

Personal flotation devices (PFDs) and lifejackets — maintenance

Wearing a PFD or lifejacket can save your life if you fall overboard. To make sure your device works as intended, you need to maintain it. This bulletin provides an overview of how to do that.

Always read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions for proper maintenance of your PFD or lifejacket.

Inspect your flotation device

Inspect your PFD or lifejacket to ensure it is in good condition. Check for the following:

- Metal or plastic hardware that is broken, deformed, or weakened by corrosion
- Webbing or straps that are ripped or torn, or that have become separated from an attachment point
- Any rotted or deteriorated material that fails when tugged
- Rips, tears, or open seams in fabric or coatings that are large enough to allow the loss of buoyant material
- Buoyant material that has become hardened, non-resilient, permanently compressed, waterlogged, or oil-soaked, or that shows evidence of fungus or mildew
- Loss of buoyant material or buoyant material that is not securely held in position



Look after your flotation device so it will keep you afloat when it is needed.

If using an inherently buoyant PFD, such as a foam vest or floater jacket, make sure that there is retroreflective material on it. Use a brightly coloured vest or jacket for the best visibility.

Auto-inflatable lifejackets have a hydrostatic inflator with a 5-year expiry date. Make sure the inflator has not expired and the status indicator button in the window is showing green. If it’s showing red, replace the cartridge.

Report damaged PFDs and lifejackets to your supervisor or vessel master. Damaged PFDs and lifejackets must not be worn.

Clean, maintain, and store your device properly

Properly clean, maintain, and store your PFD or lifejacket as follows:

- Use only a mild soapy solution when cleaning your PFD or lifejacket.
- Never use dry-cleaning, strong detergents, gasoline, or solvents to remove a stain from your PFD or lifejacket.
- Never store your PFD or lifejacket when it is wet. First, dry it in the open air, away from sunlight or a direct heat source.
- When your PFD or lifejacket is not in use, store it in a dry, well-ventilated, easily accessible place on board the vessel.

Keep records

Owners or masters are required to record all inspections and maintenance of manual or automatically inflatable PFDs and lifejackets.

OHS Regulation requirements

- [Part 8, Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment](#)
- [Part 24, Diving, Fishing and Other Marine Operations](#)