

Frequently Asked Questions

What are inflatable life jackets and how do they work?

Inflatable life jackets rely on inflatable chambers that provide buoyancy when inflated. Uninflated, inflatable life jackets are less bulky than inherently buoyant life jacket. Onyx inflatable life jackets are United States Coast Guard Approved. All inflatables contain a backup oral inflation tube (and also serves as a deflation tube)

All Onyx Inflatable Life Jackets are approved by Underwriters Laboratories and receive a UL / Coast Guard Approved label, located on the inside of the life jacket.

Advantages of Inflatables:

Provides high visibility when inflated
Will usually keep unconscious users face-up
Superior in-water performance

Disadvantages of Inflatables:

Not suitable for non-swimmers
Not approved for children under 16 years of age
Requires frequent inspection and maintenance
Not appropriate for activities such as personal watercraft use, tubing, swimming, snorkeling, whitewater rafting

Always read the owner's manual that comes with your inflatable life jacket before using.

I do not know how to swim. Should I use an inflatable PFD?

- No. A non-swimmer could panic in an unexpected fall into the water, and forget they may need to activate the inflator mechanism.
- Non-swimmers would be advised to use an inherently buoyant or hybrid PFD that provides flotation without any action on their part

Is there an age requirement for inflatable PFDs?

Yes. Inflatables are only approved for use by people 16 years and older. People under the age of 16 must have inherently buoyant or hybrid device in their size range on board the boat to meet the carriage requirements.

Are inflatable PFDs approved for all boating activities?

- No. Fully inflatable PFDs are not approved for high speed applications such as riding a PWC, waterskiing, or tubing.
- Inflatables are not approved for white water activities
- For these activities, the user needs buoyancy while in the water. It is not reasonable to expect that the wearer would stop, deflate the chamber, rearm the inflator, and repack the PFD after each water entry

Will any CO2 Cylinder work?

No. It is important to use a rearm kit that includes a cylinder that is supplied by the maker of the vest. There are a variety of CO2 cylinders in stores for various uses.

The correct cylinder to use will be indicated on the PFD itself and in the Owner's Manual or can be obtained by calling the PFD manufacturer.

Can I use my CO2 cylinder more than once?

No. Once the cylinder has been punctured all the gas will escape into the chamber. Therefore you need to check to see if the cylinder is full before each outing.

If your device has a CYLINDER SEAL INDICATOR, it will show GREEN if the cylinder is full. If it shows RED, you must replace the cylinder.

Will my inflatable PFD inflate unexpectedly when exposed to heavy splashing, fog, rain, or high humidity

When the inflatable life jacket is worn and stowed properly premature inflation from rain, splashing, fog, and humidity is rare. The automatic inflation mechanisms are designed and tested to be resistant to rain and humidity. When worn and stowed hanging up and in a cool dry place it is very unlikely the automatic mechanism will be affected by rain, splashing or fog. Premature inflation almost always happens when the life jacket is stowed in the boat where moisture and humidity can be very high or laid down flat on the bottom of the boat where water can get to it. If in a humid region like the Southeast, water sensing bobbins (yellow bobbin) should be replaced yearly.

For more information, refer to your Inflatable Life Jacket Owner's Manual.

Can i bring my inflatable life jacket (IPFD) on a plane with me?

In regards to the CO2 cylinders for the inflatable life jackets, the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) allows for the following: Small compressed gas cartridges (Up to 2 in life vests and 2 spares. The spares must accompany the life vests and presented as one unit). This includes both carry-on and checked baggage.

You should always check with your airline's policy before your flight.

Can i wear my inflatable life jacket (PFD) when ice fishing?

We **DO NOT** recommend wearing inflatable life jackets for ice fishing or on open water when the temperatures are below 40°F (4°C).

Oral inflation may be required in addition to manual inflation if chamber is not firm due to cold temperatures at or below 40°F (4°C). Inflation time using CO2 will be longer at these temperatures.

Never use in below freezing temperatures unless worn partially inflated. At or below 40°F (4°C) inflation time with CO2 gas will be longer. Wearing a partially inflated PFD under these conditions will provide some initial buoyancy while the PFD fully inflates.

