



LIFEJACKETS *for* LOBSTERMEN



NORTHEAST CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

SUMMARY REPORT 2020



Terminology Notes

Lifejackets & Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) — For this report, we use the term “lifejacket” broadly since it is more widely recognized than PFDs. However, a true lifejacket must be U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved to meet carriage requirements. Commercial fishermen already have approved lifejackets on board but find them difficult to wear while working. The goal of this project was to find lifejackets and PFDs that were more likely to be worn. Included in this summary are a wide range of PFDs, some are not USCG approved. Always read the label and understand the appropriate use for the PFD. For further information visit: <http://wearitlifejacket.com/>

Lobstermen — Northeast commercial lobstermen (male and female) recommended that we use the term “lobstermen” universally, regardless of gender.

The Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety promotes health and safety research, education and prevention activities in the high-risk industries of farming, commercial fishing and logging from Maine to West Virginia.

www.necenter.org | 607-547-6023 | @LifejacketsforLobstermen

Funding for the Northeast Center’s Lifejackets for Lobstermen Project was provided by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a research agency focused on the study of worker safety and health and empowering employers and workers to create safe and healthy workplaces. NIOSH is part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.html

This summary is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH.



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"Everyone knows someone that never came home."

- Maine lobster boat captain

OVERVIEW

An ongoing danger, falls overboard happen in the commercial fishing industry. For Northeast lobstermen, they are the most frequent cause of death on the job.*

While a lifejacket is considered one solution to improving Northeast lobstermen's chance of surviving a fall overboard, Maine lobster boat captain Tim Morong admits that in his 40 years of lobstering he never wore one, until now. So, what made the difference?

"Lifejackets for Lobstermen called me to do a survey," Morong explained. "It got me thinking, and I (kept) thinking about it." So when he heard the projects' vans were pulling into his home port in Phippsburg, he came to check things out, try things on. Morong found something he liked. He bought himself a pair of Stormline Flotation Bibs. He bought his wife/crew a Hyde Wingman.

Lifejackets and other Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) had long been on the minds of researchers at the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety (NEC), a not-for-profit center serving the Northeast commercial fishing, farming, and logging industries. The on-the-job death rate for fishermen nationwide is 31 times higher than any other industry.* Center staff recognized that increasing the "wear rate" of lifejackets by fishermen might be a good start to improving Northeast lobstermen's chance of surviving in the event of a fall overboard.

"We knew that fatalities from falls overboard were higher for Northeast lobstermen," said Lifejackets for Lobstermen project coordinator Rebecca Weil. "We also realized there must be good reasons fishermen were choosing to not wear lifejackets. So we set out to understand what these challenges were and how we might help."

This summary report chronicles the four-year Lifejackets for Lobstermen project. It was a project that, at the beginning, Northeast fishermen and other industry stakeholders considered to be little more than researchers' folly. That changed. Three years later, the project launched two cargo vans full of lifejackets that began travelling from port to port along the Northeast coastline.

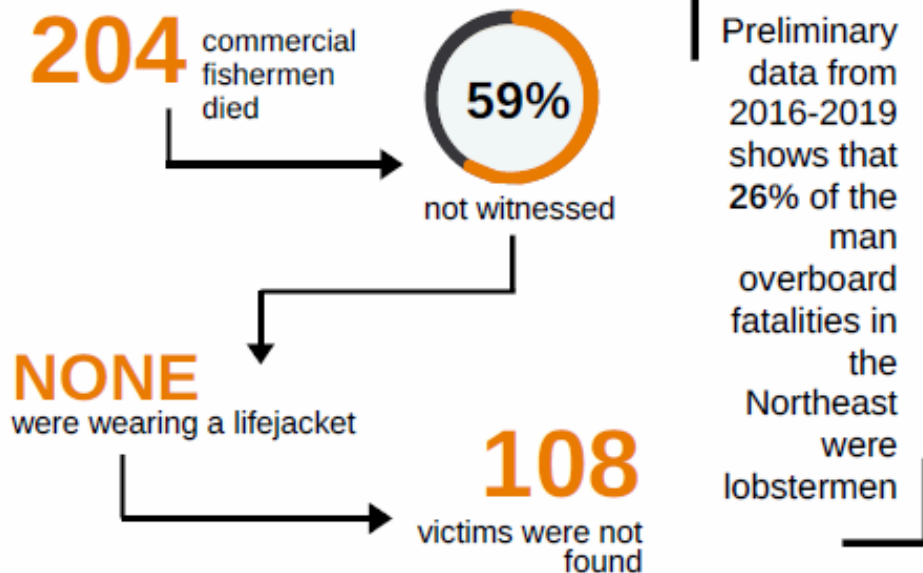
Fishermen and their families were following the vans' itinerary on social media and texting and calling to urge the drivers to come to their home ports. Ultimately, it was the fishermen who created the solutions, their ideas and their solutions—that made the project a success.

