



## Marine Notice No. 32 of 2019

Amended 07/02/2025

*This Marine Notice replaces Marine Notice Nos. 45 of 2012 and 10 of 2016.*

*Notice to all owners, masters and users of pleasure craft and personal watercraft*

### Personal Flotation Devices for Pleasure Craft and Personal Watercraft




#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to highlight the requirements for the carriage, certification, selection and wearing of Personal Flotation Devices for pleasure craft and personal watercraft. The Marine Notice also contains recommendations on correct use for users of Personal Flotation Devices.

#### 2. What is a Personal Flotation Device?

The term “personal flotation device” (PFD) covers all forms of lifejackets and buoyancy aids which, when correctly worn and used in water, provide buoyancy and increase the likelihood of survival.

A PFD is:

- a lifejacket that is  marked<sup>1</sup> or  wheel marked<sup>2</sup>, or
- a buoyancy aid that is  marked.

Tables B and C of this Marine Notice provide further information on the differences between a lifejacket and a buoyancy aid and associated use.

#### 3. Personal Flotation Device Regulations

The *Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) (Safety) Regulations 2005* ([S.I. No. 921 of 2005](#)) as amended by the *Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2012* ([S.I. No. 349 of 2012](#)) and the *Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2018* ([S.I. No. 400 of 2018](#)), apply to pleasure craft being operated in Irish waters and to:

<sup>1</sup> Lifejackets and buoyancy aids that are marked with the CE conformity marking consisting of the initials ‘CE’ taking the form shown in the specimen in Annex II of Regulation (EC) 765/2008 of 9 July 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Lifejackets that have the mark of conformity in the form of the wheel mark symbol set out in Annex I to Council Directive 2014/90/EU of 23 July 2014.

- any person on board a pleasure craft;
- any person being towed by a pleasure craft, or on board a craft or object of any kind being towed by a pleasure craft.

Table A of this Marine Notice provides further details on the application of the regulations to particular types/size of craft and sets out the carriage, certification and wearing requirements for PFDs on pleasure craft and personal watercraft.

**There must be suitable PFDs for everyone on board any pleasure craft.**

**Failure to comply with the legal requirements – Fixed Payments and Fines:**

Where an authorised officer has reasonable grounds for believing that a person is committing or has committed an offence under the PFD regulations, he or she may serve a fixed payment notice in the prescribed form on the person in question. The person who is alleged to have committed the offence may pay **€150** during the period of 21 days from the date of the notice. Failure to pay the €150 within the 21 days will lead to the institution of prosecution proceedings and, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €5,000.

**Wear a PFD – A person on board a pleasure craft of less than 7 metres length overall is required to wear a suitable personal flotation device while on board an open craft or while on the deck of decked craft, other than when the craft is made fast to the shore or at anchor.**

**4. Selection of Personal Flotation Devices**

When selecting a PFD, it is very important to select the correct device that is the appropriate size for the person wearing it and is suited to the particular conditions and circumstances in which it will be used. Reference should be made to Tables B, C and D of this Marine Notice, which set out the various PFD performance levels available and their associated description of use.

**5. Recommendations for correct use of a Personal Flotation Device**

- Users should read and understand the manufacturers’ instruction manual when they acquire a new PFD as each device may have specific user instructions.
- **PFDs should be worn over all clothing and not underneath.** This is to ensure that there is sufficient space for the device to inflate and that the user’s breathing is not restricted.
- PFDs should be worn in the **correct position** on the torso as per the manufacturer’s instructions. Hold-down devices can greatly assist in keeping the PFD in the correct position, as detailed below.

- Users should be fully **familiar with the operation of their inflatable PFDs** both manually and automatically.
- **Automatically inflatable PFDs**, which operate by means of a soluble bobbin, may activate in error if left in a damp condition. When inflatable PFDs are not being worn, they should be hung to dry vertically to ensure that all moisture drains away from the bobbin. Covers are available which reduce the problem of accidental inflation.
- Whilst not a requirement of the PFD regulations, it is recommended that anyone alone on board a craft should **wear a PFD at all times** regardless of weather conditions, the size of the craft or whether the craft is made fast to the shore or at anchor.
- It is recommended that all persons should wear a PFD at all times while on an open pleasure craft or on the deck of a decked pleasure craft.
- Where PFDs are required to be carried on board a craft, it is recommended that they are stored in a **readily accessible position** which may save time in an emergency situation.
- It is recommended that a PFD should be fitted with **hold-down devices such as crotch straps or thigh straps** which should be worn to maximise lifesaving potential and reduce the risk of the PFD riding up on the user, potentially moving it to an incorrect position. Some PFDs are sold with hold-down devices provided and others are sold with the hold-down device as an optional extra. **It is important that features such as crotch straps are worn correctly, in accordance with the instructions of the manufacturer of the PFD, to ensure that they work as intended.**
- Please see **Appendix 1** of this Marine Notice regarding the effect of **Cold Water Shock** and the benefits of a correctly worn lifejacket.

