

Inflatable Personal Flotation Devices:

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BoatUS Dispels Inflatable Life Jacket Myths

Inflatable life jackets, which automatically or manually inflate with the tug of a pull cord, have been around over 25 years, but there are still quite a few misconceptions about how this life saving device works. The BoatUS Foundation set out to debunk some of the myths.

1. Inflatable life jackets are zero maintenance:

Let's face it; pretty much nothing on a boat is zero maintenance. Before you head out for the day, simply check to ensure the CO2 cylinder is screwed firmly in and you can see the green indicator tab.

Once a year, take it out and blow it up with your mouth, wait overnight, inspect for wear and check for leaks. Repacking is a task made simple- a few folds and a tuck- as instructions are found printed inside the cover flap. Most life jackets that automatically inflate when you hit the water also have small dissolvable components that periodically need replacement, but it's a simple process. A rearming "kit" comes with everything you need.

2. Not a lot of choices:

Actually, there are. Once you get past a range of colourful design, there are two basic styles of inflatable life jackets: over the shoulder suspender-style and waist-fitting belt pack.

3. Inflatable life jackets are too expensive:

Inflatable life jackets start at under \$100. That is a real expense for some, but consider that a cheap life jacket that no one will want to wear is as useless as a hook without a worm. Belt pack types tend to be less expensive than suspender style, while automatically inflatable types or those with extras like an integral sailing harness increase the price.

4. Inflatable life jackets are uncomfortable:

Baloney! Inflatable life jackets are compact, don't trap body heat, give full body movement, and can be as unobtrusive as a small bait pouch attached to your belt. Look for one that has a neoprene chafe guard around the neck and one that can be adjusted to prevent it from shifting from side to side.