

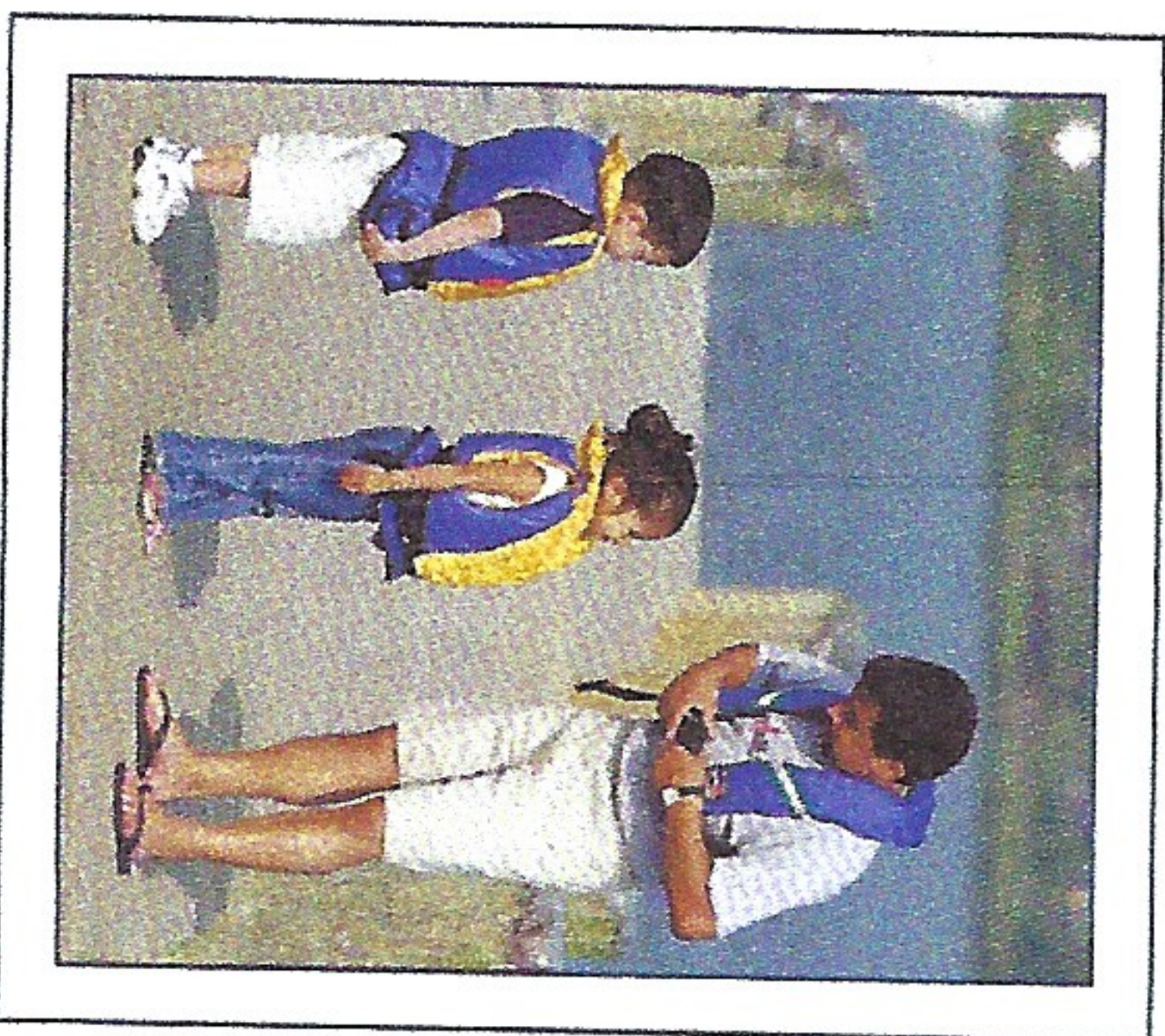
EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

The United States Coast Guard sets minimum standards for recreational vessels and associated safety equipment. To meet these standards, required equipment must be U.S. Coast Guard "approved" or "certified." This means that it meets U.S. Coast Guard specifications, standards, and regulations for performance, construction, or materials.

Life Jackets (33 CFR 175)

You may have heard reference to Type I, II, III, IV, and V "Personal Flotation Devices" (PFDs). The term PFD is used in a strictly regulatory sense. For greater clarity, this publication will use the term "wearable life jacket" and "throwable device." Understand that Type and Number refer to the same equipment, whether called a PFD or life jacket, and that any PFD is approved for use anywhere.

All recreational vessels must carry one wearable life jacket for each person on board. Any boat 16 feet and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also carry one throwable (Type IV) device. Life jackets **should** be worn at all times when the vessel is underway. *A life jacket can save your life, but only if you wear it.*



Always check and read the manufacturer's information booklet and label provided with all life jackets. They will provide valuable information, including size, type, intended use, and Coast Guard approval information.

Life jackets must be:

- U.S. Coast Guard-approved (check the label).
- In good and serviceable condition.
- Appropriate size and type for the intended user.
- Properly stowed.

Some items that are not required but are a good idea to have with your life jacket are a whistle and an emergency light.

Storage

- Wearable life jackets must be readily accessible.
- You should be able to put them on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency (vessel sinking, on fire, etc.)
- They should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments, or have other gear stowed on top of them.
- Throwable devices must be immediately available for use. They should be on the main deck within arm's reach, hanging on a lifeline, or other easily reached location.

Inflatable Life Jackets

- U.S. Coast Guard-approved inflatable life jackets are authorized for use by persons 16 years of age and older (check the label).
- Inflatable life jackets require regular maintenance and attention to the condition of the inflator.
- They must have a full cylinder and all status indicators on the inflator must be green or the device is **not** serviceable and does **not** satisfy the legal requirement for the wearable life jacket carriage requirement.
- Inflatable life jackets are more comfortable, encouraging regular use. The best life jackets are ones the user will wear.

Child Life Jacket Requirements

On a vessel that is underway, children under 13 years of age must wear an appropriate U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket unless they are 1) below deck, or 2) within an enclosed cabin. If a state has established a child life jacket wear requirement that differs from the Coast Guard requirement, the state requirement will be applicable on waters subject to that state's jurisdiction.

Children's life jackets are approved for specific weight categories. Check the "User Weight" on the label and for an approval statement that will read something like:



Approved for use on recreational boats and uninspected commercial vessels not carrying passengers for hire by persons weighing "less than 30, lbs., "30 to 50 lbs., "less than 50 lbs., " or "50 to 90 lbs."

