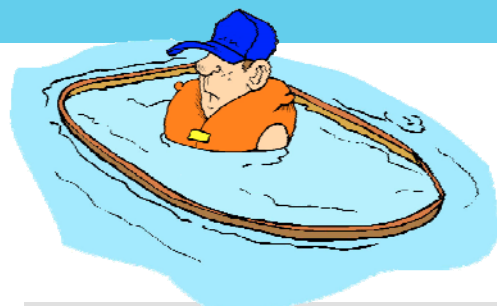


Lifejackets

and Personal Flotation Devices



It is really important to wear personal buoyancy or a lifejacket when afloat or if your activity takes you near the water. You must ensure that it is the correct size, properly fastened and that you understand how to operate it. Wearing an appropriate personal flotation device can give you extra time for the search and rescue services to find and rescue you.

What is a personal flotation device (PFD)?

This is a generic term used to describe lifejackets and buoyancy aids. The main difference between lifejackets and buoyancy aids is that a lifejacket is designed to turn an unconscious person face up on entering the water. A buoyancy aid is not guaranteed to do this and as the name describes, an aid to keeping you afloat.

Buoyancy of Lifejackets

Buoyancy is measured in Newtons – 10 Newtons equals 1kg of flotation. There are 4 European standards for personal flotation devices, which must all carry the CE mark:



EN 393

1. 50 Newton buoyancy aids are only for use by swimmers in sheltered waters when help is close at hand. They are not guaranteed to turn a person from a facedown position in the water.



EN ISO 12402-4

2. The 100 Newton buoyancy aid is for those who may still have to wait for rescue but are likely to be in sheltered and calm water.



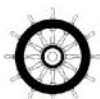
EN ISO 12402-3

3. The 150 Newton lifejacket is for general offshore and rough weather use where a high standard of performance is required.



EN ISO 12402-2

4. The 275 Newton lifejacket is primarily for offshore and extreme conditions and those wearing heavy protective clothing.



EN ISO 12402-1

5. IMO / SOLAS approved lifejackets are generally used for abandoning ship and are not intended for everyday use as they are generally bulky.

What is the right PFD for you?

The most suitable type for you will depend on the type of activity and the distance you are likely to be from the shore:

- Foam-only personal flotation devices provide buoyancy at all times. They may be bulky, but in addition to providing buoyancy, they often provide additional protection against wind and cold.
- Air-only lifejackets are likely to be the most compact and comfortable and may be automatically inflated on entering the water or inflated manually or orally. Spare gas cylinders and automatic inflation mechanisms should be carried. It is recommended that all personal flotation devices are fitted with a whistle, light and retro-reflective strips and should have under-leg straps. Under-leg strap is a very important feature especially for children to ensure a secure fit and prevent child from slipping out of the PFD.
- For some sports such as jet skiing, water skiing, dinghy sailing, windsurfing and canoeing, specialised personal flotation devices are available which are specifically designed to suit these sports.



Care for your PFD

You should have your PFD serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. On a regular basis, you should check for wear and tear, and wash it out with fresh water to remove salt and allow to dry. Remember to disarm any automatic inflation first to avoid accidental inflation.

Information provided by Irish Water Safety, Long Walk, Galway, Ireland. www.iws.ie