

Personal floatation device (2)

This resource can help with the following areas:

- Stage 1: I know the importance of a personal floatation device.
- Stage 2: I can put on my own personal floatation device properly.
- Stage 3: I can put on my personal floatation device and adjust it properly.
- Stage 6: I can carry out the routine inspection of a personal floatation device.

Wearing a PFD

Those in charge of boating activities should ensure that PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices, buoyancy aids or lifejackets) are the correct; size, type and weight, are worn correctly and are properly closed and secured. Check inside the garment for details of the specific weight capacity and Newton buoyancy of the Jacket (see diagram below).



Secure the jacket using all the belts straps and buckles provided including crotch straps if present. The PFD should be securely fitted and not loose otherwise it may slip off if a person falls overboard.

Maintenance and Inspection

It is important that all lifejackets and buoyancy aids are properly maintained. Inspections should be independently conducted at least once on an annual basis. If there is any doubt, the advice of the Water Activities Team should be sought. Particular attention should be paid to zips, buckles and straps. Any buoyancy aid or lifejacket that has been damaged, so that its buoyancy has been reduced or that it cannot be properly closed and secured, should be taken out of service immediately and destroyed. It should not be available as a "reserve" garment.

It is important that any damage to the outer skin of a PFD is repaired immediately. Delays will only compound the problem and possibly damage the internal buoyancy material or air chambers. The annual inspection should check for any damage and for standard of repairs, particularly to stitching and zips. Self-inflating PFDs must be regularly checked for corrosion of the gas canister connection. Rusty bottles should be replaced immediately.

A simple test for a PFD is to suspend a weight appropriate to the garment, remove the air and check that it floats. If it fails to float it needs replacing. It is also recommended that all life jackets and buoyancy aids be individually marked with an identification system and that a record is kept of the date of purchase, repairs made and the dates of inspections. This will assist with the long term planning for renewal and any budget implications associated with such renewals.

Safety notes

- All garments should be worn correctly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Lifejackets should never be a substitute for; good practice on the water, appropriate training, good organisation, qualified leaders or correct briefings. These are skills paramount for good boating practice.
- In order to pass the Adventure Skills requirements for boating, young people must get experience putting on their own PFDs correctly and know how to make appropriate adjustments themselves.

Correct Use and Storage

Those in charge of boating activities should ensure that PFDs (buoyancy aids or lifejackets) are the right size and are; worn correctly, properly closed and secured. They should not be thrown around, walked on or otherwise ill-treated. The best way to carry a buoyancy aid from the boat to the den or the campsite is to wear it. After use, buoyancy aids should be hung on hooks or clothes hangers to dry and to keep aired. Damp jackets left in a pile will soon developed mildew. Jackets that have been immersed in salt water should be thoroughly rinsed in fresh water before drying. Salt and sand in zips and buckles can cause them to seize and become inoperable and can also cause fabric wear in seams and stitching lines.