Life Jacket Requirements for Specific Activities

The U.S. Coast Guard recommends – and many states require – wearing life jackets when engaged in the following activities:

- Water skiing and other towed activities (use a type designed for water skiing.)
- Operating a Personal Watercraft, or PWC (use a type designed for water skiing or PWC use.)
- Whitewater boating activities.
- Sailboarding.

Check with your state boating agency for the laws that apply.

Federal law does not require life jacket use on racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks; state laws vary, however. Check with your state boating agency.

Note that if you are boating in an area under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or a federal, state, or local park authority, other rules may also apply.

The U.S. Coast Guard recommends that you always wear a life jacket while underway on a boat and require passengers to do the same.

Life Jacket Flotation

The five types of life jackets are based on three kinds of flotation and can be characterized as follows:

Inherently Buoyant (Primarily Foam)

- The most reliable.
- Come in Adult, Youth, Child, and Infant sizes.
- Designed for swimmers and non-swimmers.
- Come in wearable and throwable styles.
- Special designs available for water sports.

Inflatable

- The most compact.
- Lightweight and comfortable.
- Sized only for adults.
- Only recommended for swimmers.
- Wearable styles only.
- Some have the best in-water performance.

Hybrid (Foam and Inflation)

- Reliable.
- Provides Inherent and Inflatable Buoyancy.
- Adult, Youth, and Child sizes.
- For swimmers and non-swimmers.
- Wearable styles only.
- Some designed for water sports.

BUOYANCY RATING: FOAM

Wearable Size	Type	Inherent Buoyancy
Adult	I	22 lbs.
	II & III	15.5 lbs.
	V	15.5 to 22 lbs.
Youth	II & III	11 lbs.
	V	11 to 15.5 lbs.
Child and Infant	II	7 lbs.

Throwable:

Cushion	IV	20 lbs.
Ring Buoy		16.58, 32 lb.

BUOYANCY RATING: INFLATABLE

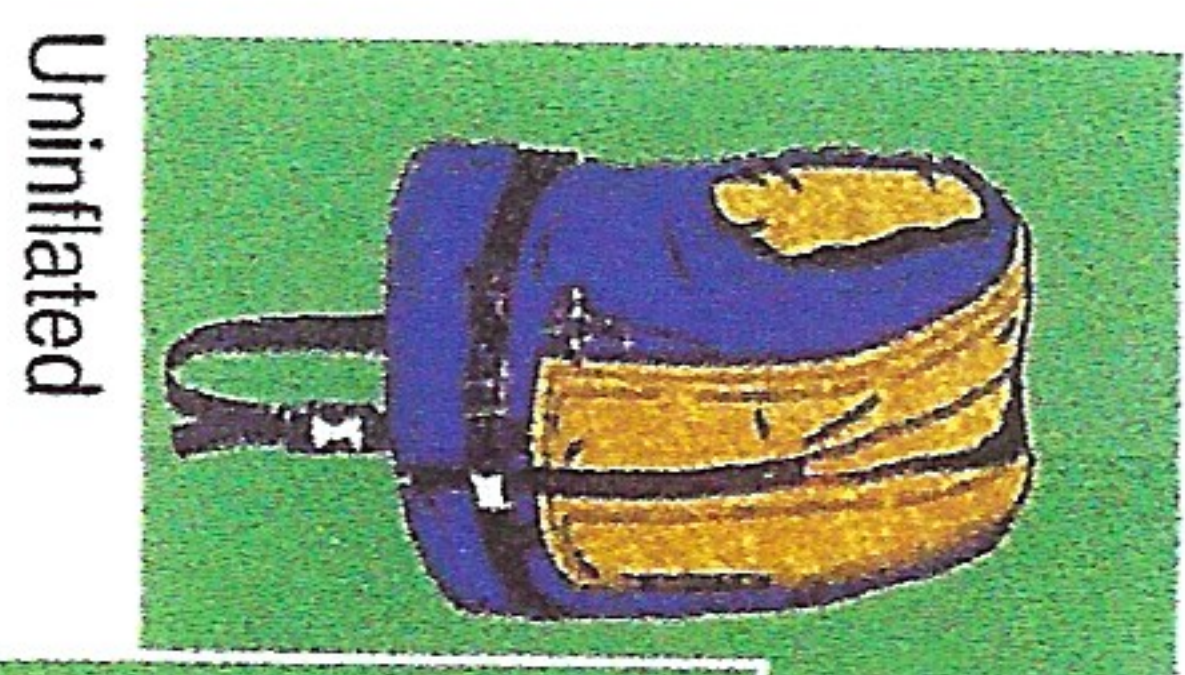
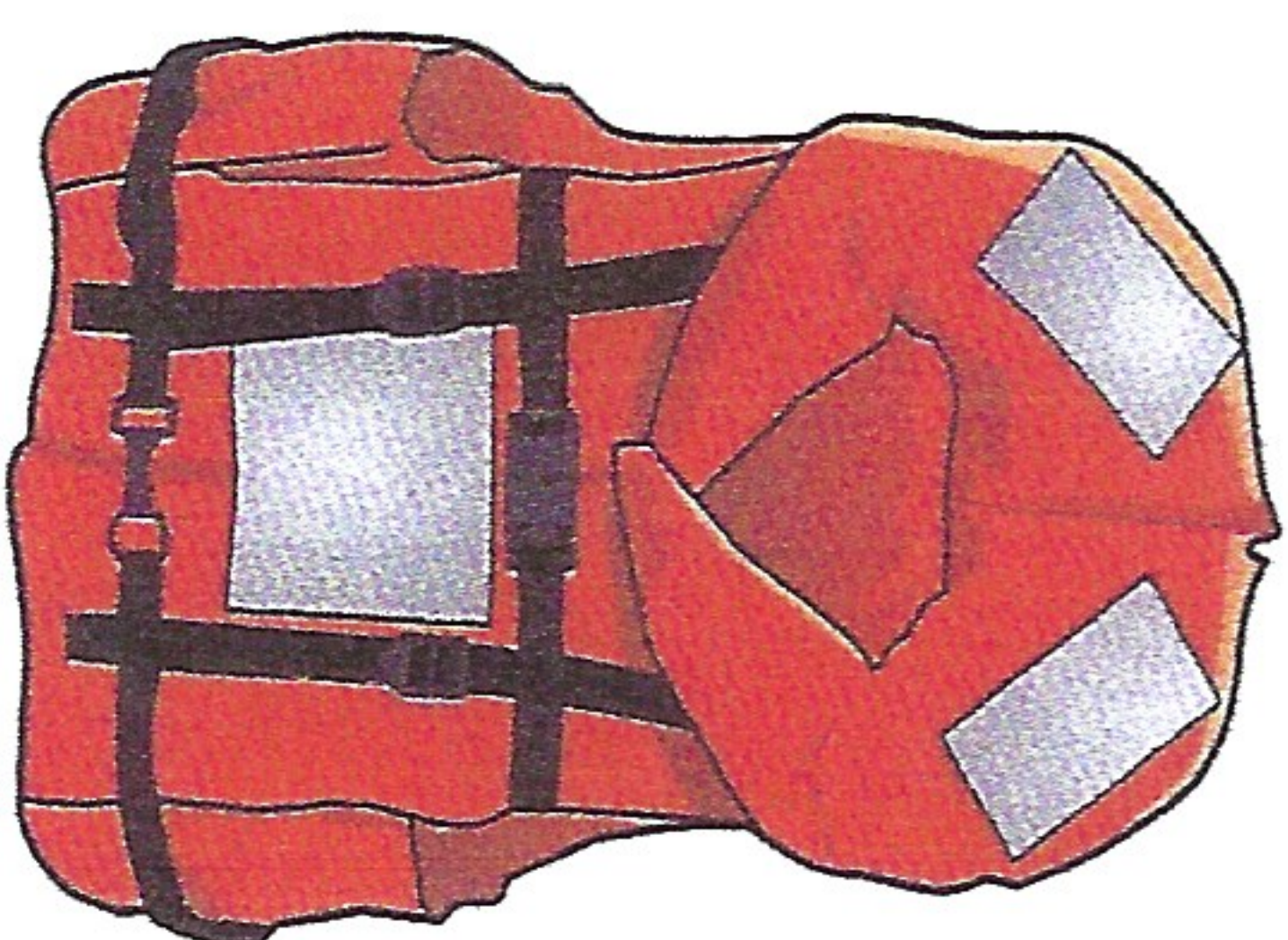
Wearable Size	Type	Inflatable Buoyancy
Adult	I & II	34 lbs.
	III	22.5 lbs.
	V	22.5 to 34 lbs.

