

# PFD & ME

Did you know...

**US Coast Guard approved lifejackets do not meet the requirements for safety equipment on Canadian boats**

## DID YOU KNOW...

- 90% of recreational boaters who drowned in 1999 were not wearing a PFD (this statistic has remained virtually the same for the past 10 years). In many cases victims had a PFD on board but were not wearing it or were wearing it incorrectly.
- Cold water is a significant risk factor in drownings. Wearing a PFD or lifejacket can increase your chances of surviving the "cold shock" phase of immersion. The majority of recreational boating drownings take place on a lake. In Canada, water temperatures can be as low as 10 degrees Celsius in summer months.
- When one person is wearing a PFD in a boat the chance of others in the same boat wearing one increases.
- 76% of toddlers who died in water-related deaths (1999) were playing or walking near water. Children should wear a PFD in, on AND around the water. Wearing a PFD does not replace the need for adult supervision.

## PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFD)

PFDs were designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. There are two basic types of PFDs: inherently buoyant and inflatable.

### INFLATABLES

#### WHAT IS AN INFLATABLE?

An inflatable is a type of personal flotation device that either automatically inflates when immersed in water, or must be inflated by the wearer using either an oral or manual inflation device.

#### WHAT TYPES ARE AVAILABLE?

1. Collar
2. Pouch

#### Inflatable Collar PFDs

High performance with 35 lbs of buoyancy

When inflated, is capable of self-righting a face down person in seconds

Ideal for people who are looking for a lot of freedom of movement, great in warm weather conditions

Comes in manual and automatic versions, with or without an integrated sailing harness

#### Inflatable Pouch PFD

Lightweight allowing you to move with ease

Provides comfort in and out of the water

Manual inflation provides 35 lbs of buoyancy, is capable of self-righting most wearers once inflated and worn

Easy to put on, re-arm and re-pack

#### WHEN WOULD I WEAR AN INFLATABLE?

The law requires boats to be equipped with a Canadian-approved PFD or lifejacket of an appropriate size for each person on board. In order for an inflatable PFD to meet this requirement, it must be:

- Worn while in an open boat, or
- Worn while on deck in the cockpit or be readily available to persons below deck of vessels with cabins.

Inflatable PFDs are NOT approved for:

- Use by persons under 16 years of age
- Use on personal watercraft
- White water activities

Inflatable PFDs fitted with an automatic inflator are not permitted for sail boarding as the automatic inflator causes the PFD to inflate the instant it is immersed in water.

Pouch style inflatable PFDs are only permitted for rowing and paddling activities.

**Flotation devices are meant to be worn, not used as cushions or boat fenders....**

## **INHERENTLY BUOYANT**

### **WHAT IS AN INHERENTLY BUOYANT PFD?**

An inherently buoyant PFD has flotation built right in. They have less flotation than all three types of lifejackets, have limited turning capability but are available in a variety of styles and colours.

### **Red Cross Children's Vest for Infant, Child, and Youth**

Three piece collar with grab strap

Adjustable leg strap for security

Adjustable waist belt

Brightly coloured outer shell

**WEARING A PFD DOES NOT REPLACE ADULT SUPERVISION**

### **High Collar Vest**

Designed for high-speed use on personal watercraft, speedboats and while water-skiing

A belt system ensures the vest provides protection and stays on your body even at high speeds

A fitted collar provides comfort and head support, large cutaway armholes for maximum range of motion

### **Deluxe Paddling Vest**

Designed especially for kayakers and canoers

Benefits include maximum range of shoulder movement, side, and waist adjustment for different sized wearers and clothing combinations

### **Deluxe Bomber Jacket**

Foam Flotation provides excellent mobility and comfort with relaxed fit

Ideal for colder conditions (spring and fall)

Keeps you afloat and protects against hypothermia

### **WHEN WOULD I WEAR AN INHERENTLY BUOYANT PFD?**

They are intended for small vessel recreational activities, including use on:

- Powerboats
- Personal watercrafts
- Canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboats, water cycles
- Sailboats, sailboards

And while:

- Water skiing (including barefoot skiing), wake boarding, parasailing, tubing and knee-boarding

Children should be encouraged to wear their lifejacket or PFD at all times.

