



# Inflatable lifejackets for recreational boating: Guidelines for choosing, servicing and wearing lifejackets

These guidelines were developed by a nation-wide industry group representing manufacturers, importers, retailers, boating organisations, New Zealand Defence Force local government and central government. The group was coordinated by Maritime New Zealand.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide nationally agreed, clear, consistent information about inflatable lifejackets (also known as personal floatation devices or PFDs). Its aim is to help save lives of recreational boaters by helping them choose the correct lifejackets, and to know how and when to service them.

It is for:

- Manufacturers, importers and retailers** Guidance about what information to include on packaging, swing tags, instructions, websites and other material intended for the public. The information is also useful advice for staff working with the public.
- Public and “boaters”** To support informed decisions about what lifejackets to buy and use, and how to care for and wear them.  
  
Importantly, for the first time, it includes instructions for how and when to self-service inflatable lifejackets.
- Boating organisations** Information to support their educational and training work with the public and boaters.
- Central and local government agencies** Information to provide to the public and boaters when making lifejacket checks and carrying out other compliance tasks, and to support their public education work.



Consistent information is crucial for safety. When all the organisations involved consistently give the same messages, we reinforce each other's advice, generate better public understanding and promote safer decisions about lifejackets.

## How to use these guidelines

Business and organisations are encouraged to use information from these guidelines in the formats that work best for them. This can include point of sale and other marketing material, brochures and information documents, online, course information etc. You are welcome to present it under your own logo and brand. It will often be best to use excerpts and change layout but factual or technical information must not be changed.

If you have any questions or need further information about these guidelines, please contact Maritime New Zealand: enquiries@maritimenz.govt.nz; toll free within New Zealand 0508 22 55 22; +64 4 473 0111.

## Inflatable lifejackets

Inflatable Lifejackets (PFDs) are designed to be bladder inflated by CO<sub>2</sub> gas when required. The deployment of an inflatable lifejacket occurs in two manners:

1. Manual release of a firing mechanism to inflate the bladder
2. Automatic bladder inflation by water saturation

Note along with “vest” style inflatable lifejackets, “belt style” inflatable lifejackets are also approved fit for purpose in New Zealand.

## Recommending a lifejacket – one size does not fit all

A particular type of lifejacket might not be suitable for every person or for every type of boating activity. This table helps advise what type of lifejacket should be used.

Inflatable Lifejackets	Adult Manual 150 N*	Adult Auto 150 N*	Child Auto 100 N*
Minimum age	13+ years	13+ years	8+ years
Minimum weight	40 kgs	40 kgs	18 kgs
Maximum Weight	No max weight, straps / webbing must fit comfortably	No max weight, straps / webbing must fit comfortably	40 kgs
Foul weather / industrial clothing or carrying heavy tools / tool belts, or dead weights etc.	Not recommended Recommend 275 N*	Not recommended Recommend 275 N*	
NOT recommended for	Any lifejacket is better than no lifejacket. Some activities are identified below where a foam filled lifejacket might be considered a better option. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal water craft (jet ski)</li> <li>• kayaking, (other than experienced Kayak operators)</li> <li>• Jet Boating (as recommended by Jet Boating NZ)</li> <li>• towing (includes water skiing, sea biscuiting, wake-boarding)</li> </ul>		

\* N = Newtons. The higher the Newtons, the more floatation a lifejacket provides.

## Other important information to provide

- Inflatable lifejackets should be worn outside of clothing to ensure access to inflation toggle, and oral inflation mechanism, and to ensure the inflation of the jacket occurs safely.
- Always check whether the lifejacket is automatically or manually inflated prior to use.
- Crotch straps, it is recommended that crotch / thigh straps be fitted to all inflatable lifejackets, as these are not supplied as standard equipment.
- Consider fitting a spray hood if boating offshore.
- Consider fitting water activated light if boating after dark.

## Servicing

Whatever type of inflatable lifejacket you wear or own, it is imperative you know what type it is (manual / automatic / newton's) how it works and how and when it must be serviced or checked.