BUOYANCY RATING: HYBRID

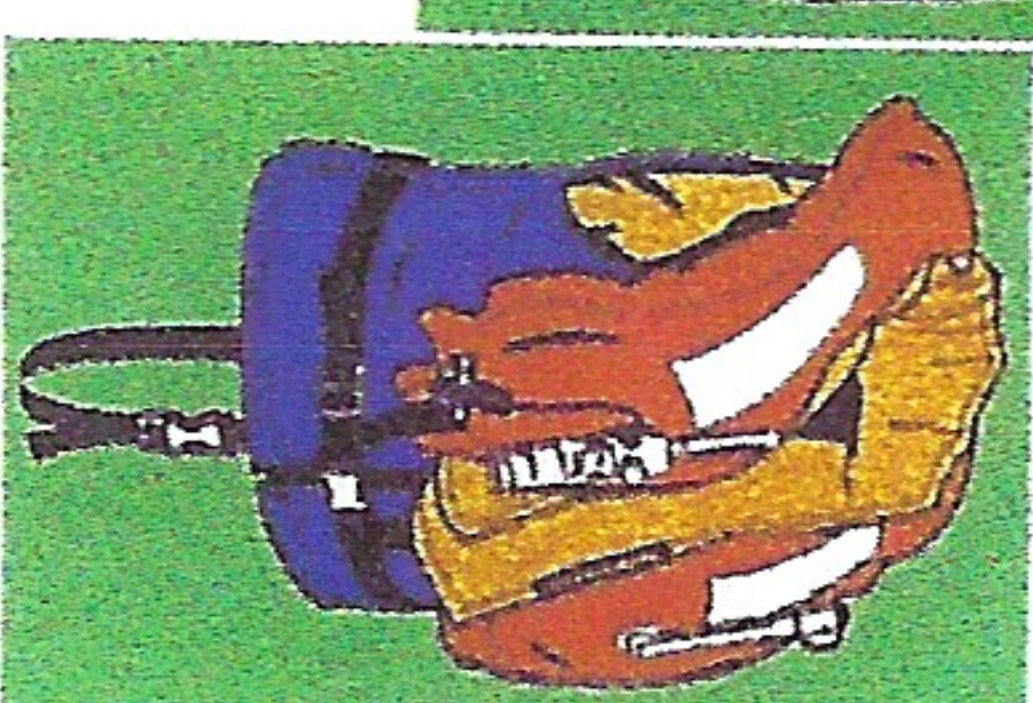
Wearable Size	Type	Inherent Buoyancy	Inflated Total Buoyancy
Adult	II & III	10 lbs.	22 lbs.
	V	7.5 lbs.	22 lbs.
Youth	II & III	9 lbs.	15 lbs.
	V	7.5 lbs.	15 lbs.
Child	II	7 lbs.	12 lbs.

Types of Life Jackets

A Type I, Off-Shore Life Jacket provides the most buoyancy. It is effective for all waters, especially open, rough, or remote waters where rescue may be delayed. It is designed to turn an unconscious wearer to a face-up position in the water.

