

## Marine Information Bulletin

### Life jackets and personal flotation devices – frequently asked questions

#### Background

Marine safety legislation requires that lifejackets and personal flotation devices comply with certain standards and that inflatable lifejackets and personal flotation devices are serviced on a regular basis according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

This bulletin will answer questions concerning standards, servicing and compliance raised by persons from the marine industry and members of the boating public.

#### Frequently asked questions

##### Q. What is a lifejacket or a personal flotation device?

- A. Generally the terms lifejacket and personal flotation device are interchangeable and when used in this bulletin mean the same thing.

A personal flotation device may be defined as a garment or device which, when correctly worn will provide the user with a specific amount of buoyancy which will increase the likelihood of survival.

No personal flotation device guarantees survival.

##### Q. What is a standard?

- A. A standard is a published document which sets out specifications and procedures designed to ensure that a material, product, method or service is fit for its purpose and consistently performs in the way it was intended.\*

\*Reference – What is a standard?

([www.standards.org.au](http://www.standards.org.au)).

##### Q. I have been told there are new standards for personal flotation devices. What's going on?

- A. Australian Standards recently published AS 4758 personal flotation devices. This standard will eventually replace the old Australian standards for PFD type 1, 2 and 3 – AS 1512, AS 1499 and AS 2260. Jackets made to the old standards will be available for purchase for sometime. As manufacturers gear up for their new products jackets made to the new standard will appear on retail shelves.

This new standard, AS 4758, will be accepted for use in Queensland from 1 February 2010.

##### Q. Do I need to upgrade?

- A. No. Personal flotation devices made to the old standards will be acceptable for use into the foreseeable future. If you purchase a jacket made to an old standard now and look after it, you can expect many years of service.

A date may be set for eventual retirement of the old standards. This will be a national decision and Maritime Safety Queensland will ensure that Queensland stakeholders are advised.

##### Q. What standards are acceptable for personal flotation devices in Queensland?

- A. See Appendix 1. Listed in Appendix 1 in their categories are the standards for lifejackets and personal flotation devices accepted under the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2004* for use in Queensland and international standards accepted as satisfactory alternative standards for use in Queensland.

##### Q. How do I know that a personal flotation device complies with the appropriate standard?

- A. For a personal flotation device to comply with a particular standard, certain information required under that standard must be displayed. This information can be used to identify the standard. Jackets not marked with all the information required by the particular standard do not comply with the standard and are not acceptable for use. Jackets not complying with marking requirements may not comply with other requirements.

If you have purchased a personal flotation device and the markings are incorrect or non-existent, or you feel the jacket is in some other way non-compliant, it is suggested that you discuss the matter with the retailer or manufacturer. Non-compliant jackets are not fit for the purpose for which they have been sold.

Consumer information is available from the Office of Fair Trading website at [www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au) or call 1300 658 030.

The condition of a personal flotation device may also affect compliance. If a jacket shows signs of deterioration such as stiff or cracked fabric, colour fading or pulled stitching it will be considered non compliant and attract a fine.

Note that inflatable personal flotation devices relying solely on oral inflation are not acceptable. This means that an inflatable jacket with no gas cylinder fitted or a discharged gas cylinder is non compliant.

**Q. What markings will I find on personal flotation devices made to the acceptable standards?**

A. See Appendix 2. Listed in Appendix 2 are the markings found on personal flotation devices according to the various standards. These markings are used to identify the standard used for manufacture and if that standard is appropriate.

**Q. What lifejacket or personal flotation device must I use?**

A. Recreational boats:

Smooth water*	Partially smooth water	Open water
PFD type 1, 2 or 3 Except in river, creek or stream, or waters contained within breakwaters or revetments when the boat has positive flotation** and grab lines/rails.	PFD type 1 or 2	PFD type 1
*Information about smooth waters, partially smooth waters and open waters is available on the Maritime Safety Queensland website at <a href="http://www.msq.qld.gov.au">www.msq.qld.gov.au</a> .		
**A positive flotation statement from the manufacturer or an accredited marine surveyor must be obtained and carried.		

Commercial ships:

Commercial ships must carry SOLAS or coastal lifejackets, depending on their area of operation. Commercial ships operating in smooth waters may carry PFD type 1.

**Q. Can I equip my recreational boat with lifejackets for commercial ships?**

A. Yes. Recreational boat owners may choose to equip their craft with lifejackets listed for use on commercial ships. These lifejackets provide greater flotation than a PFD type 1 and are made for situations where rescue may take longer, for instance in offshore waters. They satisfy the requirements for when PFD type 1 are required under the legislation.