*Based on data from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Center for Maritime Safety and Health Studies



"I have two sons and two of my brothers who lobster here in Maine... I lost my grandfather, my brother, fiancé, and my husband all to the sea. So it would mean a lot if I could get these [lifejackets]"
 - Deborah Damon

U.S. Falls Overboard from 2000-2016



Data source: CDC/NIOSH



Dear Lobstermen,

We are grateful for your participation in this lifejacket project. Thank you!

We so value our joint effort to make commercial fishing safer. This isn't to say there isn't more to do. So contact us with your ideas and solutions.

We will continue to support your work and well being.

Julie Sorensen, Director, Northeast Center



The Lifejackets for Lobstermen project began with listening. Team members talked with fishermen at their boats. They learned about commercial fishermen's work and the challenges of their jobs. They learned just how safety focused the lobstermen are. They also learned how lifejackets could be hard to find, costly, and, ironically, a challenge to work in safely.

In all, the team spent two years gathering feedback from fishermen on the challenges and the benefits of wearing life jackets and other PFDs. On the phone, in person and through the mail, the project team surveyed over 550 Northeast fishermen for insights and solutions.

Project coordinator Jessica Echard said the many questions asked in surveys and conversations could be distilled down to two main questions:

1. Tell us everything you hate about lifejackets.
2. Tell us everything you would change about them.

Fishermen, association leaders, safety trainers, industry experts, and other researchers provided candid input throughout the process.



"Having the lobstermen participate from the research and development of the personal flotation device right through the final version is a testament to their commitment to enhance safety for themselves and their families alike. We look forward to continuing (support for) this project until every lobsterman has a personal flotation device." - Beth Casoni, Executive Director
Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association



The Best Lifejacket is the One You Wear



For a Northeast lobsterman, a lifejacket needs to fit with the work of the boat.

Spending up to 12 hours a day hauling traps and moving gear in all forms of weather requires that a lifejacket be workable and comfortable. It can't be so bulky that the fisherman can't reach into traps or work on an engine. It can't add to the already high risk of gear entanglement with straps and buckles or extra pockets.

It needs to allow the fisherman to move fully, quickly, and adeptly through the work of the boat.

Hardliners say that a lifejacket doesn't need to be comfortable. It just needs to save your life. Fishermen, however, work hard to make a living.

They need to be able to do their job efficiently and safely to bring their catch to market daily. Many fishermen have past injuries that make it painful to wear something while working for many hours. During the project's survey period, calls came rolling into the Northeast Center from the fishing community.

Fishermen expressed:

- frustration about lifejackets
- concern that they be affordable
- skepticism that there would be something they could work in all day

These conversations supplied rich information on what would work for fishermen, what would not, and, importantly, what changes needed to be made in existing devices.

"I wear a lifejacket as a precaution. If I hadn't participated in the [Lifejackets for Lobstermen] survey, I wouldn't be wearing one."

-Josh Fredrickson , Hingham, MA

according to lobstermen LIFEJACKETS SHOULD...