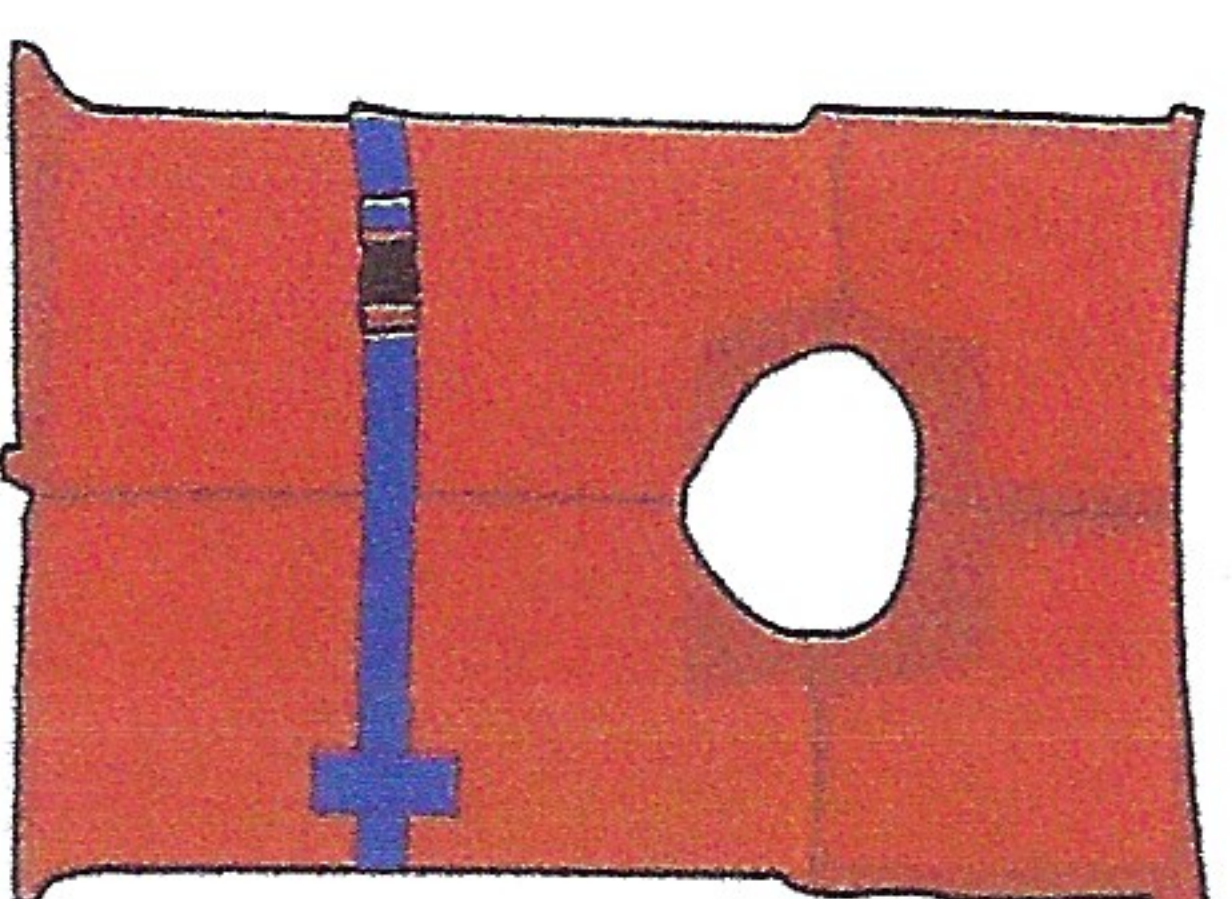
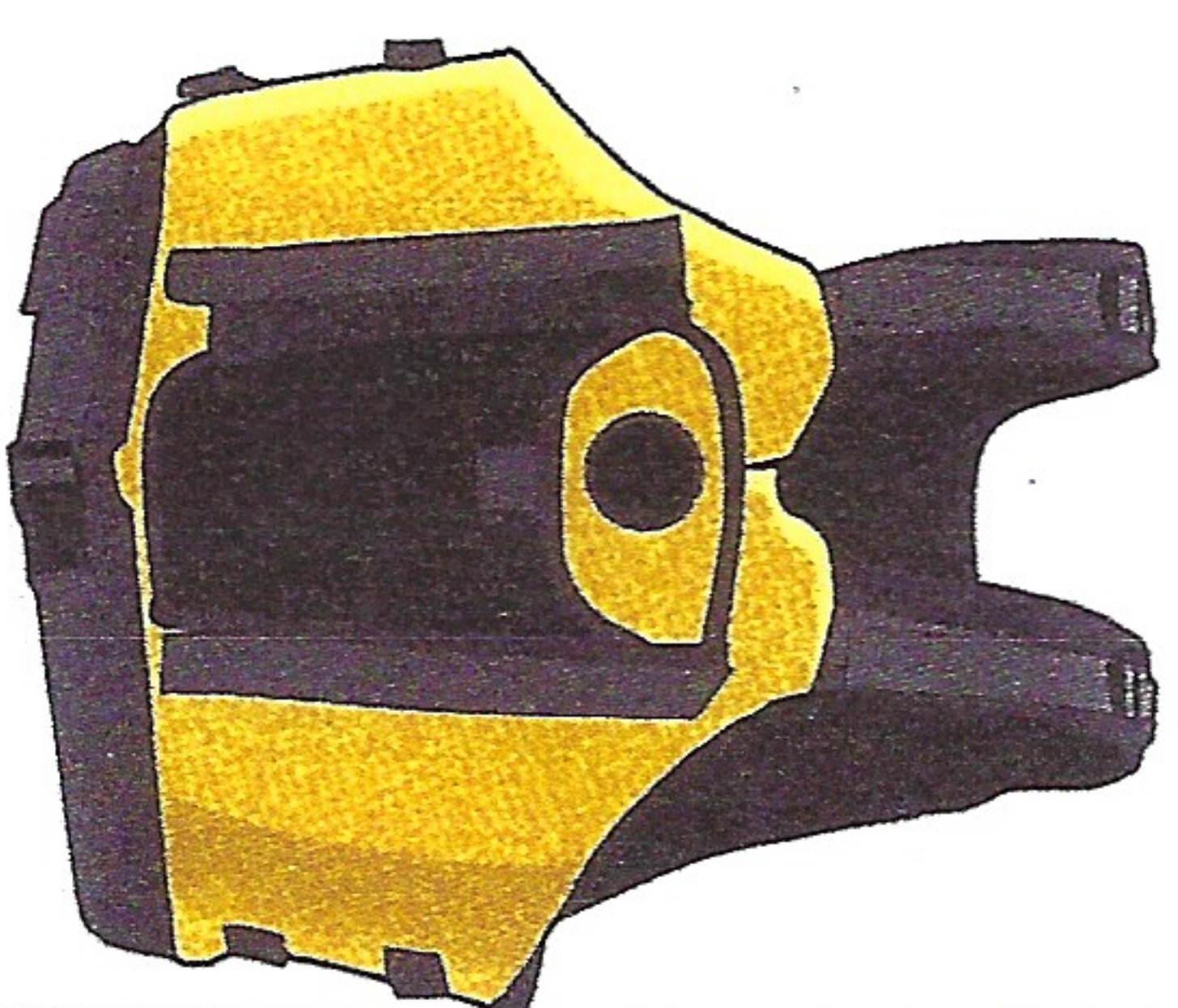