## 6. Inspection and Servicing of Personal Flotation Devices

PFDs have a limited lifespan and require regular inspection and servicing in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Servicing should only be carried out by the manufacturers or their approved agent.

Users of PFDs should ensure that the device is inspected prior to each use as per the manufacturer's instructions. The inspection, as a minimum, should include:

- Inspection of harness straps/stitching for damage/wear;
- Inspection of external lining for wear/damage;
- Checking that all buckles are correctly adjusted;
- Checking that all zips, buckles, fasteners, webbing straps and lights (if fitted) are functioning correctly;
- Checking all hold-down devices attached to the PFD, if fitted;
- Inflatable lifejackets – refer to manufacturer's user instructions with particular reference to the CO<sub>2</sub> gas firing cylinder;
- Checking any marked expiry dates to confirm that there are no expired components.

If any concern exists regarding a PFD or a component following a user's inspection, it should not be used and should be brought to an approved service agent for servicing.








This is an information notice which serves to draw attention to the relevant legislation and is not a legal interpretation of the legislation.

## **7. Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft**

Further safety information for recreational craft users in relation to PFDs and other matters is contained in the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft. The Code of Practice is a free document and hardcopies can be obtained on request, in both English and Irish, from the Maritime Safety Policy Division of the Department at email [marineleisuresafety@transport.gov.ie](mailto:marineleisuresafety@transport.gov.ie).

The Code of Practice is also available to view or download from [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/66ff7e-safe-operation-of-recreational-craft/> and on [www.safetyonthewater.ie](http://www.safetyonthewater.ie).

**Table A - Personal Flotation Devices: Certification, carriage, selection and wearing requirements**

| LENGTH OVERALL of craft  | PFD CERTIFICATION AND CARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS<br><i>See notes (1) and (2)</i>   | SELECTION OF PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES | REQUIRED WEARING OF PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
|  |   |   | PLEASURE CRAFT <i>see note (3)</i>            |   | PERSONAL WATERCRAFT<br><i>See note (6)</i> |
|  |   |   | OPEN CRAFT<br><i>See note (5)</i>             | DECKED CRAFT<br><i>See note (4)</i>             |  |
| Less than 4 metres   |  or <br>For all persons | Refer to Tables B, C and D.             | All persons                                   | All persons while on deck                       | All persons                                |
| Less than 7 metres   |  or <br>For all persons | Refer to Tables B, C and D.             | All persons                                   | All persons while on deck                       | Not applicable                             |
| 7 metres or greater  |  or <br>For all persons | Refer to Tables B, C and D.             | All persons under 16 years of age             | All persons under 16 years of age while on deck | Not applicable                             |
| Over 13.7 metres   | <br>For all persons<br><i>See note (7)</i>  | Refer to Table C.                       | All persons under 16 years of age             | All persons under 16 years of age while on deck | Not applicable                             |
| <b>Notes:</b>  |   |   |   |   |  |
| (1) Means lifejackets and buoyancy aids that are marked with the CE conformity marking consisting of the initials 'CE' taking the form shown in the specimen in Annex II of Regulation (EC) 765/2008 of 9 July 2008. |   |   |   |   |  |

(2) Means lifejackets that have the mark of conformity in the form of the wheel mark symbol set out in Annex I to Council Directive 2014/90/EU of 23 July 2014.



(3) Does not apply to:

- a person on board a pleasure craft (other than a personal watercraft), which is not under way, when the person is wearing, putting on, or taking off, scuba diving equipment, or is about to engage in, or has just completed swimming (including snorkelling) from the craft;
- The PFD regulations do not apply to rowers in boats which are designed and specifically used for rowing in boat races and are capable of being entered into regattas or other events recognised by the Irish Amateur Rowing Union, and of a design and type in respect of which events are held in the Olympic Games or other international rowing regattas.






(4) "Decked craft" means a pleasure craft which is not an open craft.

(5) "Open craft" means a pleasure craft which does not have a cabin or below deck facilities for the use of persons and where seating, or any place on the craft used for seating, is exposed or partially exposed to the elements.