BE COMFORTABLE

LAY FLAT

HAVE HIGH VISIBILITY

BE STRAPLESS OR HAVE
SHORT BUCKLES

BE EASY TO CLEAN

BE EASY TO USE

NOT BE BULKY

BE EASY TO PUT ON
AND TAKE OFF

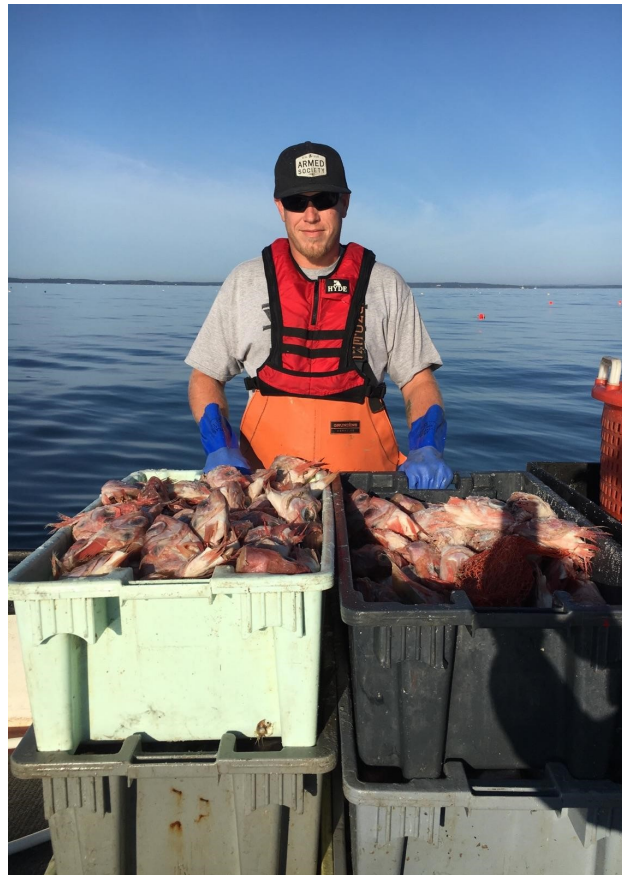


Lifejacket Trials

After hundreds of fishermen from all over the Northeast weighed in on their ideal lifejacket or other PFDs, the next hurdle was to find models that met their wants and needs.

The goal was to find a wide range of lifejackets and PFDs that were as workable and comfortable as possible.

On-board, at-work trials were run during the winter and summer months of 2017. A total of 181 fishermen volunteered to spend a month wearing a randomly assigned model.



Team members attended fishing industry association meetings, trade shows and forums, always toting with them boxes of lifejacket models for the fishermen to try on and provide feedback.

Eleven models were chosen and stocked in the vans to be transported from port to port throughout Maine and Massachusetts for fishermen to try on and, ideally, purchase.



Bibs Test Drive Goes Viral

Colin MacDonald gave the Stormline flotation bibs a try by hopping off the stern of his boat into frigid Maine waters. The video has been viewed by more than 118,000 people worldwide through our Facebook page @LifejacketsforLobstermen

Lifejacket Vans Take to the Road

In New Zealand, there's a van-based project called Old4New that exchanges old PFDs for new ones in the recreational boating community. This project planted a seed of inspiration: why not use vans to bring lifejacket models to the docks for commercial fishermen to try on, compare, and buy?

By late winter, 2019, the Lifejackets for Lobstermen project had two brand new vans ready for the road. Packed inside were lifejackets and other PFDs selected by the fishermen and supplies to set up shop port to port. In the drivers' seats were two newly hired project members—game for spending seven months on the road.



On April 1, they buckled into the drivers' seats of each van and headed, in tandem, to their first port.

"When we first hit the road, we weren't sure what to expect, but we were pleasantly surprised," said Amanda Roome, fieldwork research coordinator. "From day one the lobstermen were very open to talking with us and trying on the different style of lifejackets and talking through what they did or did not like about them so we could help them find the one that was the most comfortable and best suited for their needs."

The products were only for sale to commercial lobstermen and commercial fishermen with a lobster bycatch license, due to the research design responding to the higher fatality rates in this fishery. A one-time 50 percent discount was provided to help fishermen get started.

The lobstermen and fishermen came—some out of curiosity, some reluctantly, some coerced by a family member or loved one but just as many pulling into the harbor deliberately to visit the vans, some driving out of their way and bringing crew along with them, to purchase a lifejacket or other PFDs of choice for themselves or their crew.

Starting April 1, 2019 and ending November 18, 2019, the Lifejackets for Lobstermen vans sold a total of 1087 lifejackets and PFDs.

A Close Call for a Father and a Son

"Almost lost my old man overboard last week. He went in, and I wasn't sure we were gonna get him back. He had his muck boots on. They kept floating up and his head kept going under. It was scary. I gaffed him by the hood to get him back in."
Pete Seiders, son, told at the vans' stop in South Bristol, ME

"If it wasn't for my son, I wouldn't be here."
-Van Seiders, father (at right)
He bought himself a Spinlock Durlo.