Uninflated

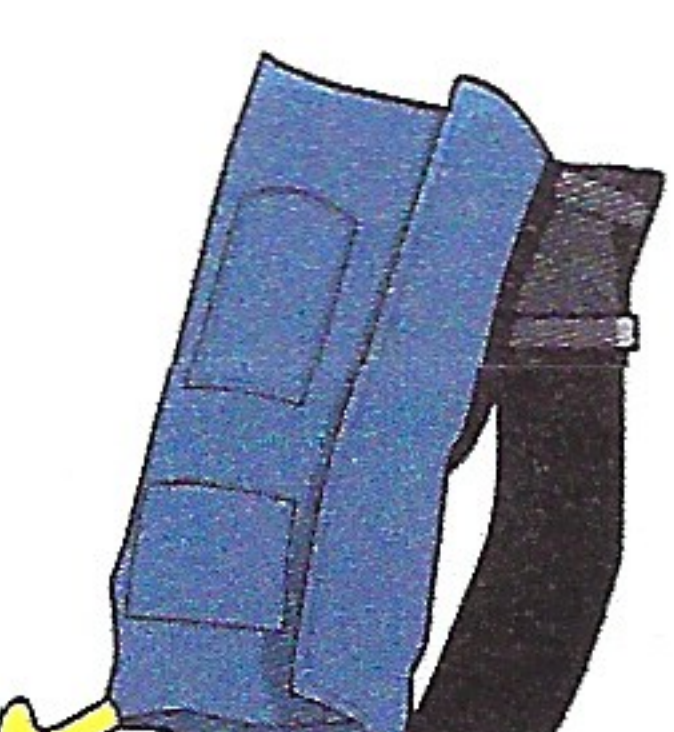
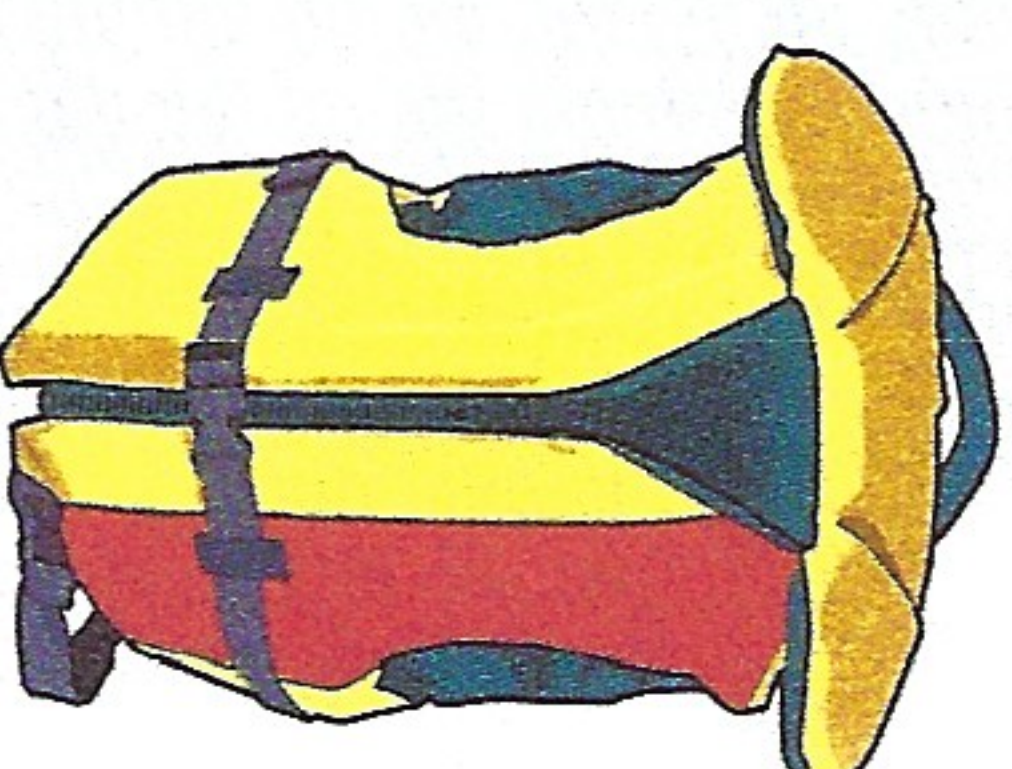
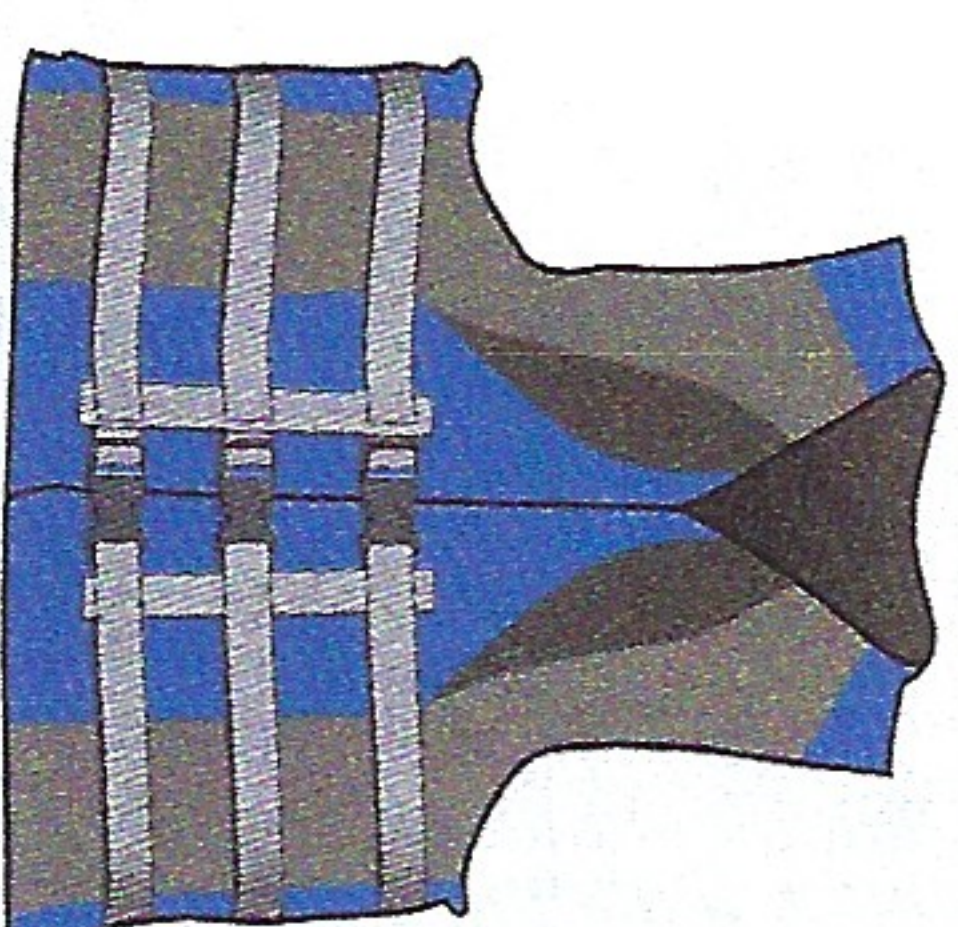
