

# LET'S GO

## Flotation devices a matter of life and death

**Each year in Canada, hundreds of men, women and children are drowned in boating accidents. Many would be alive today if they had worn, not just flotation aids, but the right flotation aids.**

The Canadian Coast Guard carries out information programs, either alone or with such organizations as the Red Cross and Canada Safety Council. It also approves lifejackets and other personal flotation devices (PFDs) to minimum standards set for their design, manufacture and testing. These approved flotation aids are available on the commercial market. If you go out in a boat, you should wear one at all times.

In any event, if you own or operate a boat, you are required by law to equip your boat with a specified type of approved lifejacket or personal flotation device for each person on board.

### WHAT TO BUY

Boats 8m long or more must carry one approved *small vessel lifejacket* for each person on board. These are made of Kapok or unicellular foam or foam covered with vinyl and come in two styles: a one-piece "keyhole" design or a front-opening vest. They must be reversible and may be orange, yellow or red, or a combination of these colors. They come in three sizes, for people weighing more than 40 kg, 18 to 40 kg and less than 18 kg.

Boats more than 5.5m long must carry one approved *small vessel lifejacket* or *personal flotation device* (PFD) for each person on board.

At present, PFDs made of buoyant material are available. The standards also permit PFDs with a certain amount of buoyant material, supplemented by a chamber which can be inflated by mouth or with a CO<sup>2</sup> cartridge.

PFDs are designed to be worn at all times while boating to ensure your safety while you're having fun. When you buy a personal flotation device, make sure it fits comfortably. Then test it in the water as soon as possible so you'll be more confident if something does go wrong. Lifejackets are designed for emergency situations and have more buoyancy and turning ability than PFDs.

Boats 5.5m long or less must carry one approved *small vessel lifejacket* or *personal flotation device* or *life saving cushion* for each person on board. These cushions are all the same size, come in red, orange and yellow, and are made of Kapok or foam.

*Standard lifejackets* must be carried on commercial ships, but can be substituted for any other approved flotation aid for other boats. They are orange, and are made of Kapok or unicellular foam in the keyhole style. They come in two sizes: for 40 kg and over and for under 40 kg. They must be completely reversible.

Many experienced boaters carry flotation aids of a higher category than is required by law. In any event, make sure you do not buy anything less than the equipment required for your class of boat and that it has the Department of Transport approval prominently displayed.

### TAKING CARE

Once you have bought your lifejacket or personal flotation device, take proper care of it. Use it only for the purpose for which it was intended, never as a cushion, kneeling pad or boat fender. Dry it in the open air, never in front of a source of direct heat. Never use harsh detergents and never dry clean.

### NOTE TO PARENTS

Make sure your children wear lifejackets or personal flotation devices at all times when boating, and even when they are playing on jetties or along the shore. There are special personal flotation devices for children and the one you choose should be suitable for the child's body type and size. Teach your children how to use the PFDs so they will be able to trust them, and remember, your own watchfulness is their best safeguard.



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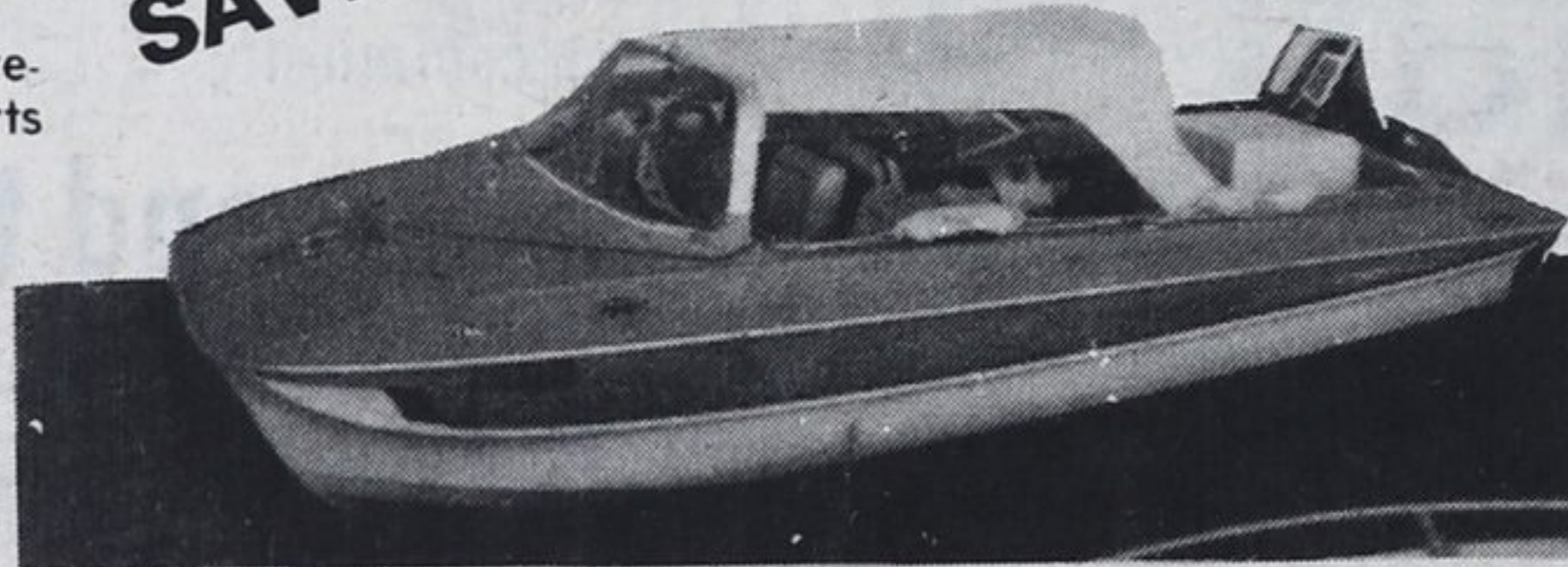


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