



Penny Bubbar



MONTANA BOATING AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Life Vest Personal Floatation Device PFD Life Jacket

Whatever you call it, it can save your life, if you wear it!

GET THE FACTS:

- Most drowning victims had a life jacket available but chose not to wear it.
- 70% of all boating fatalities result from drowning. 85% of those who drown are not wearing a life jacket.
- It only takes 60 seconds for an adult to drown, and only 20 seconds for a child to drown.
- Air-filled swimming aids such as “water wings” are not U.S. Coast Guard approved and are not substitutes for a life jacket.

Want to learn more?
Visit FWP on-line at:

fwp.mt.gov



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LIFE JACKETS

MONTANA BOATING AND EDUCATION PROGRAM



What you need to know...

...before you go!





Boaters— What You Need On Board

All boats must have one U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket (also known as a personal flotation device or PFD) for each person on board. They must be in good condition and the appropriate size for the intended wearer. Boats 16 feet or longer (excluding canoes and kayaks) must also have at least one throwable flotation device (Type IV) such as a ring buoy or boat cushion.

Wearable life jackets must be **readily accessible**—located out in the open where they can be easily reached. A throwable flotation device (Type IV) must be **immediately available**—within an arm’s reach of the operator or passengers while the boat is operated. A life jacket that is sealed in a bag or stored in a compartment is not readily accessible or immediately available.

In Montana a life jacket must be worn by:

- Children under 12 years of age
- Water skiers, tubers or anyone being towed by a boat
- Anyone operating or riding a personal watercraft (jet ski, wave runner, etc)

If you are floating through whitewater, get caught in a storm, or you are not a good swimmer, wearing a life jacket could save your life.

Hunters & Anglers

Sportsmen and women drown on Montana’s water every year. People who use a boat while hunting or fishing often do not consider themselves “boaters” and may not think to take the same precautions as a recreational boater. Waterfowl hunters can purchase life jackets and float coats that come in camouflage colors. Anglers can use an inflatable life jacket that provides more comfort and is less bulky. Some inflatable life jackets look and function like a fishing vest.



Cold Can Kill

Cold water (less than 70 degrees F) can lower body temperature, causing hypothermia. If body temperature drops too low, a person may pass out and then drown. The human body cools 25 times faster

in cold water than in air. Life jackets can help increase the odds of surviving in cold water by conserving the energy it would otherwise take to float and insulating the body from cold water.

Keep Kids Afloat

Make sure a child’s life jacket fits snugly. Check the fit of the life jacket by grabbing the shoulders and pulling upwards. The shoulders of the jacket should not rise higher than the bottom of the child’s ears. Bright colored life jackets are best since they are more visible in the water.

Allow a child to get used to the feel of wearing the life jacket in the water. Teach the child to relax and float while wearing the jacket. While a life jacket will keep a child afloat, it may not keep a frightened struggling child face-up.

Life jackets are not babysitters. Even if a child wears a life jacket when on or near the water, an adult must always be present.

Life Jacket Care

Be sure each life jacket on your boat is in serviceable condition. A life jacket is not in serviceable condition when:

- Any strap, buckle, zipper or connector is broken or missing
- The fabric is ripped, torn or punctured
- It has been altered or modified. If yours doesn’t fit, get one that does.

Allow life jackets to drip dry before putting them away. Never use a dryer, radiator or any other heat source to dry lifejackets. Avoid storing life jackets in direct sunlight, and follow the manufacturers instructions for cleaning.

Inflatable Life Jackets

Inflatable life jackets provide recreationists a less bulky and more comfortable hot-weather option. Inflated with compressed gas (CO2), they are then activated manually by pulling a “jerk to inflate” ripcord, or automatically when the jacket is submerged in water. Once inflated it performs like a Type I, II, III or V, as indicated on its label.

Inflatable life jackets are not suitable for children under age 16, non-swimmers, whitewater rafters, water skiers, jet skiers, or other high-speed boating activities.

Do not wear an inflatable life jacket under restrictive clothing because once inflated it could restrict breathing and cause injury.

5 Types of Personal Flotation Devices

Choose the style of PFD best suited to your activity:

Type I: Off-shore life jacket

Best for open, rough or remote waters where rescue may not be immediate. Designed to turn an unconscious person face-up.



Type II: Near shore life vest

Good for calm water where fast rescue is likely. A good choice for children when equipped with a strap to buckle between their legs.

Type III: A Flotation aid

Generally the most comfortable to wear for water sports. Available in many colors and styles including vests and float coats. Will not turn an unconscious person face-up.



Type IV: A Throwable Device

Includes boat cushions, ring buoys and horseshoe buoys. Designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped to the chest, not worn.

Type V: A Special Use Device

Intended for specific activities. May be used instead of another PFD only if used according to conditions printed on the label. Includes deck suits, pullover vests, work vests and some hybrid life jackets. Not

