

Marine Notice No. 10 of 2016

Notice to all owners, masters and users of pleasure and recreational craft.

Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aids – Main Points

This Marine Notice is primarily addressed to pleasure and recreational craft owners, masters and users. It provides a brief summary of the **legal requirements** in relation to the wearing and carrying of lifejackets and buoyancy aids, the **penalties** arising from non-compliance, as well as **advice** on the selection and maintenance of Personal Flotation Devices.

The term “personal flotation device” (PFD) covers all forms of lifejackets and buoyancy aids which, when correctly worn and used in water, will provide buoyancy and increase the likelihood of survival. A lifejacket is designed to prevent drowning and must be capable of returning the user to the surface as quickly as possible and of keeping the person afloat, permitting breathing while waiting for help. Buoyancy aid clothing ensures a degree of buoyancy and support in the water while enabling the user to swim or take action to escape from danger.

Personal Flotation Devices and the Law – PFD 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](#)), apply to pleasure craft being operated in Irish waters and to any person on board a pleasure craft or being towed by a pleasure craft, or on board a craft or object of any kind being towed by a pleasure craft.

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

A suitable PFD must be worn at all times:

- By anyone on board any moving pleasure craft (not tied up or made fast) that is under 7 metres in length, including personal watercraft (jet-skis);
- By anyone under the age of 16 years on board any type of moving pleasure craft;
- By anyone in another craft or on any other device (e.g. skis, donuts, etc.) being towed by a pleasure craft.

Except

- Immediately prior to, during and after swimming from a stationary pleasure craft;
- When putting on, wearing or taking off diving equipment on a stationary pleasure craft.

It is recommended that:

- Anyone alone on board a pleasure craft should wear a PFD at all times regardless of weather conditions, the size of the pleasure craft or whether it is made fast or at anchor;
- PFDs, if required to be carried, are stored in a readily accessible position;
- PFDs should be fitted with hold-down devices such as crotch straps or thigh straps to maximise lifesaving potential and reduce the risk of the PFD riding up on the user;

- Persons should wear lifejackets at all times while on open decked pleasure craft over 7 metres in length not fitted with inherent buoyancy.

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.

Selection and use of Personal Flotation Devices

Pleasure and recreational craft owners should select PFDs that are appropriate to:

- the particular circumstances in which they will be used (e.g. area of operation, sea state, weather, ease of use);
- the type of risks likely to be encountered (e.g. sudden immersion due to capsizing);
- other factors (e.g. type and buoyancy of clothing worn, chemical exposure);

PFDs should be worn over all clothing and not underneath. PFD users should be familiar with the correct use and operation of their PFDs.

Servicing and maintenance of Personal Flotation Devices

Servicing of PFDs should only be carried out by manufacturers/approved agents in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, but users should still carry out regular safety checks prior to each use.

PFD users should not use PFDs with expired components and should remove PFDs from the boat and refer to an approved service agent if there are any concerns about a PFD.

Conformity Marking of Personal Flotation Devices

- Every PFD made available on the European Union market should be CE marked.
- Every survival lifejacket should be marked with the "ship's wheel" mark.

Further Information

For more detailed information on lifejackets and buoyancy aids, please consult [Marine Notice No. 45 of 2012](#) (Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aids). [Marine Notice No. 39 of 2013](#) (Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) and increase your chance of survival in the event of entering water) and [Marine Notice No. 48 of 2015](#) (Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Requirements) provide information on the wearing and carrying of PFDs in the fishing and commercial vessel sectors.

Help yourself to survive by wearing a lifejacket

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!

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For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice please contact
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