Port Location Visits

Waterville

1087

PFDs Sold

10K

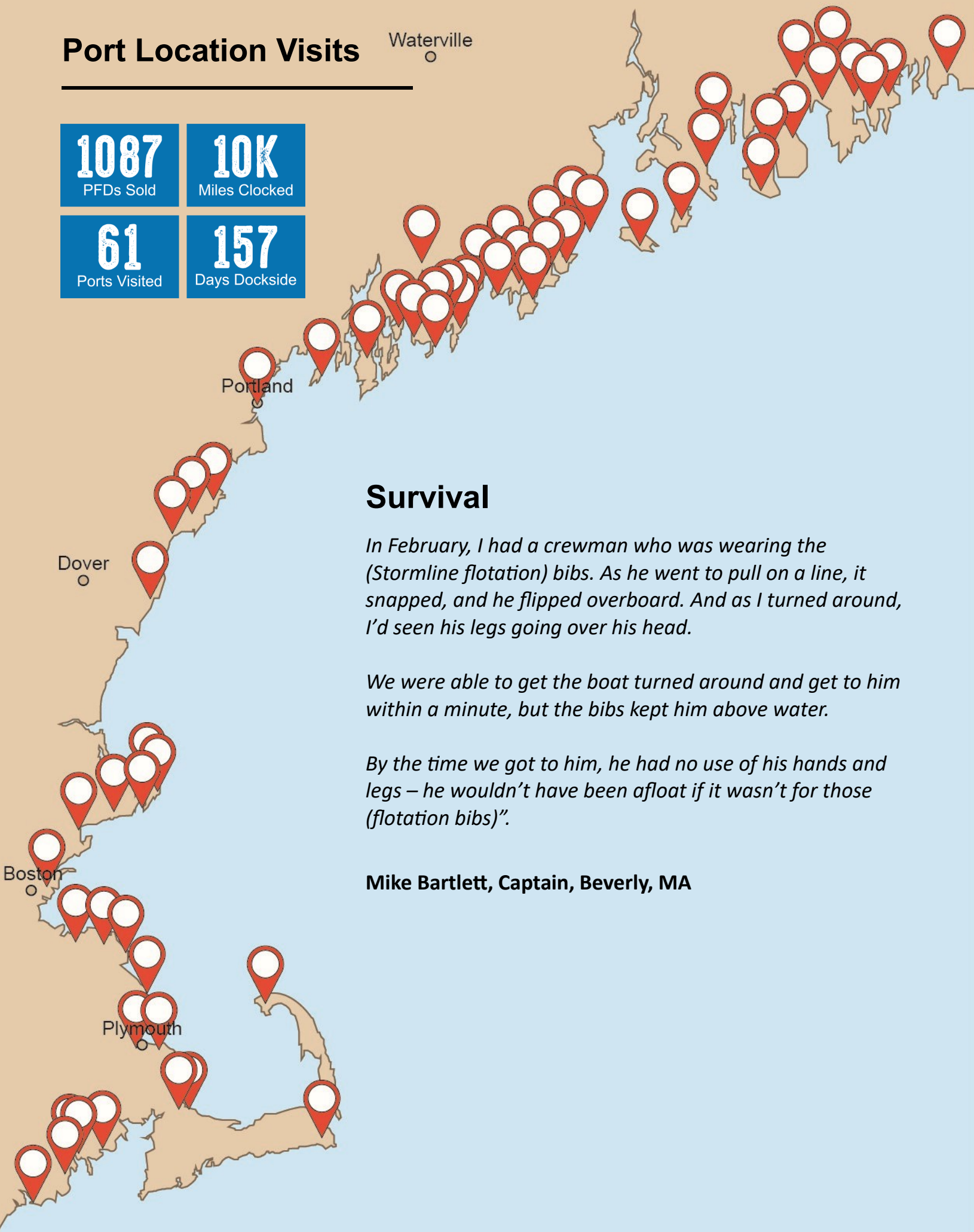
Miles Clocked

61

Ports Visited

157

Days Dockside



Survival

In February, I had a crewman who was wearing the (Stormline flotation) bibs. As he went to pull on a line, it snapped, and he flipped overboard. And as I turned around, I'd seen his legs going over his head.

We were able to get the boat turned around and get to him within a minute, but the bibs kept him above water.

By the time we got to him, he had no use of his hands and legs – he wouldn't have been afloat if it wasn't for those (flotation bibs)".

