



Consider a Personal Flotation Device (PFD)

Every time you untie from the wharf there's a chance you will unexpectedly end up in the water. Most of us don't like to think about it, but it happens far too often – and more often than not, the result is tragic. This year alone, in three separate incidents, three commercial fish harvesters in this province lost their lives from cold water immersion and drowning.

So be prepared to stay afloat, to survive the effects of cold water shock, reduce the need to swim, and give rescuers time to respond. An approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) can be the difference between life and death, because if you end up in the water, it can hold your head above water, and help you maintain your body temperature. It can buy you valuable time!

Workable PFD's are available

For years, fish harvesters complained, in many cases legitimately, that manufacturers were not providing a “workable PFD”. However, after years of research and technological advancement, there's a PFD for just about every working condition, from floater jackets to inflatable oilskins.

Most notable perhaps are the Canadian Coast Guard approved “suspender-style” inflatable PFD's, which provide excellent floatation in a small, lightweight, and unrestrictive package. These inflatable PFD's are now widely available at marine supply stores, and are reasonably priced. Mustang Survival (www.mustangsurvival.com), for example, has several models available in both manual and automatic inflation.

Whether you're in an open boat on a hot July morning or on the deck of a longliner on a cold November night, these non-cumbersome inflatable PFD's are proven to be reliable and worthy.

Are you still unconvinced? Consider some of these myths and facts:

I don't need one – I'm fishing close to shore.

More fish harvesters drown in near-shore accidents than offshore or elsewhere. When it comes to drowning, distance from shore is not a reliable indicator of risk.

PFD's are too hot to work in.

Inflatable “suspender-style” PFD's are designed with an open back which makes them cool during hot summer conditions, yet adjustable and light enough to be worn over the top of oilskins or a jacket.

I'm a strong swimmer – I don't need one.

Even strong swimmers are impeded by cold water temperatures. In fact, swimming ability is not a strong predictor of survival in immersion situations.

I have a PFD's/lifejackets/immersion suits on the boat – they're within reach if anything happens.

Accidents happen in a split second, and most drowning victims find themselves in the water without time to prepare. Keeping a PFD or lifejacket “handy” is like trying to buckle your seat belt just before a car crash.

It's not going to happen, so why worry about it?

Accidents and deaths do happen...to fish harvesters more often than to any other industrial worker in the world! If you fish for a living there's a good chance you will end up in the water at some point during your career.

If I go overboard, A PFD will only prolong the inevitable.

Death in an immersion situation is not inevitable. By keeping your head above water and helping you conserve valuable energy and body heat, PFD's are proven to increase your likelihood of surviving.

The perfect gift

What do you buy for that special fish harvester friend or relative? Why not an unrestrictive, lightweight PFD that they can work in? It may turn out to be the gift of life!

For more information on inflatable PFD's contact your local marine supply store or call NL-FHSA at 722-8177.