

by Keith Edwards

### Hey You! Zip and Buckle Up!

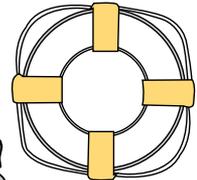
A personal flotation device (PFD), also called a life jacket, can save your life—if you wear it! When you ride in a car, the law says you have to wear your seat belt. If you are in a boat, Pennsylvania law says there must be a wearable life jacket on the boat for each person and certain people must wear a life jacket. When riding in a boat, everyone should wear a life jacket. Here is a list of those who must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket on board a boat in Pennsylvania.

- Anyone age 12 or younger in a moving boat (one that is under way) that is 20 feet long or less.
- Anyone age 12 or younger riding in any canoe or kayak no matter how long it is.
- Anyone towed behind a boat on water skis or any other device (tube, wakeboard, pulltoy, etc.).
- Anyone on board a personal watercraft (Jet Ski®, Waverunner®, Sea Doo®, Aquatrax®, etc.).
- Anyone on board a sailboard or windsurfer.
- Everyone boating on Pittsburgh Army Corps of Engineers lakes, regardless of age, in boats less than 16 feet in length and in all canoes and kayaks.



Other types of personal flotation devices (PFDs):

- Throwable ring buoy.
- Throwable cushion.



At least one of these two types of throwable devices must be on board boats that are 16 feet long or longer. Canoes and kayaks are not required to carry one of these devices. They are not designed to be worn. They are thrown to a person who gets into trouble in the water. They can grasp it until they are pulled out of the water. A throwable device cannot be used as a substitute for a wearable life jacket.

#### MAKE SURE IT FITS.

A life jacket is designed to hold your head above water so you can breathe. Too much room around the arms and neck could allow the life jacket to "ride up" and reduce flotation. It should fit snugly but not too tightly.



### TOOT your whistle!

Attach a whistle to your life jacket. A good place is the life jacket's zipper or top buckle. If you ever get in trouble on the water, blow your whistle to get someone's attention.



For more boating safety information, go to the Commission's web site:

[www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us)

