

Personal Floatation Garments

SSWA Info 003 (Jan 04)

Scouts should use floatation garments that carry the CE mark of approval. These are classified into four groups by level of buoyancy, measured in units called "Newtons". The rating given in the title of each group is that for adult sizes. Smaller sizes in the same group have proportionally less buoyancy.

50 NEWTON - BUOYANCY AID

- Support for a conscious person who can help himself
- Competent swimmers only
- For sheltered water use where help is near at hand
- Minimum bulk for active watersports

For Scout purposes this garment should be restricted to canoeing or boating on sheltered inland waterways or safe enclosed inshore waters with close support and supervision - e.g. with safety craft. This type is recommended by the Irish Sailing Association for use on sailing courses, unless otherwise specified.

100 NEWTON - BUOYANCY AID

- Increased buoyancy for use in general inshore conditions
- Reasonable assurance of safety in relatively calm waters, but not guaranteed to self-right an unconscious person, or to protect the airway of an unconscious person in water.
- Suitable for swimmers and non-swimmers
- Retro-reflective stripes

This type of buoyancy garment is the commonest type for general Scout boating on inland and inshore waters.

150 NEWTON - LIFEJACKET

- Reasonable assurance of safety in all but the most severe conditions for a person not fully capable of self-help. Note - may not immediately self-right an unconscious person who is wearing heavy waterproof clothing.
- Suitable for swimmers and non-swimmers
- Whistle
- Retro-reflective strips

These jackets come in four forms -

- 1 - No permanent buoyancy - inflation by mouth
- 2 - No permanent buoyancy - manual inflation by gas cylinder
- 3 - No permanent buoyancy - automatic inflation on immersion
- 4 - Contain permanent buoyancy and may be inflated to full buoyancy level.

Permanent buoyancy amounts to about half the specified buoyancy level - they do not become "lifejackets" until fully inflated. Normally they should be worn uninflated to allow full and unrestricted movements. The decision to inflate lifejackets is made by the person in charge of the boat.

Of these four sub-groups only jackets with permanent buoyancy are recommended for normal Scout use. Jackets with no permanent buoyancy, described in 1, 2 and 3 above are not recommended for normal Scout use.

275 NEWTON - LIFEJACKET

- High performance jacket for offshore use and severe conditions

This type of jacket would not normally be used in Scout boating.

THE CE MARK

Lifejackets and buoyancy aids that meet the European standards carry the CE mark to show that they comply with the regulations. These have been advised in Scouting since the CE classification was introduced many years ago, but pre-CE personal flotation devices were allowed to continue in use in Scouting if they were in good condition. In July 2004, under Statutory Instrument No.259 of 2004, the Minister of the Marine introduced the Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Craft) (Lifejackets and Operation) (Safety) Regulations 2004, making the wearing of Personal Flotation Devices compulsory. PFDs were already compulsory in Scouting, but the new regulations defined a "suitable personal flotation device or lifejacket" as one carrying the CE mark. Older, pre-CE buoyancy garments (e.g. ICF, SBBNF, BS) are therefore no longer allowed under the regulations, and should not be used in Scouting.

CORRECT USE

Leaders in charge of boating activities should ensure that buoyancy aids or lifejackets are of the correct size and are worn correctly - properly closed and secured. They should not be thrown around or into a corner, walked on or otherwise ill-treated. The best way to carry a buoyancy aid from the boat to the den or the campsite is to wear it. After use, buoyancy aids should be hung on hooks or on a frame to dry and to keep aired. Damp jackets left in a pile will soon develop mildew. Jackets that have been immersed in salt water should be thoroughly rinsed in fresh water before hanging

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up to dry. Salt and sand in zips and buckles can cause them to seize and become inoperable, and can also cause fabric wear in seams and stitching lines.

REGULAR INSPECTION

All floatation garments, new and old, should be inspected regularly. Particular attention should be paid to zips, buckles and straps. Any buoyancy aid or lifejacket that has been damaged so that its buoyancy has been reduced or that it cannot be properly closed and secured should be taken out of service immediately and destroyed - it should not be left around and regarded as a "reserve".

RETRO-REFLECTIVE STRIPS

It is strongly advised that retro-reflective strips should be attached to CE 50 N buoyancy aids, that may not have them.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - Marine Notice No.24 of 2008

SEAGO LIFEJACKETS RECALL

Seago Yachting Limited issued a recall on safety grounds of certain batches of its 150 & 175 Newton lifejackets manufactured between fourth quarter of 2005 and first quarter of 2007. The batch numbers are –

IV/05, I/06, II/06, III/06, IV/06, I/07

Any Lifejacket from any of these affected batches should be returned immediately to Seago Yachting Limited, Mullany Business Park, Golden Cross, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 3RP, UK.