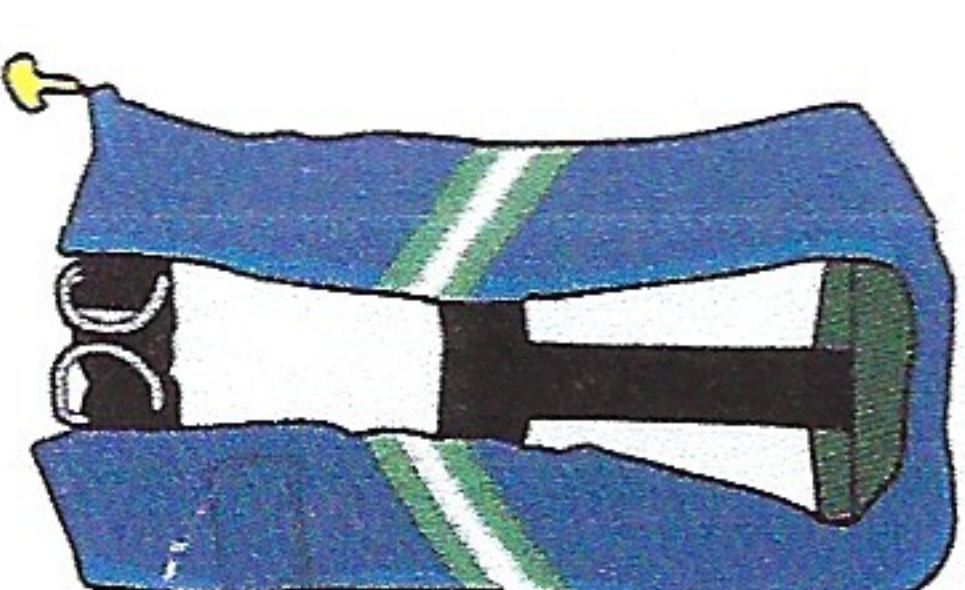
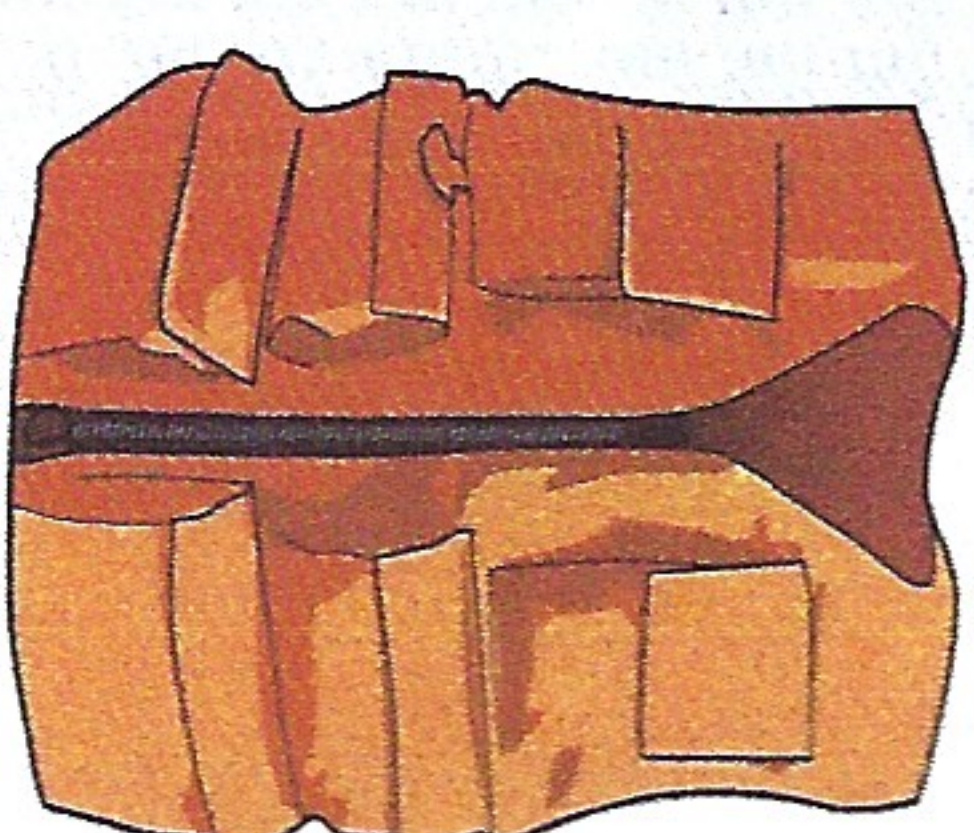
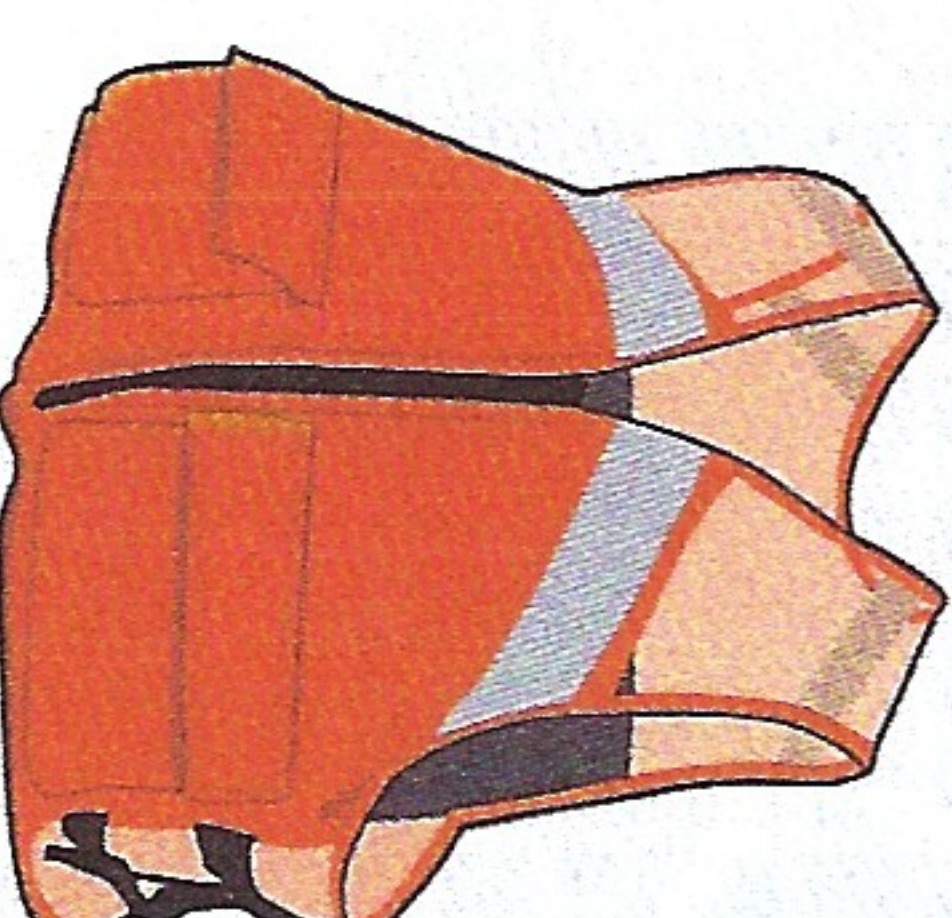


