

NATIONAL BOATING SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**April 1-2, 2011
Arlington, Virginia**

Resolution Number 2011-87-01

**APPROPRIATE REGULATIONS FOR LIFE JACKET WEAR BY
RECREATIONAL BOATERS**

WHEREAS, recreational boating is a premier outdoor pastime for over 70 million Americans and untold numbers of visitors to our nation's waters each year; AND

WHEREAS, in spite of the fact that boating is highly regarded as a safe and enjoyable recreational activity, this Council recognizes the need to be mindful that the reduction in annual fatalities associated with recreational boating is of great importance; AND

WHEREAS, thorough analysis of available boating accident data has been performed and used as a basis for this recommendation; AND

WHEREAS, given the fact that, on average, approximately 500 people die in recreational boating accidents each year in the United States as a result of non-swimming-related drowning and very few of them were wearing a life jacket, consequently the National Boating Safety Advisory Council agrees that mandatory life jacket wear is appropriate for certain segments of the boating community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Boating Safety Advisory Council, meeting in regular session in Arlington, Virginia, on April 2, 2011, recommends that the U. S. Coast Guard:

1. Initiate efforts which target a future regulatory project to pursue requirements for life jacket wear for recreational boaters while underway and riding in or upon (with consideration given to appropriate exemptions):
 - a. personal watercraft regardless of length
 - b. human-powered vessels (such as canoes, kayaks, rowboats, etc.) regardless of length
 - c. any vessel less than 18-feet in length
 - d. for any person towed while engaged in watersports

2. Work with its partners to design a strategy to engage the boating public through in-person and electronic dialogue on this topic through pre-rulemaking consultation aimed at informing the public about the potential benefits of such a regulation, gauging public opinion about life jacket wear based on boating type and activity, and making decisions on this topic based on a thorough understanding of both public sentiment and potential benefits.

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3. Make initiatives aimed at streamlining the life jacket testing and approval processes a high priority in order to reduce the overall cost of highly comfortable life jackets, support innovation and creativity in life jacket design and technology, and allow improved life jacket models to reach the consumer quicker and easier.

4. Give proper consideration to the acceptance (US Coast Guard approval for wear requirements and carriage requirements) of alternative life jackets and other buoyant devices (i.e., Level 50 devices) by completing and accepting a harmonized North American standard, and report back to this Council on the potential benefits and drawbacks of allowing these devices to be worn as a means of compliance with a proposed life jacket wear regulation.

James P. Muldoon, Chairman
National Boating Safety Advisory Council