

Self service of inflatable life jackets

As from the 1st November 2011 new regulations are effective in regard to the wearing of life jackets. We would encourage all BOA members to ensure they are familiar with these.

In the regulations the matter of testing and self servicing of inflatable life jackets is covered. Some aspects of these guidelines are less than clear.

According to NSW Maritime they are aware of the issues and are seeking RVAG to assist in providing the appropriate solution.

Basically, inflatable life vests (manual and automatic) according to the regulation need to be tested/serviced annually. This is where the issues occur.

Do you have suitable qualifications?

Maritime state within their 'Boating Handbook' page 16: *Jackets are*

serviced annually by an accredited service centre or the original manufacturer. However, on page 17 they state: *Manufacturers allow you to 'self service' your life jacket provided you do so in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If the manufacturer allows self testing you should be COMPETENT to do so.*

Many boaters believe that 'self servicing' following the instructions provided by manufacturers will satisfy the regulation. However, what are suitable qualifications to ensure that the person performing the self testing is sufficiently COMPETENT?

Servicing while still under warranty

The initial warranty period from manufacturers varies from 1 to 3 years. Therefore, should we assume that within the warranty period

beyond the first year that jackets with a 3-year warranty will satisfy the regulation?

According to Maritime they will enforce the new regulations as from 1st November 2011, with a warning for any initial occurrence and thereafter fines will apply.

Interestingly, the purchase price of manual inflatable life jackets starts about \$65.00 and annual testing from accredited service providers is a minimum of \$37.00 plus GST and parts.

Where to read about self service

Maritime's brochure '*Don't Expire*' provides instructions: '*Step by Step guide on how to self check your inflatable jacket*'. Afloat magazine (August 2011) has on page 76 an article by Maritime: '*How to check your inflatable life jacket*'

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