Mike Bartlett, Captain, Beverly, MA

Sales Rankings at Vans



Stormline Flotation Bibs 544 SOLD



Mustang Elite 28 103 SOLD



Kent Rogue II 99 SOLD



Mustang Work Vest 71 SOLD



Hyde Wingman 57 SOLD



Coleman Shipmate 57 SOLD



West Marine Beltpack 55 SOLD



Hero Rashguard 42 SOLD



Mustang Beltpack 27 SOLD



Mustang Khimera 27 SOLD



Spinlock Duro 5 SOLD



What was in the Vans?

PFD Product Guide



The pros and cons detailed with the following lifejacket and PFD product profiles are based on fishermen's feedback and are not the opinions of the Northeast Center or manufacturers.



Stormline 662 Heavy Duty Oilskin Fishing Flotation Pants

stormlinegear.com

Flotation Method: Inherent
Buoyancy: 50N (~11-13 lbs.)
Certification: None/ISO Level 50

Pros: Two in one—something most fishermen wear, bibs, plus flotation; lightweight; comfortable flotation padding on chest and knees; flexible material

Cons: Can be hot in summer; pant leg at foot could be wider; not certified as a lifejacket



Mustang Survival Elite 28 Hydrostatic Inflatable MD 5183

mustang survival.com

Flotation Method: Auto
Buoyancy: 26 lbs.
Certification: USCG Type V with Type III performance

Pros: Lays flat; not in the way; lightweight; can flip most face up if unconscious; conveniently placed manual pull; red/green indicator for maintenance

Cons: Some found it narrow in neck



Kent Rogue II Fishing Vest

kentsafetyproducts.com

Flotation Method: Inherent
Buoyancy: 12 lbs.
Certification: None

Pros: Low profile; segmented foam for better movement/comfort; added warmth in winter; can be worn under bibs/clothing; many size options

Cons: Added heat in summer; not certified as a lifejacket



Hyde Wingman Vest

wingmanlifejacket.com

Flotation Method: Manual
Buoyancy: 22.5 lbs.
Certification: USCG Type V with Type III performance

Pros: Very low profile; sits high on chest

Cons: When layering clothing neck may be snug



Mustang Survival HIT Inflatable Work Vest MD 3188

mustangsurvival.com

Flotation Method: Auto
Buoyancy: 35 lbs.
Certification: USCG Type V

Pros: Low profile; high visibility; wide neck; high buoyancy; turns most unconscious wearers face up; red/green indicator for maintenance; easy to clean

Cons: Manual pull tab hangs down



Stearns 1404 Ship Mate II Vest

stearnsflotation.com

Pros: No maintenance, useful for all swimming abilities

Flotation Method: Inherent

Cons: Slightly stiff foam

Buoyancy: 15.5lbs.

Certification: USCG Type III



westmarine.com

Pros: Compact; out of the way; nothing on your chest or around neck

Flotation Method: Manual

Cons: Manual pull tab hangs down

Buoyancy: 19 lbs.

Certification: USCG

Type V Approval with

Type III performance



HERO Inflatable Rash Guard

herowaterwear.com

Pros: “just a t-shirt”; low profile; can choose manual or auto inflation; does not look like a PFD

Flotation Method: Manual or Automatic

Cons: Not machine washable, hand wash only; runs small—size up; black color can be hot in sun; not certified as a lifejacket

Buoyancy: 80-100N (15-19 lbs.) dependent on size

Certification: ISO Level 50



Mustang Survival MD3075 Inflatable Belt Pack

mustangsurvival.com

Pros: Compact and light; out of the way; nothing around neck

Flotation Method: Manual

Cons: Manual pull tab hangs down

Buoyancy: 38 lbs.

Certification: USCG Type III



Mustang Survival Khimera Dual Inflation PFD MD 7183

mustangsurvival.com

Pros: Wide around neck; dual flotation methods - Foam & CO2

Flotation Method: Dual, Foam, and Manual

Cons: Material may not be strong enough to withstand traps/equipment

Buoyancy: 20.5 lbs. (7.5 lbs. foam, 13 lbs. inflation)

Certification: Harmonized Level 70 - USA & Canada



Spinlock Duro 170N Commercial Lifejacket

spinlock.co.uk/en

Pros: High buoyancy; lift strap for re-boarding; ability to integrate a strobe light and personal locating beacon

Flotation Method: Automatic

Cons: Higher buoyancy slightly increases stiffness

Buoyancy: 170N (~38 lbs.)

