

Life Jackets – It's Your Life – Preserve It

- Norm and Jim – Mustang Survival
- **Does anyone know the significance of May 14th this year** (Thursday before the long weekend)
- **Of the drownings that happen annually in Canada, what percentage was not wearing life jackets?** It between 80% and 90%
- So as I am talking about maintaining life jackets, just want to remind everyone that no matter how much maintenance you do with your life jackets, it will not save you unless you are wearing it

Types of Life Jackets

- **Does anyone know the difference between a life jacket and a personal floatation device?**
- In very simple terms a Lifejacket is an approved device that will float someone with their head well out of the water but also has the ability to turn that person onto their back with their face up even if they are unconscious. A PFD or Personal Flotation Device provides sufficient flotation to keep a person afloat at the surface, but is not self-righting. Because of the extra flotation material required and the positioning of it on the chest a lifejacket tends to be bulkier than a PFD.

Self inflating PFDs

- o One of the new self inflating PFDs uses the acronym HIT.
- o **Does anyone know what HIT means?**
- o Self inflating (Hydrostatic Inflating Technology) and Automatic
 - Best for sailing and when you could potentially be knocked out
- o Manual inflating – includes waist devices

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Advantages of Inflatables

Contain a backup oral inflation tube (which also serves as the deflation tube)

- High visibility when inflated
- Turns most wearers face-up faster than traditional PDFs
- Will usually keep unconscious users face-up
- May be more comfortable than inherently buoyant lifejackets

Disadvantage of Inflatables

- Some require multiple steps to deploy
- Not suitable for nonswimmers because they cannot accomplish oral inflation if needed – also takes a minute to inflate
- Not appropriate for activities that involve frequent water entry or high-speed boating activities (e.g., personal watercraft use, racing, sailboarding, whitewater rafting)
- Require frequent inspection and maintenance
- Not good for kids

Since some of you have grandkids – I just want to spend a couple of minutes on life jackets for them.

What is the weight/age for kids before they can wear inflatables? Not approved for children under 16 years of age or who weigh less than 80 pounds

- Proper size is so important for kids

- What to look for crotch strap – to stop it from going over their head and helping to heave them out of the water, large collar for head support
 - Waist ties or elastic gathers in front and back
 - As soon as you get a life jacket for your grandkid, test is out – they have to know how to relax.
- The U.S. Coast Guard (Canadian Coast Guard and Transport Canada) and lifejacket manufacturers recommend immediate in-water testing of children's lifejackets on the intended user. Children often panic when they fall into the water. While a lifejacket will keep a child afloat, it may not keep a struggling child face- up. Violent movement can counteract a lifejacket's performance; therefore, it is important to teach children how to wear a lifejacket and how to relax their arms and legs in the water.
 - Check your child's lifejacket for proper fit. To work correctly, a lifejacket must fit snugly. To check fit, pick the child up by the shoulders of the lifejacket. If the lifejacket fits, the child's chin and ears will not slip through. Check the lifejacket label to ensure it matches your child's weight.

Checking your PDF

- **How often should you check your PDF? Some say every two months – some say before any boating adventure. Others say at least once a year.**

Visual inspection

- Ensure that straps, buckles and zippers are clean and in good working order.
- Tug on straps to ensure they are well attached and there is no sign of wear.
- Is the whistle still attached?
- Are all the zippers, snaps, belts etc in good condition?
- Will it support the person who is using it?
- Will it keep your head out of the water?
- Are the straps twisted?

- Has it been used as a fender or to kneel on
- If they look old and worn – get a new one
- Check its buoyancy regularly in a pool or by wading out to waist-deep water and bending your knees to see how well you float.
 - After testing, make sure you dry it really well. Don't use put it over any heaters etc.

Inflation system

Check the inflation system- at least every 2 months – Wearyourlifejacket.ca

Three parts – cylinder, inflator pull-tab is hanging on the outside and mouth piece

Re-Arm Kits – prices from 12 – 85

How often should you change the CO2 cylinder? Recommendation is the cylinder seal indicator is red; if it has been punctured; rust or damaged or at least every three years.

Check the bobbin. Replace the bobbin on an automatic model every 12 months, unless specified otherwise. Mustang Survival says every three years

Check all components for dirt or corrosion.

Check the mouth inflation valve.

Blow them up – Should last 24 hours

- If someone can't swim, there is no way they will be able to tread water and blow up their life jacket

Manual

- If the sensor ring is broken, it has been used or damaged.

Record on your life jacket when you reviewed it

Store in a cool dry place.

