vests, board sailing vests, and vest with safety harness.



Special Use Device

A TYPE V, Inflatable PFD with Safety Harness is approved as a Type V PFD because its use to prevent falls overboard presents several risks. The Coast Guard has not assessed potential for personal injury as a result of fall arrest. The safety harnesses are designed to be worn at the chest area, to reduce injury potential due to shock loads. Thus, the harness belt must always be worn at least 2 inches above the lowest rib measured from the bottom of the harness belt and adjusted to a tight personal fit. In case of capsizing, or sinking, the boat may take you down, resulting in death. DO NOT attach to boat unless being worn with tether of less than 6.5 feet in length and with quick-release-under-load hardware. READ SAFETY HARNESS SECTION OF OWNER'S MANUAL for intended use. ALERT! Under no circumstances should the safety harness be used for any climbing activity. U.S. COAST GUARD APPROVAL DOES NOT APPLY TO THIS HARNESS.



PFD-The Right One For You

PFDs come in a variety of shapes, colors and materials. Some are made to be more rugged and last longer while others are made to protect you from cold water. No matter which PFD you choose, be sure to get one that is right for you, your planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter. Remember, spending a little time now can save you a lifetime later.

Selecting Your PFD

- Select a properly sized PFD (Coast Guard Approved).
- Try on the PFD to see if it fits comfortably snug.
- Insure all straps, zippers and ties are fastened.
- Raise your arms over your head.
- Have someone lift your PFD straight up by the shoulders.
- The PFD should stay in place. If the zipper touches your nose or almost comes off, the PFD is too loose.

Buoyancy Testing Your PFD

- Test your PFD in shallow water to see how it floats you.
- Put on your PFD and insure that all straps, zippers, and ties are fastened. Tuck in any loose strap ends.
- Relax your body and let your head tilt back.
- Make sure your PFD keeps your chin above water and you can breathe easily
- If your mouth is not well above the water, get a new PFD or one with more buoyancy.

Child PFD

Check PFD label for proper weight range to match your child's weight. **Note:** While some children in the 30-50 pound weight range who can swim may like the extra freedom of movement that a Type III PFD provides, most children in this weight range, especially those who can't swim, should wear a Type II PFD. To check for a good fit, pick the child up by the shoulders of the PFD. If the PFD fits right, the child's chin and ears will not slip through. A child's PFD should be tested in the water immediately after purchase. Children panic when they fall into the water suddenly. They move their arms and legs violently and try to climb out of the water, making it hard to float safely in a PFD. A PFD

will keep a child afloat, but may not keep a struggling child face-up. That is why it is so important to teach children how to put on a PFD and to teach them to relax in the water.

Be Safe - Wear Your PFD

Most drownings occur way out at sea, right? Wrong! Fact is, 9 out of 10 drownings occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety. Most of the victims owned PFDs, but they died without them.

When you don't wear your PFD, the odds are against you.

You're taking a chance on your life...

For more information of PFDs visit The USCG web site:

www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mse4/mse4home.htm