Certification: ISO Approved

Finding the Right PFD for You: 5 Things to Consider



1 STYLE

Vests



Bibs



Suspenders



T-Shirts



Belt Packs



Float Coats



2 FLOTATION

Inherent/Standard

- Typically foam flotation
- Low maintenance
- Recommended for all swimming abilities



Hybrid

- Dual flotation, typically foam & CO₂
- Security of foam with less bulk
- Not recommended for nonswimmers



Manual Inflatable

- CO₂ flotation
- Manual pull to inflate
- Oral backup inflation
- Ages 16+
- Not recommended for nonswimmers



Automatic Inflatable

- CO₂ flotation
- Automatically inflates in water
- Manual and oral backup inflation
- Some models can be set to auto or manual*
- Ages 16+
- Not recommended for nonswimmers



3 BUOYANCY



- Most adults need 7-12 lbs. to keep their head above water.
- The higher the buoyancy, the higher you will float.

4

CERTIFICATION

What you choose to wear may not replace USCG approved flotation devices required to be on your boat; check your state and federal requirements.

Read the label; understand what you're choosing for its function; and determine the best match for you.

USCG Type I

Best for open, rough and remote water. It will turn most unconscious wearers face-up. Type I is the best option for retaining body heat.

USCG Type II

Best for protected, inland water near shore. It is not suited for extended survival in rough water. Turns some unconscious face-up. The user should be able to tread water.

USCG Type III & Level 70

Best for protected, inland water near shore. It is not suited for extended survival in rough water. This type is not designed to turn unconscious wearers face-up.

USCG Type IV

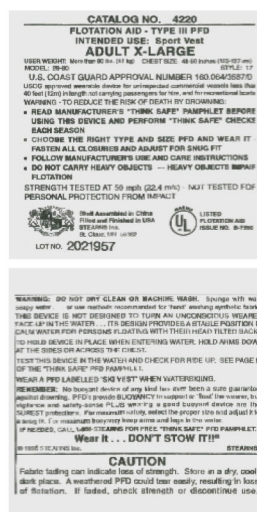
Square, ring or horseshoe buoy mounted on deck. Type IV is not for unconscious wearers, nonswimmers or children. It must be immediately available for use and at arms length.

USCG Type V

Type V must be worn underway to meet USCG requirements. Automatic inflation is not guaranteed to turn unconscious wearers face-up. Hybrids are not for unconscious wearers.

USCG Types are transitioning to Performance Levels

USCG Legacy Label > NEW USCG & Transport Canada Label



- PFDs can also come with a certification that meets international standards (ISO), European standards (CE), Commercial standards (SOLAS), or have no certifications

5

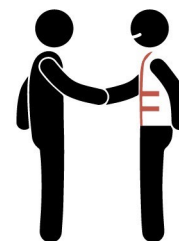
WEARABILITY

Is it comfortable and correctly fitted?



NO

Read manufacturer instructions, refit, or try another model.



YES

You have found the right PFD for you.

Poster & Media Campaigns

In focus groups, fishermen described family, generational work, good crew, and the desire to stay alive as crucial concepts to highlight when promoting the use of PFDs. These were developed into a poster and media campaign.

NOT JUST A LIFE PRESERVER. A LEGACY PRESERVER.

Lifejackets. They're not cork anymore. Now lighter, less bulky, and easier to work in. Put on your lifejacket and preserve your legacy. Help keep a good thing going.

Yes, they are all wearing flotation devices!

WE'VE LOST A LOT OF GOOD LOBSTERMEN OVER THE YEARS. EQUIP YOUR CREW AND YOURSELF WITH COMFORTABLE LIFEJACKETS.

LIFEJACKETS for LOBSTERMEN
NORTHEAST CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

www.facebook.com/LifejacketsforLobstermen/
or call us to learn more 607-221-4448

A GOOD CREW IS HARD TO FIND

ESPECIALLY IF THEY'RE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.

Yes, these are flotation devices!

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Photo Credits: Kelli Park

Posters designed by Dimitreus Kloczko, Nora Lindner, and FHI

1-10-1 Cold Water Survival

With a lifejacket on, a person has approximately:

1 minute to control their gasp reflex — **10** minutes of meaningful movement toward rescue —and **1** hour of survival prior to hypothermia.

Without a lifejacket in cold water, a person can survive for just minutes—no matter how strong a swimmer.