**Q. When is it compulsory to wear a personal flotation device?**

A. The required lifejacket or PFD type 1 must be worn by all persons when crossing designated coastal bars in open boats less than 4.8 metres. Children under 12 must wear the required appropriate lifejacket or personal flotation device when underway in an open boat less than 4.8 metres. Wearing personal flotation devices is strongly recommended:

- in any emergency situation
- at the first sign of bad weather
- at night or when visibility is restricted
- when boating in unfamiliar waters
- when operating in a following sea
- by persons who are poor swimmers
- when boating alone.

**Q. I want a flotation device for my infant. What is available?**

A. Personal flotation devices are not required for infants under the age of one year. The Australian personal flotation device standards do not provide for wearer's body weight less than 10 kilograms.

There are a few jackets available for infants and very small children. Seek the advice of your safety equipment supplier or ship's chandler. Try the jacket on your baby in calm, shallow water under controlled conditions, for example, in the shallow end of a pool. Remember that baby clothing, particularly nappies, can have an effect on flotation and stability in the water.

Note that there are general safety obligations imposed by legislation on the master or owner of a boat. The owner and master must take steps to ensure that everybody on board is safe, including an infant – even though a lifejacket is not required for that infant. Where a marine event causes danger to a passenger, including an infant, the owner or master may expose himself or herself to prosecution for an offence.

**Q. What are the requirements for personal flotation devices for children?**

- A.** The legislation calls for a lifejacket or personal flotation device of an appropriate size for each person. The label of a lifejacket or personal flotation device will carry information about the intended body mass range, that is, the intended wearer's weight.

A personal flotation device must fit the wearer. Zips should be closed and straps firmly tightened. Any looseness will allow the wearer, particularly a child, to slip down in the jacket and the head will not be held clear of the water. Consider the use of a crotch strap.

AS 1512 – 1996 PFD type 1 does not permit inflatable personal flotation devices for body masses below 40 kilograms. Inflatable jackets are not recommended for children below the age of about six or seven. If an inflatable jacket is to be used for children automatic inflation is recommended.

Teach your child to use the personal flotation device, to move about and swim and also to float.

**Q. Should I get my children to practice wearing their personal flotation devices in the water?**

- A.** Have all your family and regular boating companions wear, and if inflatable then manually inflate, their jacket. Get into the water, say in a pool. Get a feel for the jacket by moving about and swimming. Involve the children in some play. Climb out and jump in from the side of the pool a few times. You'll see the need for a firm fit and where a crotch strap can add to your security. Familiarity gained in a non stressful play session will pay off if you need to use the jacket in an emergency situation.

**Q. My jacket is marked lifejacket and has a Standards Australia mark as shown including the number 1512. Is it okay to use?**



- A.** Sorry, you'll have to replace this one.

As this jacket does not display PFD type 1, PFD type 2 or PFD type 3 it indicates that the jacket was made to comply to a standard that was superseded in 1988 and does not comply with current requirements.

**Q. Is the marking lifejacket the only reason my old jacket is unacceptable?**

- A.** The marking of jackets made to the pre 1988 AS 1512 standard requires the word 'lifejacket' in block letters of at least 6 millimetres while current standards require the words PFD type 1. These markings are a way of identifying lifejackets made to the older standard. However, the markings are not the only difference between the old and current standards.

Lifejackets complying with pre-1988 standards may not meet the requirements of current standards in several areas including specifications related to buoyant materials, webbing, fabric, sewing threads, fastenings and retroreflective material.

**Q. My jacket is marked PFD type 1 and has a manufacture date of 1990. Is it okay to use?**

- A.** Yes, as long as the jacket is in good condition and includes all of the information and instructions as required, a personal flotation device made to AS 1512 – 1988 still complies with AS 1512 – 1996. The jacket will be more than 10 years old and although there is no time expiry date required under the legislation the condition of the jacket will be taken into account. Any deterioration in a jacket of any age, such as stiff or cracked fabric, colour fading or pulled stitching, will mean non compliance.

**Q. I am an interstate visitor to Queensland and my lifejackets are acceptable in my home state. Are they acceptable here?**

- A.** All states require personal flotation devices that comply with the appropriate Australian Standard for the area of operation. Provided your jackets comply with one of the Australian or international standards mentioned in Appendix 1, are in sound condition and suitable for the waters you are operating in they are acceptable.

