



Water Safety

Drowning is the leading cause of death for recreational boaters, with 519 drownings in 2000 (most recent U.S. Coast Guard statistics available). Life jackets (also known as personal flotation devices or PFDs) could have saved the lives of approximately 450 of those victims. U.S. Coast Guard statistics indicate that eight out of 10 boating-related drownings in 2000 involved a person who was not wearing one of these simple life-saving devices.

"We're working with UL to get the word out that life jackets save lives, plain and simple," says Alan McMillan, president of NSC. "Boaters must realize that just having PFDs on board boats isn't enough; they don't work unless people wear them."

Dan Ryan, associate managing engineer at UL agrees that a little knowledge can go a long way when it comes to life jackets. "There are many new and inexperienced boaters hitting the waterways every year," Ryan says. "Both our organizations want to make sure these people understand that a PFD is the most important piece of boating equipment one can bring on any boating trip."

"Most boaters don't plan on falling overboard, and if they do, they are not prepared to deal with the situation," adds Ryan. "Even experienced swimmers may panic and get into trouble."

Facts to consider

- Capsizings and falls overboard account for more than half of all boating fatalities.
- Federal law requires boat operators to have a properly fitting life jacket for everyone on board and a throwable device for craft that are 16 feet in length or longer. Most states require that children wear a life jacket. Obey your state's laws.
- Simply put, life jackets are very difficult-almost impossible-to find and put on once you are in the water; they are easier to put on before an emergency situation occurs.
- Hypothermia, the loss of body heat, contributes to as many as half of all water fatalities. If someone is in 50-degree water for 50 minutes, they have a 50 percent better chance of survival if they're wearing a life jacket.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

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