**DID YOU KNOW...**

**As of April 1, 1999, lifesaving cushions are no longer accepted as approved PFDs.**

**“It’s not PFDs that save lives – it’s people wearing PFDs that save lives.”**

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING A PFD**

- The D.O.T and/or CCG label will indicate weight and size restrictions and is a guarantee that it is approved for use in Canada
- Choose bright colours that can be seen at night, reflective tape provides added visibility
- A belt prevents the vest from riding up over the shoulders, especially when falling off a boat at higher speeds
- A whistle draws attention in case of an emergency

**DOT = Department Of Transport**

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN...**

- Appropriate weight and size
- Large collar for head support
- An adjustable buckle strap between the legs to prevent the PFD from going over the child’s head
- A grab strap aids retrieval of children that have fallen in the water
- Adjustable waist straps to ensure a snug fit
- Durable nylon and sewing
- Canadian approval label (D.O.T. and/or CCG)
- Sturdy rust-proof zipper
- Bright colour and reflective tape for added visibility
- Neck ties
- Plastic whistle

**CCG = Canadian Coast Guard**

## **QUICK QUESTIONS...**

- Is it well-made, strong fabric, sturdy zippers?
- Is it comfortable to wear when walking and sitting down?
- Can you easily swim and move with it when in the water?
- Is it easy to put on and take off?
- Does it keep your head above water?
- Is it self righting, does it roll you face-up when you relax in the water face down?
- Will it support the person it was made for?

**The best PFD  
is the one  
you will wear.**

## **CARE...**

- Rinse with fresh water after every use
- Hang to dry away from direct heat
- Once dry, store in a cool, ventilated area
- Use mild soaps; do not use strong detergents or dry clean
- Test before using
- Do not leave in the sun for long periods

### **REMEMBER...**

**The approval status of your PFD  
depends on its condition!**

Check often for:

- Rips, tears and holes
- Damage to seams, buckles, straps and zippers
- Signs of water logging, mildew, shrinkage or hardening of the buoyant material
- Performance of flotation and fit

An average sized adult requires seven pounds of buoyancy to remain afloat with his or her mouth clear of the water.

#### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LIFEJACKET AND PFD?

Lifejackets and PFDs in many cases can look virtually identical. The key differences are lifejackets are more buoyant with greater self-righting (turning) capability compared to PFDs.

## LIFEJACKETS

### WHAT IS A LIFEJACKET?

Lifejackets were designed to have the capability to keep a person floating and turn the wearer (conscious or unconscious) onto his or her back with the head supported and mouth out of the water.

### WHAT TYPES ARE AVAILABLE?

There are three different types of lifejackets:

1. SOLAS ("Safety of Life at Sea")
2. Standard
3. Small Vessel

#### **SOLAS Lifejacket**

Usually found on commercial vessels

Designed for emergency use only and don't provide the comfort to be worn in recreational activities

Provide self-righting capability

40 lbs of buoyancy

#### **Standard Lifejacket**

Lightweight and durable

Provide self-righting capability

#### **Small Vessel Lifejacket**

More comfortable than a standard lifejacket

Provide self-righting capability

Can only be used on small vessels

(i.e., motorboats, personal watercraft, etc.)

The most important and consistent risk factor in boating fatalities is the non-usage of some sort of flotation device.

**BUCKLE UP!** Did you know that if you are involved in a serious boating incident you are 5.5 X less likely to drown if you are wearing your PFD or lifejacket?

Skydivers buckle up their parachute harnesses. Rock climbers and mountaineers buckle up their safety harnesses. Boaters buckle up their PFD or lifejacket.