Inflated

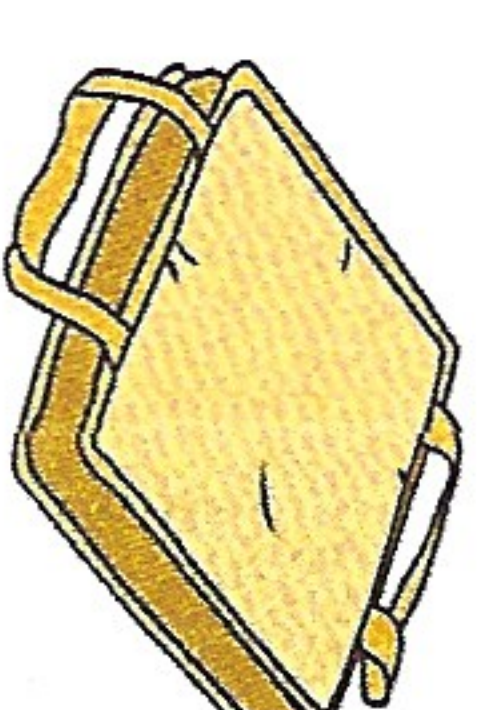
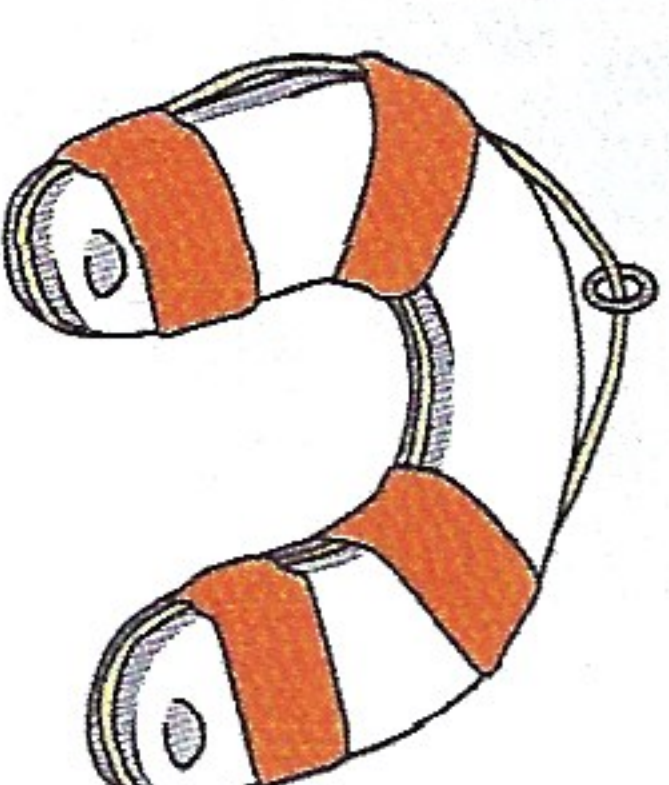
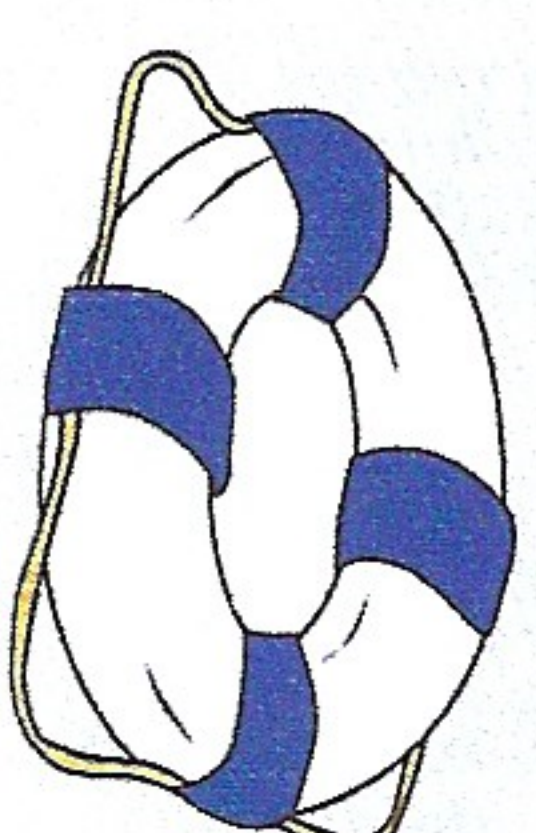
A Type II, Near-Shore Buoyancy Vest is intended for calm, inland waters or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. Inherently buoyant life jackets of this type will turn some unconscious wearers to a face-up position in the water, but the turning is not as pronounced as with a Type I. This type of inflatable turns as well as a Type I foam jacket.



