

The notation *Approved by Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans* or *D.O.T./Coast Guard Approved Personal Floatation Device* on the label means the PFD meets the minimum requirements of the regulations for its particular class and size. PFDs with this notation on the affixed tag are the only PFDs qualifying for approval under the Canadian Small Vessel Regulations. An exception exists for American visitors to Canadian waters. A reciprocity agreement takes effect for US Coast Guard (USCG) approved PFDs appropriate for the activity the wearer is engaged in in this specific case.

The system of regulation and approval in the United States is similar to ours.

However, there are some key differences pertaining to the youth 60 to 90 lb PFDs. The Canadian Coast Guard regulations require 60 to 90 lb youth PFDs to have a floatation collar containing 15% of the vest's total floatation. The US Coast Guard regulations allow for a collarless 60 to 90 lb Youth PFD designed similarly to the fully adjustable adult PFDs. The CCG regulations require the 60 to 90 lb youth, who could be approaching their teenage years, to wear a PFD similar to those of infants and toddlers rather than the cooler collarless adult PFDs. The cooler looking USCG approved PFDs 60 to 90 lbs youth are available in some Canadian stores but they don't meet CCG approval under current PFD classifications.

If ever questioned by authorities you could be ticketed for having your child wear an unapproved PFD. There is some merit to the coolness argument as with the colour argument—if kids don't like the look of what they're wearing they're more likely not to wear it. At press time there are no policy changes in the works for CCG approved 60 to 90 lb youth PFDs.

There are lots of manufacturers producing children's PFDs and we've listed a sample of what's available, different features and a price range. Take your child with you to try PFDs on before purchasing. Fit is important not only for the child's comfort (and for your sanity) but also for safety. —Ak

TIPS on choosing your kid's PFD

by mike oades

Choose the PFD that most accurately describes the weight of your child, remembering to include the weight of any paddling gear they may be wearing. A wet diaper can add an additional weight of up to 4 lbs. For big boned children with low body fat you may wish to have a bit more floatation. The CCG advises that infants under twenty pounds should not be brought on the water. The disproportional head size and upper body weight of an infant causes too great a risk of inversion in the water which cannot be prevented by PFD design.

If you might paddle look for a sewn loop on the collar of the jacket to hold a light or glowstick. Many jackets have reflective piping and tape sewn on for improved low light visibility.

A whistle can be attached to a separate lash point rather than to the zipper preventing the zipper from lowering under the weight of the whistle. Ensure that your child understands that the whistle is not a toy. It is a signalling tool only to be used in an emergency.

The floatation collar required on all PFDs for children and youths under 90lbs will help keep a child's head floating face up in the water.

Little people have little or no waist to help keep the jacket from riding up on their rib cage. children's PFDs have a crotch strap to help keep the jacket down. Rear fastening crotch straps are not as common but they are less likely to be accidentally opened and are more comfortable for the child.



Salus Marine Wear's Nimbus Childrens Vest is available in gold or teal in all three childrens sizes with ensolite rounded edge foam design for comfort. SRP with pockets \$69.00 CDN 519-579-3131.



A grab loop on the collar is a must for quick extraction from the water.

It is now possible to find colours and prints that children will enjoy wearing. Remember though, yellow, orange and red remain the most visible colours in the water and easiest to spot as your child wanders down the beach.

Drawstring closures for waist and other adjustments are less likely to pinch an errant bit of skin from your child's tender spots than plastic buckles.

Mustang Survival's Deluxe Childrens Vest is available in the yellow/purple combo shown here in all three childrens sizes. SRP \$30.00 CDN www.mustangsuvival.com.