CAUTION: Do not fully inflate the PFD orally and then inflate with the CO2 cylinder. Repeated CO2 inflation after oral inflation will damage the PFD to the point that it will not hold air or float. Never inflate an inflatable PFD with a pump or air compressor.

How should I maintain my inflatable?

- You need to unscrew the cylinder and examine the seal to be sure that it has not been broken or pierced.
- Frequent inspections are important. Read your Owner's Manual.

REMEMBER:

Whether you choose an Inflatable PFD or an Inherently Buoyant PFD, choose to WEAR IT!

Your life depends on it!

Can i wear my inflatable life jacket under other clothing?

No, inflatable life jackets are designed to wear over your clothing (sweatshirt, jacket, shirt, etc.) Do not wear these vests under any type of clothing.

What does it mean for an inflatable life jacket to be converted to manual only inflation?

Some Onyx Automatic/Manual inflatable life jackets can be converted to manual only inflation for those times when you want the convenience of kayaking, canoeing, or fly-fishing activities where there is a good chance you may get wet or could end up in the water. If this happens, you just pull the inflation cord so the vest will inflate and keep you safely floating when you are immersed in water.

Where do I find the yellow cap to convert my inflatable life jacket to "manual only"?

For the Onyx Inflatable Life Jackets that allow for "manual only" conversion using the Yellow "manual only" conversion cap, please follow these steps to convert to Manual Only.

1. Locate yellow "Manual" cap. It is in the Velcro pocket on the back side of the life jacket panel
2. Unscrew the CO2 cylinder from the inflation mechanism, then remove the clear cap and yellow bobbin
3. Install the yellow "Manual" cap snugly onto the inflation mechanism (a Warning flag should remain exposed on the outside of the PFD).
4. Inspect the CO2 cylinder to make sure it is not punctured or damaged, then install the cylinder by rotating it clockwise into the inflation mechanism until the CO2 is firmly installed. Do NOT over-tighten.
5. Re-pack your Inflatable Life Jacket and make sure the manual inflation "Warning" label and Yellow "Jerk to Inflate" inflation tab are visible on the outside of your life jacket

How do i deflate my inflatable life jacket?

Locate the red oral inflation tube. Remove the black at top cap and invert it into the oral tube and hold. While holding the black cap down, squeeze the air out of the inflated chamber. All air has to be out of the inflatable chamber before repacking.

Once air has been expelled through the oral tube, replace the black cap to its original position and proceed to re-arm (if necessary) and repack the device.

How do i re-arm my inflatable life jacket?

It is important to read the instruction manual that was included with your Onyx Inflatable Life Jacket. If you no longer have your instruction manual, please download it from our website, or watch our rearming and repacking video for the specific Onyx inflatable life jacket you purchased.

- Remove all air from the inflation chamber
- Remove the used CO2 cylinder from the inflation mechanism by rotating it counter clockwise and pulling the CO2 cylinder out. (discard the used CO2)

- Remove the clear cap by turning counterclockwise and remove the yellow bobbin from the cap or housing unit. Discard the yellow bobbin.
- Check that the device housing is dry and clean of debris.
- **IMPORTANT:** Install the yellow bobbin in the housing, aligning the slots on the bobbin with the ridges inside the threaded housing. (The bobbin will slide in easily when installed correctly.)
- Install the cap securely by screwing clockwise until it meets the housing shoulder
- Confirm replacement CO2 cylinder is not pierced and install new cylinder by rotating clockwise into inflator until cylinder is secured firmly.
- Service indicator window on front of inflator should be GREEN and ready for use. If RED, the device is not armed properly, and follow the steps again to properly arm the device, and GREEN ready to use shows.
- Repack and ensure the yellow "inflation" tab is hanging freely outside the device.

How often do i need to inspect my inflatable life jacket

The U.S. Coast Guard recommends you test the automatic inflation system in water at the beginning of each season. It is recommended you check the yellow bobbin (water-sensing element) before each use.

How often do i need to replace my yellow bobbin?

there is no deterioration. Bobbins that are exposed to high humidity, high heat, or vibration may need to be replaced more often.

Some of the Onyx Inflatable Life Jackets will have a three-year shelf life, and others will have a five-year shelf life. A manufacture date code is stamped on all Onyx bobbins. See the examples below to determine the manufacture date and when your bobbin should be replaced.

