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Lifejackets and Paddlecraft

Being on a paddlecraft (kayak, canoe or paddleboard), boaters enjoy the feel of closeness with the water, the sun and the waves. So it's not unusual for people to go out on a paddlecraft without a life jacket. But that's no excuse not to wear a life jacket on the water!

Federal law states that all paddlecraft must carry one Coast Guard approved wearable lifejacket for each person aboard. Though it is not required that adults wear a lifejacket, one should be worn at all times when the vessel is underway. In New Jersey, children 12 and under must wear a lifejacket when aboard any boat underway. A wearable lifejacket can save your life, but only if you wear it.

Modern life jackets are available in a wide variety of shapes, colors and sizes. Many are thin and flexible. Some are built right into fishing vests or hunter coats. Others are inflatable — as compact as a scarf or fanny pack until they hit water, when they automatically fill with air.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, in 2011 there were 118 deaths nationwide of boaters in canoes and kayaks. Also, three-fourths of last year's 758 fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, over eighty (80) percent were reported as not wearing a life jacket.

The best lifejacket is the one you will wear.



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The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard created by an Act of Congress in 1939. The Auxiliary, America's Volunteer Guardians, supports the Coast Guard in nearly all of its missions.