**Q. I am visiting Queensland, in my boat, from overseas. My lifejackets are acceptable in my home country. Are they acceptable here?**

**A.** Provided your personal flotation devices comply with one of the international standards mentioned in appendix 1, are in sound condition and suitable for the waters you are operating in they are acceptable. Note that after one year in Queensland waters your ship must be registered here.

**Q. I've heard that I must have my inflatable lifejacket serviced. Is this correct and if so how often is servicing required?**

**A.** For a recreational ship:  
Yes, your inflatable personal flotation device must be serviced regularly. Follow the manufacturer's recommended service program for frequency of servicing or have it done annually. Be sure to keep receipts and certificates of servicing as documentary evidence is necessary to show that servicing has taken place.

Keeping a safety equipment log for your boat is a way to record replacement and servicing of all your safety equipment.

For a commercial ship:

Commercial ships must have their inflatable lifejackets serviced by a service station approved and accredited by the manufacturer at intervals of 12 months or any longer interval recommended by the manufacturer in writing.

**Q. Retailers of personal flotation devices sell re-charge kits for my brand and model jacket. Can I do the service myself?**

**A.** Self servicing of inflatable personal flotation devices is not recommended. However, for recreational ships, should you consider yourself competent to do your own service you may. You must follow the manufacturer's instructions and ensure the re-charge kit matches your jacket. Documentary evidence of the servicing is required. Keep the receipts for recharge kits and record the service dates.

**Q. My inflatable lifejacket is marked with a date of manufacture that is six months before I bought it. When does my servicing schedule begin?**

**A.** The servicing schedule starts from the date of purchase. Keep your receipt as evidence. If you can not produce a receipt then the date of manufacture will be taken as the starting date.

**Q. Can my large mate have a personal flotation device custom made?**

**A.** See Appendix 3  
Yes, custom made personal flotation devices must comply with the requirements of the legislation as described in Appendix 3.

**Q. I bought my tinny second-hand and it came with personal flotation devices. Will they be okay?**

**A.** Check carefully. The personal flotation devices require the markings listed in Appendix 2 to ensure they have been made to an appropriate standard and they must be in sound condition. A lifejacket in poor condition, for instance if it shows signs of deterioration such as stiff or cracked fabric, colour fading or pulled stitching, will be considered non-compliant and attract a fine.

**Q. Can a coastal life jacket be an inflatable?**

**A.** Yes, under NSCV C 7A a coastal lifejacket is a lifejacket that complies with AS 4758.1 – Level 150, ISO 12402-3 – Level 150 or BS EN 396. These standards all provide for inflatable lifejackets. Remember, there are servicing requirements for inflatable coastal lifejackets.

**Q: My inflatable jacket has printed on it 'This is not a PFD until it is inflated'. Does that mean I have to have it inflated when I am on my boat to meet my requirements?**

**A:** No, this statement is a requirement of the standard AS4758.1 – 2008 and it must be printed on the jacket to comply with that standard.

#### Information

For further information about this Marine Information Bulletin, email [msgmail@msg.qld.gov.au](mailto:msgmail@msg.qld.gov.au).

Other Marine Information Bulletins covering various topics relating to the safe operation of ships can be obtained from Maritime Safety Queensland's website [www.msg.qld.gov.au](http://www.msg.qld.gov.au) and from the following Maritime Safety Queensland regional offices:

Airlie Beach	(07) 4946 2200
Bundaberg	(07) 4131 8500
Cairns	(07) 4052 7400
Gladstone	(07) 4973 1200
Hervey Bay	(07) 4194 9600
Mackay	(07) 4944 3700
Mooloolaba	(07) 5477 8425
Pinkenba	(07) 3860 3500



Southport (07) 5539 7300  
Townsville (07) 4726 3400

## Appendix 1

### Standards approved for lifejackets and personal flotation devices in Queensland

- When the legislation requires coastal lifejackets
  - USL Code, Section 10, Appendix R
  - MO 25, SOLAS (LSA Code)
  - EN 396 150 N – Lifejacket
  - ISO 12402-1 – Lifejacket for seagoing ships
  - ISO 12402.2 PFD – level 275
  - ISO 12402.3 PFD – level 150
  - EN 399 275 N – Lifejacket
  - AS 4758 PFD – level 275
  - AS 4758 PFD – level 150.
  