3-Year Bobbin Replacement example:

Month Day

NOVXX

Year Manufacturer

XXHR

5-Year Bobbin Replacement example:

Manufacture Date:

103120

Expiration Date:

EX10/25

What is the right life jacket / PFD for the right activity?

PFDs come in a variety of shapes, colors, and materials. No matter which PFD you choose, be sure to get one that is right for you and the water conditions and activity you expect to encounter. Choosing the right PFD (Personal Flotation Device) is an important decision. Listed below are the various types of U.S. Coast Guard approvals and their uses.

Most adults only need an extra 7 - 12 pounds of buoyancy to keep their heads above water. A PFD

can give you that "extra lift" and it is made to keep you floating until help comes. But, a PFD is a personal flotation device and it's important to get the right one for you. Your weight isn't the only factor in finding out how much "extra lift" you need in water. Body fat, lung size, clothing and whether the water is rough or calm, all play a part in staying on-top. In general, the more physically fit you are, the more "lift" you need.

Proper size and fit are important to the performance of a flotation device. Read the Label on your PFD to be sure it's made for people your weight and size. Test it in shallow water or a pool. Then in an emergency, don't panic... Relax, put your head back and let your PFD help you come out on top!

Off-Shore Life Jacket / minimum buoyancy requirement 22.0 lbs. (Type I)

Best for open, rough or remote water, where rescue may be slow coming.

Advantages: Floats you the best. Turns most unconscious wearers face-up in water. Highly visible colors.

Disadvantages: Bulky

Sizes: Two sizes to fit most children and adults

Near-Shore Buoyant Vest / minimum buoyancy requirement 15.5 lbs. (Type II)

Good for calm, inland water, or where there is good chance of fast rescue.

Advantages: Turns most unconscious wearers face-up in water. Less bulky, more comfortable than Off-Shore Life Jacket.

Disadvantages: Not for long hours in rough water. Will not turn some unconscious wearers face-up in water. Sizes: Infant through adult

Flotation Aid / Minimum buoyancy requirement 15.5 lbs. (Type III)

Good for calm, inland water, or where there is good chance of fast rescue.

Advantages: Generally the most comfortable type for continuous wear. Designed for general boating or the activity that is marked on the life jacket. Available in many styles, including vests and flotation coats.

Disadvantages: Wearer may have to tilt head back to avoid going face-down. In rough water, a wearer's face may often be covered by waves. Not for extended survival in rough water.

Sizes: any individual sizes from small-child through adult.

Throwable Device / Minimum buoyancy requirement - Ring buoys 16.5 lbs., Boat cushions 18.0 lbs. (Type IV)

Good for calm, inland water with heavy boat traffic, where help is always nearby.

Advantages: Can be thrown to someone, Good back-up to wearable PFD's. Some can be used as seat cushion.

Disadvantages: Not for unconscious persons. Not for non-swimmers or children. Not for many hours in rough water.

Kinds: Cushions, ring, and horseshoe buoys

Special Use Devices - Minimum buoyancy requirement 15.5 to 22.0 lbs. (Type V)

Only for special uses or conditions. See label for limits of use. Varieties include board-sailing vests, deck suits, work vests, hybrid PFD's and others.

Advantages: Made for specific activities, such as white-water rafting.

How many life jackets do i need onboard my boat?

The United States Coast Guard requires USCG-approved life jackets on all recreational boats. The number and type of life jacket needed depends on the number of passengers you will have aboard, the size and type of boat, and what water activity you will be doing.

IT IS REQUIRED to have one of the following life jackets for each person on board your boat:

- Off-Shore Life Jacket
- Near-Shore Life Jacket
- Flotation Aid
- Special Use Device (Type V)

Federal regulations require all children 13 years old and younger to wear a life jacket unless they are inside an enclosed cabin. State laws vary in terms of age - check your state's boating safety office for your state's requirements.

Boats 16 feet or longer (not including canoes and kayaks) must also have a least one throwable device on boats (Type IV flotation cushions, ring buoys, etc).

What should I be looking for when trying to fit a life jacket for my child?

Children's PFDs are sized according to weight range and chest size. Weigh your child and measure their chest under the arms. Whenever possible, be sure to try the PFD on the child in the store. A PFD needs to fit comfortably snug. To check for a good fit, pick the child up by the shoulders of the PFD. If the PFD fits right, the child's chin and ears will not slip through.