**YOU HAVE
10 MINUTES.**

In cold water, that's how long you have to rescue your crewman before they lose the ability to keep their head above water.
Keep yourself safe, keep your crewmembers safe.
The clock's ticking without a lifejacket.

WE'VE LOST A LOT OF GOOD LOBSTERMEN OVER THE YEARS.
EQUIP YOUR CREW AND YOURSELF WITH COMFORTABLE LIFEJACKETS.

 **LIFEJACKETS
for LOBSTERMEN**
NORTHEAST CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

**www.facebook.com/LifejacketsforLobstermen/
or call us to learn more 607-221-4448**

Falls Overboard Survival & Next Steps

Staying aboard, staying afloat, being found, and re-boarding/recovery are core pieces to surviving falls overboard. Each piece works collectively to ensure the safety and survival of fishermen.

Although wearing a lifejacket or other PFD will increase the chance of survival and provides rescuers with more time to launch a safe rescue effort, it takes time to locate a falls overboard victim and get them back into the boat.

Drills and safety trainings help to ensure an efficient and finely-tuned recovery effort. Support from the USCG, systems for getting falls overboard victims back on deck and first aid training for crew members are also essential to being prepared to save the life of a crew or family member who falls overboard.

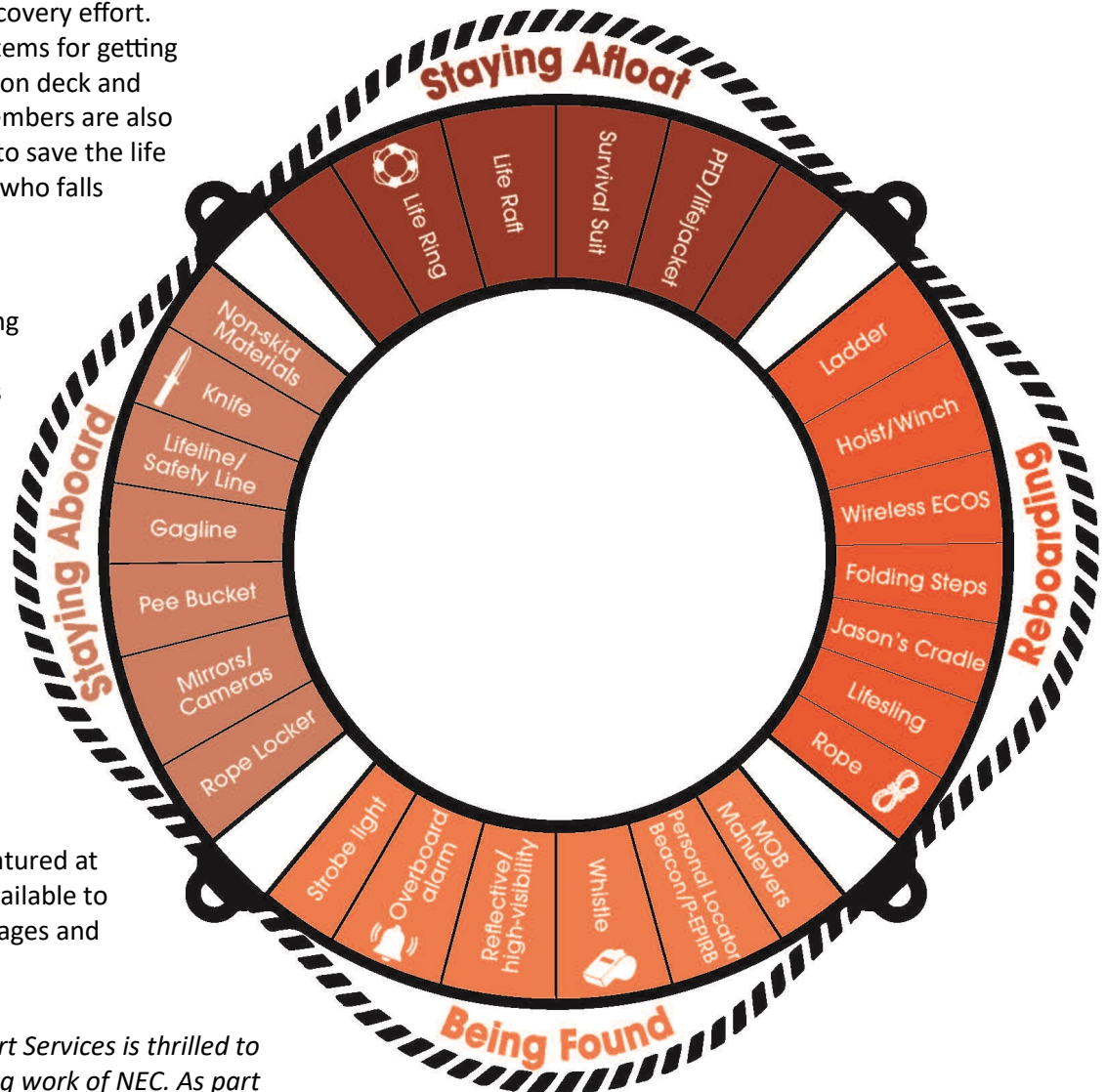
To this end, the Northeast Center is excited to be passing the van keys onto Fishing Partnership Support Services (FPSS).