**MAKE THE SMART CHOICE!**

#### REMEMBER...

**SURVIVE!** Lifejackets, PFDs or inflatables can prevent you from drowning if worn and sized properly.

# PREPARE! STAY SAFE! SURVIVE!

## COMPARISON CHART

	Lifejacket	Personal Flotation Device (PFD)	
		Inherently Buoyant	Inflatable
<b>Benefits</b>	Self-righting capability for an unconscious person	Designed for constant and comfortable wear Provides minimal protection against cold water depending on the type (vest versus floater coat) – boaters need to dress appropriately for their environment Multiple approved styles and colours	Capable of self-righting most wearers once inflated and worn Freedom of movement and comfort
<b>Drawbacks</b>	Less comfort	Less buoyant and limited self-righting capability compared to lifejackets	Requires annual maintenance and spare cylinders should be on hand Option of manual inflation
<b>Sizing</b>	Two sizes: Weight 90 lbs + Weight less than 90 lbs	Based on chest measurements for adults, body weight for children	Must be over 16 years of age and weigh more than 80 lbs
<b>Style</b>	Keyhole (SOLAS, Standard or Small Vessel)	Vest, bomber, floater suits, keyhole, over-the-head	Collar and pouch (Manual or automatic)
<b>Colour</b>	Orange, yellow or red	Range of colour options	All colours
<b>Fit</b>	Ensure you can cross your arms under the tied life jacket for proper flotation	Snug yet comfortable fit, pull the device at the collar to ensure it does not ride up and interfere with movement or breathing	
<b>Approval</b>	Department of Transport (DOT) or Canadian Coast Guard approved	Department of Transport (DOT) or Canadian Coast Guard approved	Department of Transport (DOT) or Canadian Coast Guard approved
<b>Regulations</b>	SOLAS and Standard lifejackets are approved for all vessels. Small Vessel lifejackets are only approved for small commercial vessels.	Only for use on pleasure crafts (i.e., boating, kayaking, canoeing, water-skiing, personal watercrafts, etc.) <u>or</u> around the water	Not approved for children, white water paddling or personal watercraft use

Regulations in Canada dictate pleasure crafts carry an approved and properly fitting PFD or lifejacket for each person on board, except for any infant weighing less than 9 kg or any person whose chest size exceeds 140 cm.

**Keeping a lifejacket or PFD handy versus wearing one is like attempting to buckle a car seat belt just before the car crashes.**

## DID YOU KNOW...

Since 1997, recreational boaters in Canada have a wider range of colours to choose from for their PFDs. Prior to this change, approved PFDs were available ONLY in yellow, red and orange.

## WHY THE CHANGE?

Evidence shows too many people are not wearing PFDs. Statistics show that roughly 90% of drowning victims were not wearing a flotation device. Expanding the range of approved colours enhances the attractiveness and choice.

## WHY PEOPLE DON'T WEAR A PFD

### 1. Perception of low risk of drowning without a PFD.

- PFDs or lifejackets are only for non or weak swimmers
- Experienced boaters are not at risk
- Feeling safe from harm if the boat is not far from shore or in shallow water
- Weather conditions are good

*"I'm more inclined to wear a PFD when the weather is rough."  
"As long as the shoreline is in sight I feel safe without a PFD."*

- ⇒ When the weather is calm and clear, only 50% of boaters wear their PFD.
- ⇒ A larger proportion of drowning victims in Canada in 1999 (59%) were swimmers than non-swimmers (41%).

### 2. PFDs restrict movement and interfere with the ability to perform activities.

- ⇒ A drowning accident occurs very suddenly. The whole tragic event from start to finish typically happens in less than six minutes because very few people taken by surprise can stay afloat for much longer without a flotation device. In nearly three-quarters of the accidents, victims are dead within 15 minutes.

### 3. PFDs are uncomfortable.

### 4. PFDs are unattractive or unfashionable.

### 5. PFDs are a sign of fear.

- ⇒ An analysis of drowning statistics between 1991-1999 indicates roughly 90% of all drowning victims during that period were not wearing a PFD.