Take aways

- Pull out your phone and put a recurring date to check your life jackets – certainly in the spring – but if you are using your boat all year – make it a quarterly event What about National Lifejacket Day on May 14 or Opening Day
- Buy a couple extra bobbins and cylinders
- Get a crotch strap
- When you get a new life jacket – consider the newer types HIT, special
- Make sure all the kids life jackets have them

There is lots of information on line. Mustang Survival has all kinds of videos and help documents. The other suppliers do as well.

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Maintenance

Caring for your lifejacket

The following information is courtesy of the PFDMA (Personal Flotation Device Manufacturers Association) from their brochure "Facts about Life Jackets."

Follow these tips to keep your lifejacket in good condition:

1. Don't alter your lifejacket. If yours doesn't fit, get one that does. An altered lifejacket is no longer U.S. Coast Guard (Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada) approved and may not save your life.
2. Don't put heavy objects on your lifejacket or use it for a kneeling pad or boat fender. Lifejackets lose buoyancy when crushed.
3. Let your lifejacket drip dry thoroughly before putting it away. Always stow it in a well-ventilated place,
4. Don't leave your lifejacket 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 lifejacket if you're the only one who wears it.

Checking your lifejacket

Test each lifejacket at the start of the season. The law says your lifejackets must be in good shape before you use your boat. Cut up and throw away any lifejackets in poor shape.

Check your lifejacket often for rips, tears and holes and ensure that seams, fabric straps and hardware are okay. Give the belts and tie tapes a quick, hard pull to make sure they are secure.

You should find no signs of waterlogging, mildew odor or shrinkage of the buoyant materials.

Fading material could indicate loss of strength. A weathered lifejacket might tear more easily, and lose flotation material. Store your lifejacket in a dry, cool, dark place. If the color of your lifejacket is fading, check its strength or replace it.

Maintain inflatable lifejackets

Check your inflatable lifejacket -including the buoyancy cell and inflation system- at least every 2 months, in addition to the following:

1. If the lifejacket does not have cylinder seal indication, remove the cylinder, and check for punctures and rust.
2. Check all components for dirt or corrosion.
3. Check the mouth inflation valve.
4. Store in a cool dry place.
5. Replace the bobbin on an automatic model every 12 months, unless specified otherwise.

Regulations

For recreational boats in Canada (also known as Pleasure Craft) there is a legal requirement to have:

"one Canadian approved personal flotation device or lifejacket of appropriate size for each person on board"

Safety organizations including Transport Canada, The Canadian Coast Guard, The Red Cross Society, The Lifesaving Society, The Canadian Safe Boating Council, etc., strongly recommend that these devices be worn.

Can I wear a US approved lifejacket in Canada?

If you are a visitor (under 45 days) to Canadian waters in a US registered boat your US approved equipment will be considered in compliance.

In a Canadian boat subject to the Small Vessel Regulations there must be a Canadian approved (Transport Canada or Coast Guard) lifejacket or PFD for each person on board.

"If you are a non-resident of Canada operating a boat that is licensed or registered in Canada, the boat must meet Canadian safety equipment requirements. However, in either case, you may bring your own lifejacket to use as long as it fits and meets the requirements of your home country." (from Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide)

There is a North American standards group that is currently working to revise and harmonize Canadian and US regulations and standards.

VISUAL INSPECTION

- 1 There are no rips, tears, excessive abrasion or holes, all seams are securely sewn, and the cover, straps and hardware are still strong.
- 2 Oral-inflation dust cap is in the stowed position
- 3 The PFD is not twisted
- 4 All zippers, closures and waist buckle are secure
- 5 Your inflator status indicator is green. Some PFDs have more than one status indicator! Refer to your product manual if you're not sure
- 6 The inflator pull-tab is hanging on the outside



Your PFD is good to go!



1 Oral Inflation Valve Test

Fully inflate the PFD using the oral inflator, and then hold the valve under water. If bubbles appear, deflate the PFD and re-inflate it again.

2 Leak Test

To test for air leakage, orally inflate your PFD until firm and then let it sit inflated for 16 hours. A PFD with a leak in it will not hold its firmness and should be replaced.

3 Bobbin Inspection and Replacement

Your inflatable PFD may use a bobbin activation system. This is a yellow “pill” with white powder inside. When the white powder dissolves, it activates a pin that punctures the CO2 cylinder and inflates your PFD. Inspect the pill to make sure it’s still intact and replace the pill if it looks compromised.

 **Your PFD is good to go!**

- 1 Perform a thorough Visual Inspection
- 2 Perform the Oral Inflation Valve Test
- 3 Perform the Leak Test
- 4 Clean the inflatable PFD
- 5 Check for dirt and corrosion and replace all corroded parts
- 6 Record “Annual” in permanent ink on the PFD service record label

 **Your PFD is good to go!**