FPSS plans to continue the Lifejackets for Lobstermen mission, which is a great fit with their mission to provide safety trainings, health insurance, and other support for commercial fishermen.

The Lifejacket Van will be featured at safety trainings and made available to commercial fishermen of all ages and fisheries in the Northeast.

"Fishing Partnership Support Services is thrilled to continue the groundbreaking work of NEC. As part of our free courses in safety and survival at sea, we will continue this approach and help fishermen find the lifejacket that they will wear."

-J.J. Bartlett, President, FPSS



To schedule a training with Fishing Partnerships or to find out about their plans for the Lifejacket Van, contact **Fishing Partnership Support Services** at 617-928-3443.

Project Collaborators

Organizational Collaborators



MCMILLAN OFFSHORE
SURVIVAL TRAINING

Advisory Board

J.J. Bartlett - Fishing Partnership Support Services
John Buckley - United States Coast Guard
Beth Casoni - Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association
Ann Carruth - Southeastern Louisiana University
Luis Catala - Fishing Partnership Support Services
Ed Dennehy - Fishing Partnership Support Services
Madeleine Hall-Arber - Anthropologist
Jeff Levin - The University of Texas
Jennifer M. Lincoln - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Rodney Avila - Marine Safety
Fred Mattera - Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island
Patrice McCarron - Maine Lobstermen's Association
John McMillan - McMillan Offshore Survival Training
Dan Miller - Commercial Lobsterman
Grant Moore - Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Assoc.
Dan Orchard - Fishing Partnership Support Services
Fred Penney - Commercial Lobsterman
Mark Ring - Commercial Lobsterman
Therese Sauvageau - Commercial Lobsterman

Manufacturers

Coleman Company, Inc.
Hero Water Safety Wear
Hyde Sportswear
Kent Sporting Goods Co.
Mullion PFD
Mustang Survival, Inc.
Spinlock Limited
Stormline Gear
West Marine

Retailers

Brooks Trap Mill
Downeast Fishing Gear
Hamilton Marine Boaters' Shop
Hercules SLR Rigging Shop
West Marine

Northeast Center Lifejackets for Lobstermen Team

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Rebecca Weil, Research Coordinator
Liane Hirabayashi, Research Coordinator
Jessica Echard, Research Coordinator
Amanda Roome, Fieldwork Research Coordinator
Erin Lally, Fieldwork Research Coordinator
Judith Graham, Occupational Health Nurse
Melissa Scribani, Jr. Research Investigator/Statistician
Pamela Tinc, Jr. Research Investigator



"The MLA has been a proud partner in the Life Jackets for Lobstermen project because it has made a real difference in our communities. Lobstermen were asked what it would take for them to wear a life jacket, project leaders worked with manufacturers to find the lifejacket designs fishermen asked for, and then made them available to lobstermen in their local harbors. Hundreds of lobstermen, crew and family members are proudly wearing lifejackets and working safer aboard their boats thanks to Life Jackets for Lobstermen."

Patrice McCarron
Executive Director,
Maine Lobstermen's
Association



New Bedford, MA captain Chris Chase was navigating his boat 110 miles offshore, when a 19-year-old crewman slipped while hauling traps and fell overboard into 41°F water. Chase dove in with life rings to rescue the crewman, who was unable to grasp a ring and began sinking underwater. Chase got them both secured. The crew hauled them back.

The crewman was in the water for less than eight minutes, and Chris was in for five minutes. In that time, both became unresponsive due to the cold water.

That is why, Chase explained, he drove to a local port to find the Lifejackets for Lobstermen vans. Chase bought lifejackets for himself and his entire crew.