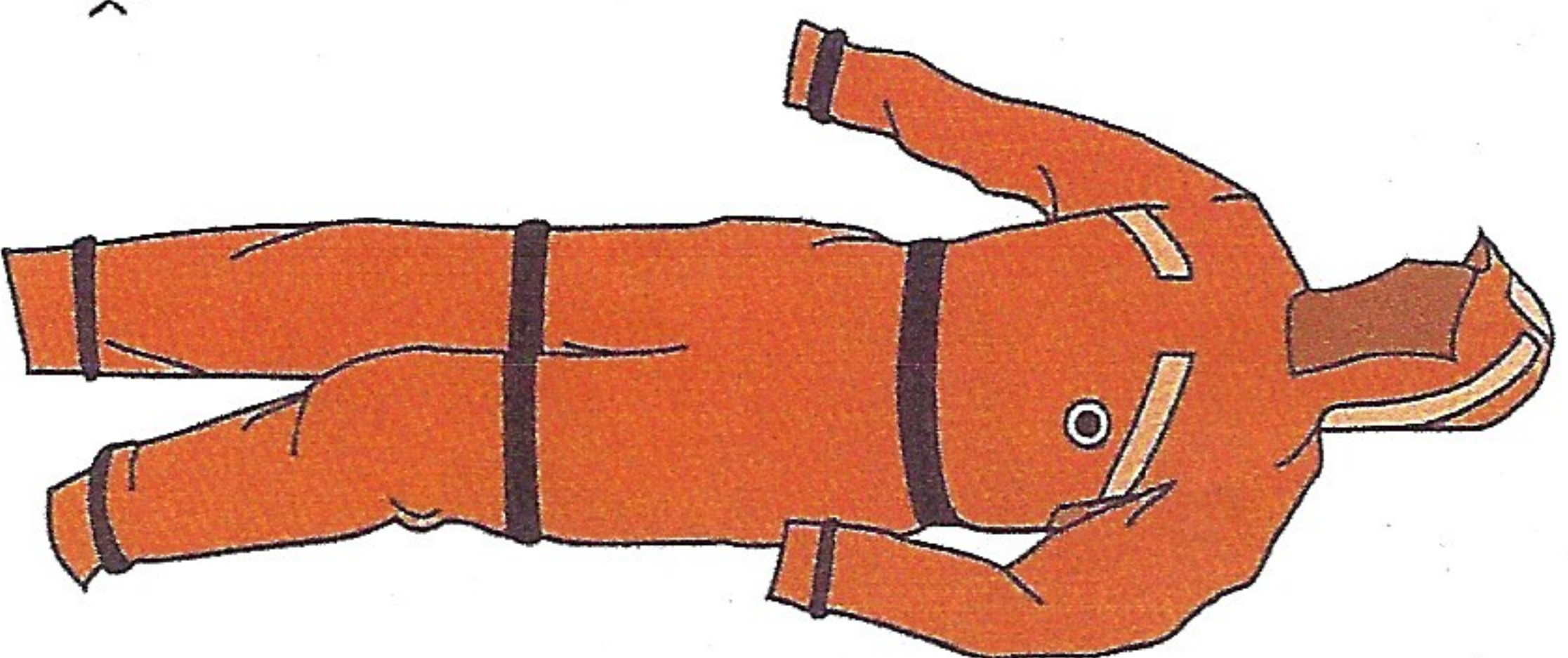
A Type III, Flotation Aid is good for users in calm, inland waters, or anywhere there is a good chance of quick rescue. The wearer may have to tilt their head back to remain in a face-up position in the water. The Type III foam vest has the same minimum buoyancy as a Type II. It comes in many styles, colors, and sizes and is generally the most comfortable type for continuous wear. Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed with features suitable for various sports activities are examples of this type. This type of inflatable turns as well as a Type II foam vest.



A Type IV, Throwable Device is intended for use anywhere. It is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped and held by the user until rescued. It is not designed or intended to be worn. Type IV devices include buoyant cushions, ring buoys, and horseshoe buoys. There are no Coast Guard-approved inflatable Type IV devices.



A **Type V, Special-Use Device** is intended for specific activities and may be carried instead of another life jacket only if used according to the condition(s) for which it is approved, as shown on its label. A Type V provides the performance of a Type I, II, or III (as marked on its label). If the label says the life jacket is "approved only when worn," the life jacket must be worn (except by persons in enclosed spaces) and used in accordance with the approval label to meet carriage requirements. Some Type V devices provide significant hypothermia protection. Varieties include deck suits, work vests, sailboarding vests, and sailing vests with a safety harness.



An Inflatable with Safety Harness is approved only as a Type V, Special-Use Device because its use to prevent falls overboard presents several risks. The U.S. Coast Guard has not assessed its potential for injury from suddenly stopping a fall and, in case of capsizing or sinking, the boat may take the wearer down, resulting in death. **Do not** attach the harness to the boat unless it is being worn with a tether of less than 6.5 feet in length with quick-release-under-load hardware. *Read the safety harness section of the owner's manual for intended use. Under no circumstances should the safety harness be used for any climbing activity. U.S. Coast Guard approval does not apply to this harness used under those circumstances.*

Finding the Right Life Jacket for You

Life jackets come in many designs, colors, styles, and materials. Some are made to stand up to rugged water sports, others to protect the wearer from cold-water temperatures. Be sure to choose one that is appropriate for your body size, planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter.

Test the Fit

Start with a life jacket that is U.S. Coast Guard-approved. Try it on. It should fit comfortably snug. Then give it this test: with all straps, zippers, and ties securely fastened, raise your arms over your head. The jacket should stay in place and not ride up. Next, have someone lift your life jacket straight up at the shoulders. Again, the jacket should stay in place. If the zipper touches your nose or the jacket almost comes off, it is too loose.

Test the Buoyancy of Your Life Jacket

In shallow water or a swimming pool, under supervision and with all straps, zippers, and ties fastened, see how the life jacket floats you. Relax your body and let your head tilt back. Your chin should remain above water so that you can breathe easily. If not, you may need a different size or model, one that provides more buoyancy.

Choosing a Child's Life Jacket

Be sure to choose a child's life jacket that is U.S. Coast Guard-approved. Check to make sure your child's weight falls within the range shown on the label. While some children in the 30-50 pound weight range who can swim may ask for the extra freedom of movement that a Type III provides, note that most children in this weight range, especially those who cannot swim, should wear a Type II. To check for a good fit, pick the child up by the shoulders of the life jacket. If it fits correctly, the child's chin and ears will not slip through.

A child's life jacket should be tested in the water immediately after purchase. Children may panic when they fall into the water suddenly. Float testing not only checks the fit and buoyancy but also provides an important opportunity to teach them to relax in the water.

Be Safe. Wear Your Life Jacket.

Most deaths from drowning occur near shore in calm weather, not out at sea during a storm; 9 out of 10 drowning fatalities occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety. Worse still, many of these victims owned life jackets and may have survived had they been worn.

Wear your life jacket.

When you don't, you're risking your life.