



PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE (PFD)

Q. What is a PFD?

A. Any garment worn on the body to assist with flotation is called a personal flotation device (PFD). PFDs include devices previously known as lifejackets, buoyancy vests or buoyancy garments.

Q. How are PFDs classified?

A. PFDs are usually classified by the level of protection they offer the wearer and the wearer's needs, according to Australian standards.

Q. Are there different types of PFDs?

A. Yes, there are three categories of PFDs

PFD Type 1 are designed for recreational boaters who venture beyond sheltered waters, they are made in the safety colours yellow, orange or red and are fitted with retro-reflective tape. They have a buoyant collar, a bulky, buoyant chest area and the degree of flotation provided is at least 50% greater than the equivalent weight range Type 2 or Type 3 PFD.

PFD Type 2 are designed for continuous wear during any aquatic activity – such as dingy sailing, board sailing or water skiing – not just in an emergency. The buoyant material is usually distributed evenly front and back, making swimming much easier. As with Type 1, Type 2 PFDs must also be made in only the safety colours yellow, orange or red, up to the arm hole.

PFD Type 3 meets all the requirements of Type 2 but is made in a different colour. Not using the safety colours is intended to make the Type 3 more attractive to wear and so encourage regular usage.

Q. How do I choose a PFD?

A. When choosing a PFD, ensure that it fits securely and is comfortable, as this will encourage use. When choosing a PFD for children, do not select a larger size that the child will 'grow into', it is important that it fits correctly to be effective.

Q. I am a competent swimmer... why do I need a PFD?

A. Even competent swimmers should wear a PFD when they are in open water or involved in activities such as fishing, boating and jet skiing. Should an accident occur you may have to spend a great deal of time in the water before getting to shore, you may have to swim to shore, you may even be unconscious. A PFD will keep you buoyant, particularly should you get tired. Additionally, if you are out on the water your PFD should be on. Should an accident occur, a lifejacket that is stowed away will be of no use to you.

Personal flotation devices, or PFDs, have been called many different names over the years, such as life jackets and buoyancy vests. Each year many people's lives are saved by wearing a PFD.

PFD Safety CHECKLIST:

Practice your PFD skills prior to needing the PFD. Can you:

- put on a PFD on land or in water?
- share a PFD as a flotation support?
- get in and out of the water while wearing a PFD?

Royal Life Saving has developed a number of fact sheets on water safety issues in Australia. Contact Royal Life Saving on:

1300 RESQ ME
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