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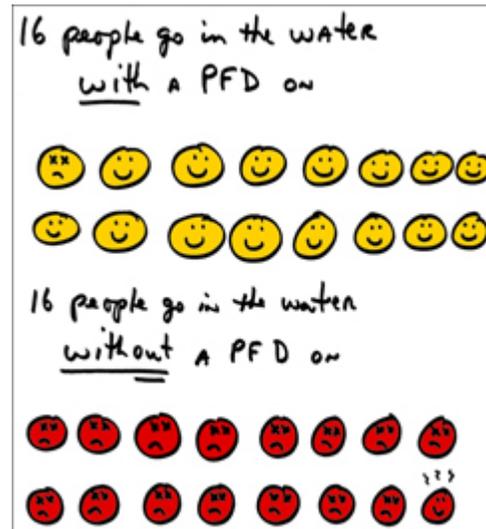
## Do I Really Need to Wear a Life Jacket?

By Vincent Pica

"Do I really need to wear a life-jacket? I've been boating since dinosaurs roamed the Earth and it is always fine!"

How many of us have said that, or something like that? More than a few and more than would admit to it. It's a natural reaction to wearing something that might be considered "binding" versus the wonderful feeling of just being out on the water.

But think again. First, some activities require a life-jacket (more scientifically called a "Personal Flotation Device" or PFD). Water-skiing regulations require the skier to have one on. The driver and passengers of a "Personal Water Craft" or PWC (often called a Jet-ski) are required to have one on. If you're under 13 years old, you must have one on. If you are using the "Type-5" PFD, the kind that look like a set of suspenders that have buoyancy pouches that are inflated by a CO2 cartridge, you must have it on for the USCG to consider that it is on the boat (unless you are under 16, in which case it's illegal to wear it!).



But what about the fellow that just wants to tool away from the dock, quietly find his favorite fishing spot off the channel in Moriches Bay and just drop two hooks – one for the boat and one for the fish? How dangerous is that?

It can be plenty dangerous. Aside from weather changes, the rapid change from dusk to night and things like that, there are other boaters. And I don't mean the ones that drive into you, admittedly a rare albeit not unique occurrence. Here's the scenario...

You hook that fish that's been nibbling away at your bait all afternoon. You finally have him on the hook. As you reach over with the landing net to get him in the boat, another boater races by and his wake hits your boat at just the wrong angle at just the wrong time. Into the drink you go.

And here are the statistics: 16 guys go in the water with a life-jacket and 15 come out. How about when 16 guys go in the water without a life jacket?...

...One comes out.

Do you have a boater that you love? Get him or her to wear a life-jacket, especially if they're out there alone.

**About the Author:** *Vincent Pica is a coxswain and the Commander of Flotilla 18-06 East Moriches. He was a navigator in a brown-water and blue-water sailboat racing crew for eight seasons. From the "iron sails" side, he is a licensed US Coast Guard Master of Steam and Diesel Powered Vessels, carries a Radar Observer endorsement, Unlimited, on his license and is certified in Marine Diesel Engine Operation and Maintenance.*

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