## Sources:

Boatsmart Canada [www.boatsmartcanada.com](http://www.boatsmartcanada.com)  
Canadian Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety Manual, 1995  
Canadian Coast Guard [www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca](http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca)  
Mustang [www.mustangsurvival.com](http://www.mustangsurvival.com)  
Safe Boating Guide, 1999  
SMARTRISK – Background Research Paper, July 2003

**Drowning is 9X more likely among males than females (90% of boaters who drown are male). Males aged 16-24 are at greatest risk with a peak period between 25-45 years.**



Canadian Red Cross  
Croix-Rouge canadienne



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## PFD and Me

**Did you know that most people who drown never intended to be in the water?**

Many of them were simply enjoying boating activities or playing near the water. Because they didn't intend to enter the water, they weren't wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD).

### THE FACTS

Prepare !

☞ PFDs and lifejackets can keep you afloat, protect you from cold water, and may save your life.

☞ PFDs...

- Provide adequate flotation within set limitations
- Are acceptable on all pleasure craft
- Come in many sizes according to chest size or weight
- Come in over 120 styles, are adjustable and versatile
- Allow freedom of movement
- Offer varying amounts of protection from the cold
- PFDs CANNOT turn you over in the water.

#### The BIG Picture...

Wearing a PFD is a wise choice. If PFDs are comfortable and people are accustomed to them, they're more likely to wear them.

Many people who drown weren't wearing an approved flotation device or were *wearing it improperly*.

☞ The Department of Transport (DOT) approves PFDs and lifejackets. Be sure to check the label too - it's either silk-screened or sewn into the PFD/ lifejacket. This label identifies it as a PFD/ lifejacket, whether it's approved, what size and weight it was made for, and how to care for it.

☞ To make sure your PFD or lifejacket is going to be effective, double-check that:

- It is comfortable and snug
- All zippers, buckles and snaps are fastened
- It doesn't come up over your nose when you pull it at the shoulders



**Stay Safe !**

- ☞ Check PFDs and lifejackets regularly for discoloration or fading; check for tears; check the texture/quality of flotation material; and check zippers, buckles and straps.
- ☞ If you're in trouble, stay calm, call for help, roll on your back, relax and wait for help.

**Survive !**

☞ *How do I use the "Heat Escape Lessening Position" (HELP) technique ?*

The HELP technique involves holding the inner sides of the arms over the sides of the chest, and pressing the insulation foam material of the PFD to the body. Place forearms across the central chest, hold thighs together to reduce inner-thigh heat loss, and then raise thighs forward perpendicular to the trunk to protect the groin area from its high rate of heat loss.

☞ *How do I use the Huddle Position?*

This can be performed by two or more people huddling together. People should face one another, press their own legs together, press their chests together (behind the insulating PFDs) and interlock arms (one person's arms under the others). This position allows more heat loss than the individual HELP position, the Huddle is better if the PFD, wave conditions or lack of swimming experience make it difficult to maintain a stable individual position. Children can also be placed in the middle of a huddle.

- ☞ Using the HELP or Huddle position while wearing a PFD can help you survive one third longer in cold water.
- ☞ If a boat capsizes, *stay with the boat*. It will float and support you, as well as reducing heat loss. Your PFD will help insulate you.

**Teaching Tips**

If you expect participants to wear their PFDs properly - you must too!  
 All buckles and ties must be fastened properly BEFORE entry.  
 PFDs that fit properly allow complete movement but DON'T rise above the ears.  
 Wearing PFDs or life jackets doesn't replace supervision.

Progression Descriptions	Contents
Orientation and Movement	Putting a PFD on with and without assistance Entries, movement, floats & changing direction in a PFD
Knowledge	Choose when to wear a PFD, and what kind How to properly care for PFDs
Cold Water, HELP	HELP position Huddle position