- When the legislation requires PFD type 1
  - AS 1512 – PFD type 1
  - USL Code, Section 10, Appendix R
  - MO 25, SOLAS (LSA Code)
  - EN 396 150 N – Lifejacket
  - ISO 12402-1 – Lifejacket for seagoing ships
  - ISO 12402.2 PFD – level 275
  - ISO 12402.3 PFD – level 150
  - ISO 12402.4 PFD – level 100
  - EN 399–1993 Lifejackets–275N
  - NZ 5823:2005 Type 401
  - AS 4758 PFD – level 275
  - AS 4758 PFD – level 150
  - AS 4758 PFD – level 100.
  
- When the legislation requires PFD type 2
  - AS 1499 – PFD type 2
  - AS 4758 PFD - level 50
  - ISO 12402.5 PFD - level 50.
  
- When the legislation requires PFD type 3:
  - AS 2260 – PFD type 3
  - AS 4758 PFD - level 50 Special purpose
  - ISO 12402.6 PFD - level 50 Special purpose.

## Appendix 2

### Markings on lifejackets and personal flotation devices according to the standards

#### AS 1512 – Personal flotation devices – type 1

#### AS 1499 – Personal flotation devices – type 2

#### AS 2260 – Personal flotation devices – type 3

- the words PFD type 1 (or PFD type 2 or PFD type 3) in block letters not less than 6 millimetres high and below that the words 'CAUTION: May not be suitable for all conditions'
- for a child's PFD 'child's PFD type 1' and an extra caution related to a child wearing the PFD being under competent supervision
- the manufacturer's name, trade name or trademark
- the manufacturer's model identification, batch identification and year of manufacture
- intended body mass range
- illustrated instructions for donning the PFD
- instructions for storage and care
- information related to replacement or checking of gas cylinders of inflatable PFDs.

#### AS 4758

Information shall be given as pictograms or as text combined with illustrations.

- identification of the manufacturer and their mailing address
- classification in accordance with application and buoyancy level
- a special purpose jacket shall be marked with buoyancy classification followed by the letter 'S'
- the statement that it is not a PFD until fully inflated (only on an inflatable PFD)
- the size range of the PFD, e.g. range of chest or waist girth and user's body mass
- the minimum buoyancy provided and amount of inflatable buoyancy, if a hybrid type
- storage, care, cleaning and maintenance instructions in brief
- simple donning and adjustment instructions
- the user's body mass clearly visible to the user before donning
- simple instructions for use
- the correct size and charge of the cylinder; if inflated by gas, near the place where the cylinder is actually fitted
- a warning that gas cylinders are dangerous goods and must be kept away from children and not misused

- the manufacturer's model, designation, serial number, and quarter (or month) and year of manufacture
- the number of this Standard, for example, AS 4758.1
- pictograms or words indicating other risks catered for or not provided for
- the text 'Do not use as a cushion'
- the text 'Train yourself in the use of the device'
- the text 'Teach the child to float in this PFD', if intended for children'
- the text 'For children less than 6 years of age use automatically operating devices only', if intended for children
- details of any special features and specific applications
- the expected servicing interval assuming average use, and a space for servicing dates to be marked, including additional items and their replacement, such as gas cylinders, bobbins, retroreflective tapes etc
- compatibility with safety harnesses, clothing or additional equipment as relevant
- the text 'Full performance may not be achieved using waterproof clothing or in other circumstances. Refer to the leaflet.'
- 'Warning: Do not apply diapers which provide buoyancy when using the PFD'  
Note: this warning is only required for PFDs for users with a body mass up to 15 kilograms
- 'Warning: May not be suitable for persons with physical disabilities'.

#### ISO 12402

##### ISO 12402-1 – Lifejackets for seagoing ships

- the manufacturer's name or means of identification
- the manufacturer's model identification, serial number and year of manufacture
- intended body mass range
- approval information including the administration which approved it
- for inflatable lifejackets a label for registering 'date of service' and the text 'Annual servicing required'.

