Personal Flotation Devices (Life Jackets)

All vessels must be equipped with life jackets, approved by the U. S. Coast Guard, called personal flotation devices or PFDs. The quantity and type depends on the length of your vessel and the number of people onboard and/or being towed. Each PFD must be in good condition, the proper size for the intended wearer, and very importantly, must be readily accessible! Readily accessible means you must be able to put the PFD on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency (vessel sinking, on fire, etc.). PFDs should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments or have other gear stowed on top of them.

Vessel operators should ask everyone on their vessel to wear a PFD whenever on the water. PFDs can save lives, but only if they are worn!

PFD Requirements

- All boats must have at least one Type I, II or III personal flotation device that is U. S. Coast Guard-approved, wearable and of the proper size for each person onboard or being towed. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.
- In addition to the above requirements, boats 16 ft. in length or longer must have one Type IV U. S. Coast Guard-approved PFD onboard and readily accessible.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible.
- Louisiana law requires that all children 12 years of age and younger *wear* a U. S. Coast Guard-approved PFD while underway on a vessel less than 26 feet long. The PFD must be fastened and of the proper size for the child.
- Each person riding on a PWC must *wear* a U. S. Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device.

PFD Descriptions

TYPE I: ***Offshore Life Jackets***
These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take awhile. They are excellent for flotation and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.

TYPE II: ***Near-Shore Vests***
These vests are good for calm waters and fast rescues. Type II vests may lack the capacity to turn unconscious wearers face up.

TYPE III: ***Flotation Aids***
These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters and fast rescues. They are not for rough waters since they will not turn a person face up. Some Type III PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water.

TYPE IV: ***Throwable Devices***
These cushions or ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. They are not for long hours in rough waters, non-swimmers or the unconscious.

TYPE V: ***Special-Use Devices***
These windsurfing vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs and others are designed for specific activities, such as kayaking or water skiing. Some Type V PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their label.*

BOATER'S TIP!

Others who should wear PFDs include:
- *Children of all ages*
- *Anyone boating at night*
- *All persons during rough weather*
- *Persons who cannot swim*
- *Hunters and anglers.*

Types Of Personal Flotation Devices