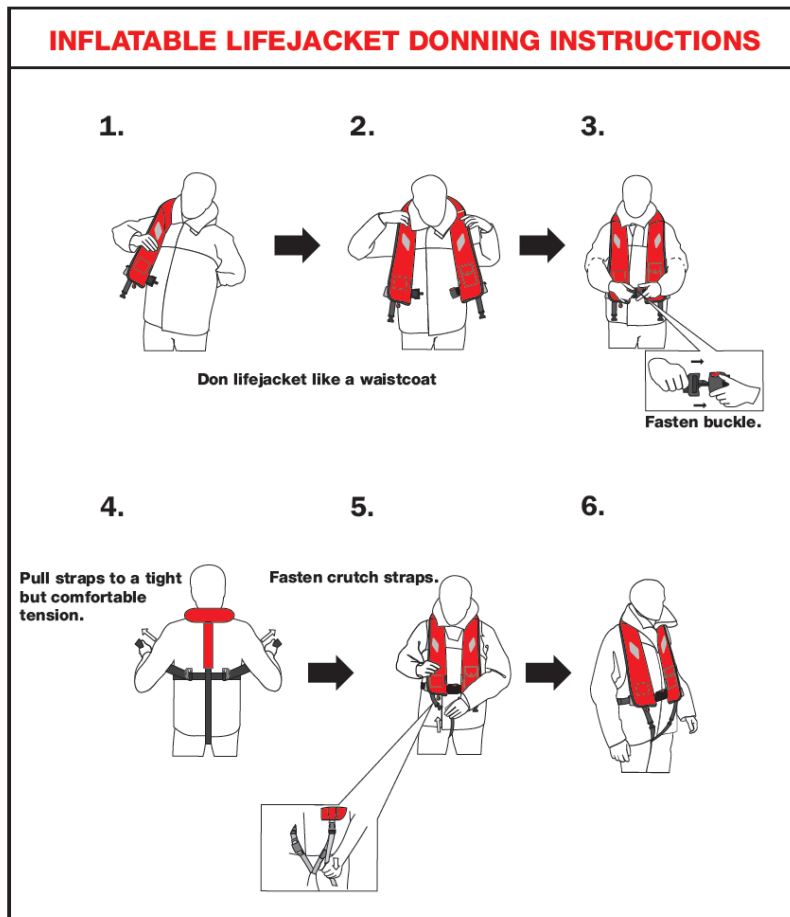
Who	When
Servicing by approved agent	As per manufacturer's guidelines
Self-servicing	Once a year (minimum)
Pre-wear check	Every time you wear a lifejacket

## Self-servicing & pre-wear checks

Lifejacket component	Self Service	Pre-wear check
Outer cover, straps/webbing	Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cuts, nicks, tears, holes, abrasions, chaffing/wear</li> </ul>	same as self-service
Fastenings/buckles	Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>functioning correctly</li> <li>fastens securely</li> </ul>	same as self-service
Bladder	Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>orally inflate and leave inflated for 24 hours (if any deflation, send to service agent)</li> </ul>	N/A
Gas cylinder	Unscrew cylinder Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>right cylinder for right jacket (if used replaced with correct cylinder)</li> <li>rust corrosion</li> <li>pierced/perforated</li> </ul> Screw in cylinder firmly	same as self-service, where possible
Firing mechanism	Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tamper clip</li> <li>Function/position of lever</li> </ul>	same as self-service,
Toggle	Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manual inflation toggle is</li> </ul>	same as self-service

Lifejacket component	Self Service	Pre-wear check
	exposed (hanging out)	
<b>Important messages</b>		
ALWAYS follow manufacturer's guidelines		
REFOLD bladder as per manufacturer's instructions – FOLD NOT ROLL		
CHECK viewer indicating system if fitted		
<b>IF unsure, send to a service agent</b>		

## Fitting



## **Advice to Skippers – what to show your passengers**

**Allocate a lifejacket to each person. Explain what type of jacket it is and how it is activated and when it is to be worn.**

Show how to:

- fit the lifejacket including fastening and adjusting buckles for crotch/leg straps, if fitted
- fasten buckle and pull straps to a tight but comfortable tension
- how to operate and use
- how to inflate correctly
- inflate orally if jacket failure
- show how to deflate
- show whistle
- show light (if fitted) and how it is activated
- show how to fit and adjust crotch strap/s (if fitted)

## **Caring and stowage of lifejacket**

Keep clean and dry – rinse off salt water

*Note: auto-inflate models should be wiped with a wet sponge – not rinsed*

Do not store folded – hang if possible

Ideally stow in a dry, well-ventilated space out of the sunlight

Do not compress (under another heavy object)