

# What You Need to Know About Life Jackets

## What is a life jacket?

A life jacket is a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device which helps to maintain flotation and warmth.

## Why should people of all ages wear life jackets?

Drowning is swift, occurring in as little as 30 seconds, and silent. Death by drowning has more to do with what you do than who you are. Life jackets are one measure you can take to prevent drowning deaths.

## Guidelines for wearing life jackets.

- Children between birth and 4 years: on beaches, docks, in boats, and on inner tubes.
- Children between 5 and 10 years: on docks, in boats, and on inner tubes.
- Children 11 through adults: in boats, and on inner tubes.
- Anyone participating in such water activities as skiing, skurfing, windsurfing, jet-skiing, etc.

## When buying a life jacket check for:

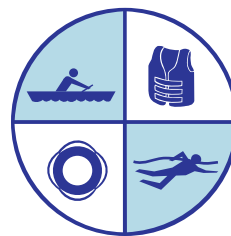
- Coast Guard approval label.
- A snug fit. Check weight and size on the label and try the life jacket on your child. Pick up your child by the shoulders of the life jacket. The child's chin and ears should not slip through if the fit is proper.
- Head support for younger children. A well designed life jacket will support the child's head when the child is in the water.
- A strap between the legs for younger children will help prevent the vest from coming off.
- Appropriate type of activity and water conditions. There are five different types of life jackets. Ask the salesperson to describe to you the different types and their purposes.
- Comfort and appearance.

## How do you use a life jacket?

- Every spring, check the life jacket for fit as well as wear and tear. Throw it away if you find air leakage, mildew, rot, or rust.
- Practice wearing your life jacket in the water. Each type of jacket provides flotation in slightly different positions. Make sure your jacket works for you as designed.
- Never substitute toys, such as water wings, or plastic rings, for a life jacket.



**Life jackets** are meant to be worn for your own personal safety in the event of a water emergency. Each year there are many incidents which lead to drownings. Wearing a life jacket is the easiest way to prevent death from drowning. Please think and teach safety every day.



**Inland Northwest  
Drowning Prevention  
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