To check for buoyancy of your PFD in the water, relax your body and let your head tilt back. Be aware, your PFD may not act the same in swift or rough water as in calm water. Children may also panic when they fall into water suddenly. This causes them to move their arms and legs violently, making it hard to float safely in a PFD. A PFD will keep a child afloat, but may not keep a struggling child face-up.

While some children in the 30-50 pound weight range who can swim may like the extra freedom of movement that a Flotation Aid (Type III PFD) provides, most children in this weight range, especially those who cannot swim, should wear a Near Shore Buoyant Vest (Type II PFD).

The "THINK SAFE" booklet, which is attached to every US Coast Guard approved device, has valuable information on types of flotation devices and how to fit a PFD. It is important to read the label on the PFD and test it in a controlled environment.

How do I properly care for my life jacket / PFD?

Fabric fading can indicate loss of strength. Store in a dry, cool, dark well-ventilated place and also let it drip dry thoroughly before putting it away. Never dry your life jacket on a radiator, heater, or any other direct heat source. A weathered PFD could tear easily, resulting in loss of flotation material. If faded, check strength or discontinue use.

Check your PFD often for rips, tears, and holes, and to see that seams, fabric straps, and hardware are okay. Give your PFD webbing belts/straps a quick, hard pull to make sure they are secure. There should be no signs of waterlogging, mildew odor, or shrinkage of the flotation foam.

Sunlight, chlorine, and weathering may cause colors to fade and/or bleed onto other surfaces.

Never alter your life jacket. If it does not fit, get a new one. An altered life jacket is no longer U.S. Coast Guard approved and may not save your life.

How do i care for my life jacket / PFD?

Follow these points to be sure your PFD stays in good condition:

1. Don't alter your life jacket. If yours doesn't fit, get one that does. An altered PFD may not save your life.
2. Don't put heavy objects on your PFD or use it for a kneeling pad or boat fender. PFDs lose buoyancy when crushed.
3. Let your life jacket drip dry thoroughly before putting it away. Always store it in a well-ventilated place.
4. Don't leave your PFD on board for long periods when the boat is not in use.
5. Never dry your PFD on a radiator, heater, or any other direct heat source.
6. Practice throwing your Type IV throwable device. Cushions throw best underhand.

Are there flotation devices available for dogs?

Yes. Even though dogs have plenty of natural buoyancy and many are good swimmers, dogs can get tired while in the water, and especially in cold water, their strength can get zapped. Flotation for your pet gives your dog a little extra lift and at the same time provides some hypothermia protection. If your dog is in rough water, that extra lift can help prevent the big gulps of water, too.

What is the life expectancy of a life jacket?

This will depend on the number of times your life jacket gets used and how it is maintained, and where it is stored. Continued exposure to ultraviolet light (direct sunlight), high temperature and high humidity weakens synthetic materials and will shorten the lifespan of a life jacket. Proper cleaning and storage conditions will help to provide a number of years of use for your life jacket.

Is my U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket approved to wear in Canada?

Canada & the United States worked together to harmonize their flotation standards, so life jackets with the new standards are approved for use in both Canada & the U.S.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Allows ability to wear your same life jacket in both the United States and Canada
- New labeling system on the inside of the life jacket with addition of intended use icons
- Literature will include a new placard "Choose the Device You Will Want To Wear" vs "Think Safe Booklet" and children's products will have a new "Children's Chart" placard with each device.
- Trilingual Labeling (English, Spanish & French)
- See below examples of the current and new labels inside your life jacket. The Trilingual labeling will indicate if your life jacket is dual-approved for both United States and Canada

DETAILS

- Level 70 (70 Newtons / 15.5 lbs min. buoyancy) = Type III (Near Shore) foam classification
- Life Jacket with the "legacy" Type III label continue to be approved in one country OR the other, NOT both. Read label inside your life jacket for approval specifics.
- Type I's, Type II's, Infant Vests, Work Vests & Inflatable PFD's are NOT part of the harmonization (Dual U.S. and Canada approvals) currently. They are still pending new standard development & there is no timeline regarding new standards for these items.

When it comes to quality marine safety, Onyx Outdoor is the brand you can depend on.