(6) "Personal watercraft" means a craft of less than 4 metres in length which uses an internal combustion engine having a water jet pump as its primary source of propulsion, and which is designed to be operated by a person or persons sitting, standing or kneeling on, rather than within the confines of, a hull.



(7) Consideration to be given to the carriage of  marked lifejackets for use on deck in addition to  marked lifejackets.

**Table B - Selection of lifejackets**


|  <b>LIFEJACKETS (INFLATABLE AND NON-INFLATABLE)</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <i>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</i>   | <i>APPLICATION</i>  |
| <p>LEVEL 275</p>  <p>Offshore, extreme conditions, special protective clothing, heavy equipment</p> | <p>This level is intended primarily for offshore use under extreme conditions. It is also of value to those who are wearing clothing which traps air and which may adversely affect the self-righting capacity of the lifejacket. It is designed to ensure that the user is floating in the correct position with his/her mouth and nose clear of the surface of the water.</p> |
| <p>LEVEL 150</p>  <p>Offshore, foul weather clothing</p>  | <p>This level is intended for general application or for use with foul weather clothing. It will turn an unconscious person into a safe position and requires no subsequent action by the user to maintain this position.</p>   |
| <p>LEVEL 100</p>  <p>Sheltered waters, light clothing</p>   | <p>This level is intended for those who may have to wait for rescue, but are likely to do so in sheltered water. The device should not be used in rough conditions.</p>   |
|  <b>LIFEJACKETS (INFLATABLE AND NON-INFLATABLE)</b>   |   |
| <i>APPLICATION</i>   |   |

Survival lifejackets that have the mark of conformity in the form of the wheel mark symbol set out in Annex I to Council Directive 2014/90/EU of 23 July 2014. Refer to Note (7) from Table A.

**Table C - Selection of buoyancy aids**

|  <b>BUOYANCY AIDS</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <i>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</i>   | <i>APPLICATION</i>  |
| <p>LEVEL 50</p>  <p>Swimmers only, sheltered waters, help at hand, limited protection against drowning, not a lifejacket.</p> | <p>This level is intended for use by those who are competent swimmers and who are near to bank or shore, or who have help and a means of rescue close at hand. These garments have minimal bulk, but they are of limited use in disturbed water, and cannot be expected to keep the user safe for a long period of time. They do not have sufficient buoyancy to protect people who are unable to help themselves. They require active participation by the user.</p> |

**Table D - Special purpose lifejackets and buoyancy aids**

|  <b>SPECIAL PURPOSE LIFEJACKETS AND BUOYANCY AIDS</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <i>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</i>   | <i>APPLICATION</i>   |
| <p>LEVEL 275<br/>LEVEL 150<br/>LEVEL 100<br/>LEVEL 50</p>  | <p>Lifejackets and buoyancy aids that have different levels of support but have modifications related to special applications for use, e.g. firefighting. These applications shall not relate to essential requirements such as in-water performance, stability and safety in use. The specific conditions for use shall be stated on their label to maintain essential requirements. Users should refer to the manufacturer's documentation for guidance on selecting this type of PFD.</p> |

Irish Maritime Administration,  
Department of Transport,  
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.

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Encl: Appendix 1

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice, please contact:  
The Marine Survey Office, email: [MSO@transport.gov.ie](mailto:MSO@transport.gov.ie).  
For general enquiries, please contact the Maritime Safety Policy Division, email:  
[MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie](mailto:MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie).  
Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:  
Dept. of Transport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.  
email: [MarineNotices@transport.gov.ie](mailto:MarineNotices@transport.gov.ie) or visit us at: [www.gov.ie/transport](http://www.gov.ie/transport).

## Appendix 1:

### **Cold water shock kills**

**Stage 1:** Cold shock (3 – 5 minutes)

**Stage 2:** Swimming failure (3 – 30 minutes)

**Stage 3:** Hypothermia (after 30 minutes)

**Stage 4:** Post rescue collapse (during or hours after rescue)

### **What does a correctly sized and worn lifejacket DO for YOU?**

Makes YOU feel safe

Keeps YOU alive

Stops YOU from panicking

Supports YOU even when unconscious

Supports and protects YOU until help arrives

But only if you keep YOUR lifejacket from riding-up!

#### **Remember: It won't work if you don't wear it.**

In order to work, a PFD should be worn at all times. Cold water can severely impede your ability to put on and fasten a PFD in the water.

Adverse wind and wave conditions can also make this extremely difficult or you could unexpectedly fall into water and be unable to reach your PFD on board your craft.