

LIFEJACKET WEAR

Under marine safety law, you are required to wear a lifejacket when in an open area of a recreational vessel that is underway based on the vessel type/length and the type of waterway travelled, that is, coastal, enclosed or inland waters.

WHEN IN AN OPEN AREA OF A VESSEL THAT IS UNDERWAY

You are required to wear a specified lifejacket when in an open area of a vessel that is underway if you are an occupant of any of the following:

- a power-driven vessel up to and including 4.8 m in length
- an off-the-beach sailing yacht
- a personal watercraft (PWC)
- a canoe, kayak, raft or rowing boat
- a stand-up paddleboard, kiteboard or sailboard when more than 400m from shore
- pedal boat or fun boat
- recreational tender.

DURING TIMES OF HEIGHTENED RISK

All occupants of vessels listed above are to wear a specified lifejacket at times of heightened risk when in an open area of a vessel that is underway. This also applies to occupants of the following vessels:

- yachts (including monohull, trailerable and multihull yachts but excluding off-the-beach sailing yachts)
- power driven vessels greater than 4.8 m and less than 12 m.



LIFEJACKET TYPES

Lifejackets come in a variety of types with different characteristics and are also referred to as PFDs (personal flotation device).

Type 1 - Level 100 and over

A lifejacket Type 1 provides a high level of buoyancy and keeps the wearer in a safe floating position. They are made in high visibility colours with reflective patches.



Type 2 - Level 50

A lifejacket Type 2 is a buoyancy vest. It provides less buoyancy than a lifejacket Type 1 but sufficient to keep you afloat.



Type 3 - Level 50S

A lifejacket Type 3 is a buoyancy garment. It has similar buoyancy to a lifejacket Type 2 but is manufactured in a wide variety of colours and is shaped or equipped for particular activities.



The information below details the requirements for which specified lifejacket must be worn. Lifejacket types are described in Schedule 1 of the MSR at legislation.vic.gov.au

LIFEJACKET WEAR REQUIREMENTS			
VESSEL CLASS	COASTAL WATERS	ENCLOSED WATERS	INLAND WATERS
Powerboat up to and including 4.8 m in length	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1, 2 or 3
Powerboat more than 4.8m but not more than 12 m in length (at times of heightened risk)	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1, 2 or 3
Personal watercraft	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3
Towed sport	A person who is being towed by a vessel must wear a lifejacket at all times.		
Recreational tender	Type 1	Type 1 or 2	Type 1, 2 or 3
Off-the-beach sailing yacht	Type 1 if >2 nm from coast, Type 1 or 2 if <2 nm from coast	Type 1 or 2	Type 1, 2 or 3
Yacht (at times of heightened risk)	Type 1	Type 1 or 2	Type 1, 2 or 3
Kiteboard or sailboard	Type 1, or 2	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3
Canoe, kayak, rowing boat, raft, stand-up paddleboard, pedal boat or fun boat	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3
	Please note: A person operating a stand-up paddleboard, kiteboard or sailboard no more than 400m from the shore, is not required to wear a lifejacket.		
Scuba or hookah diving equipment (underwater breathing apparatus of a kind that is self-contained (scuba) or is surface supplied)	A person who is wearing, or in the process of donning or removing, diving equipment is not required to wear a lifejacket.		

LIFEJACKETS ON CHILDREN

The master of a recreational vessel or a hire and drive vessel that is underway must ensure that every person aged less than 10 years old who is on an open area of the vessel wears a lifejacket at all times. Penalties apply when lifejackets are not worn. When choosing a lifejacket for a child, care must be taken to ensure that the garment fits the child and that small children do not slip out when they are in the water. Where possible, a child's lifejacket that features a crotch strap is strongly recommended, as it assists to hold the child in the jacket.

LIFEJACKETS ON BABIES AND TODDLERS

MSV does not recommend taking infants on board a recreational boat.

The varying weight distribution of babies means it is difficult to design jackets which have flotation in the right places to keep them afloat. The lifejackets currently available for newborns up to 10 kilograms may not provide a proper fit or perform as expected. You must be sure the lifejacket you have works for your infant. MSV recommends that children are not exposed to any risk on a boat on the water.