##### ISO 12402.2~6 Personal flotation devices

- identification of the manufacturer and their mailing address
- the class the PFD and the performance level according to application and buoyancy
- the statement that it is not a PFD until fully inflated (only on an inflatable PFD)
- the size range of the lifejacket
- the minimum buoyancy provided and amount of inflatable buoyancy, if a hybrid type

- storage, care, cleaning and maintenance instructions
  - simple donning and adjustment instructions
  - simple instructions for use
  - if inflated by gas, the correct size and charge of the cylinder
- Note: this information appears near the place where the cylinder is actually fitted
- if inflated by gas, a warning that gas cylinders are dangerous goods, and that they shall be kept away from children and not misused
  - the manufacturer's model, designation, serial number, and quarter (or month) and year of manufacture
  - the number of this part of ISO 12402
  - pictograms or words indicating other risks catered for or not provided for
  - the text 'Do not use as a cushion'
  - the text 'Train yourself in the use of the device'
  - the text 'Teach the child to float in this lifejacket', if intended for children
  - the text 'For children less than 6 years of age use automatically operating devices only', if intended for children
  - the range of its specific application
  - the expected servicing interval assuming average use, and a space for servicing dates to be marked including additional items (gas bottles, bobbins, retroreflective tapes, and so on) and their replacement
  - compatibility with safety harnesses, clothing or additional equipment as relevant
  - the text 'full performance may not be achieved using waterproof clothing or in other circumstances. Refer to the leaflet.'
  - the text 'warning: do not apply diapers which provide buoyancy when using the lifejacket'.
- Note: this warning is only required for lifejackets for users with a body mass up to 15 kilograms.

#### **NZ 5823:2005 Type 401 Open waters lifejackets**

- the manufacturer's name, trade name or trademark
- the manufacturer's batch identification and year of manufacture
- the words '401/OPEN-WATERS LIFEJACKET' in block letters not less than 6 millimetres high and beneath that the words 'This buoyancy aid is intended to hold the wearer's head above water if unconscious'
- warnings concerning operational effectiveness and the use of crotch straps
- intended body mass range
- method of donning, securing and adjusting
- minimum buoyancy

- further instructions related to inflatable lifejackets.

**SOLAS lifejackets** must be clearly marked with approval information including the administration which approved it (Australian Maritime Safety Authority in Australia).

**Coastal lifejackets** made to the USL Code, Section 10, Appendix R

- the manufacturer's name or other means of identification
- the word 'LIFEJACKET' in lettering not less than 25 millimetres high
- instructions for donning
- the ship operator should have some means of verifying compliance with the standard.

#### **EN399–1993 Lifejackets–275N and EN396–1993 Lifejackets–150N**

- identification of the manufacturer
- title of the lifejacket, that is 'LIFEJACKET 275' or 'LIFEJACKET 150'
- the manufacturer's model number, serial number and year of manufacture
- the numbers of the European standard to which it conforms
- size range
- minimum buoyancy provided
- storage, care, cleaning and maintenance instructions
- simple donning and adjustment instructions;
- simple instructions for use
- the text 'do not use as a cushion' and 'full performance may not be achieved using certain clothing or in other circumstances. Refer to leaflet'
- if intended for a child less than 40 kilograms the text 'teach the child to float in this lifejacket'
- the expected servicing interval assuming average use, and a space for servicing dates to be marked.

## Appendix 3

### Custom-made personal flotation devices

If a ship is required to be equipped with a personal flotation device for each person on board and the ship is equipped with a custom-made PFD for a person then the ship is taken to be equipped with the required personal flotation device for the person if:

- there is a manufacturer's declaration for the custom-made PFD
- the ship is required to be equipped with the type of personal flotation device in place of which the manufacturer's declaration states the custom-made PFD may be used
- the master of the ship:
  - keeps a copy of the manufacturer's declaration while the person is on board
  - reasonably believes the person is the person stated in the manufacturer's declaration.

**Custom-made PFD**, for a person, means a personal flotation device that has:

- been constructed using the same materials and methods of construction as:
  - for a custom-made PFD that is used in place of a PFD type 1 — a PFD type 1, or
  - for a custom-made PFD that is used in place of a PFD type 2 — a PFD type 2, or
  - for a custom-made PFD that is used in place of a PFD type 3 — a PFD type 3, and
- flotation appropriate to the type and body mass of the person.

**Manufacturer's declaration**, for a custom-made PFD, means a declaration by the manufacturer of the custom-made PFD that states the following:

- the type of personal flotation device in place of which the custom-made PFD may be used
- that the custom-made PFD has been constructed using the same materials and methods of construction as the type of personal flotation device in place of which the custom-made PFD may be used
- the name of the person for whom the custom-made PFD has been manufactured
- that the custom-made PFD has flotation appropriate to the type and body mass of the person for whom the custom-made PFD has been manufactured
- how the custom-made PFD may be identified.