

IRELAND News Release - New Irish Lifejacket Law

LIFEJACKETS TO BE MADE COMPULSORY IN WATER SAFETY DRIVE DUBLIN, SUNDAY, 16TH MAY, 2004

Dermot Ahern T.D., Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, today announced a major new safety drive by making the wearing of lifejackets compulsory on board any boat of seven metres or less.

In addition, the Minister ruled a lifejacket or personal flotation devices must be carried on every vessel regardless of size.

The water safety measures are contained in new draft regulations published today which will become law in two weeks time following a consultation period.

Minister Ahern said: "We have endured too many tragedies at sea and on our waterways. I fully appreciate that people have to take responsibility for their own safety but the time has come, I believe, to make the wearing of lifejackets compulsory on most of our vessels.

"These regulations are based on the overwhelming call from the public for a statutory requirement for the wearing of lifejackets in response to a consultation paper on the wearing of life jackets and personal flotation devices on small watercraft which was published by the Maritime Safety Directorate of my Department last year".

The main provisions of the draft regulations provide that :

- A lifejacket/ personal flotation device is carried on board for each person (irrespective of the size of craft)
- Everyone on board a craft less than 7.0 metres (23 feet) in length must wear a lifejacket/ personal flotation device
- Every child less than 16 years of age must wear a lifejacket/ personal flotation device at all times while on deck when the craft is underway

Controls of consumption of alcohol or drugs on board non-mechanically propelled pleasure craft are addressed

The Minister said he hoped to have the new regulations in place intended in advance of the June Bank Holiday weekend when many people will be taking to the water for the first time this year. The Minister, before making the order, is seeking final comments on the proposed draft. Interested parties are asked to submit their views to the Maritime Safety Directorate by 26th May 2004.

The Minister also announced the publication of a draft Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft, this follows the announcement made last year. The Code covers all aspects of leisure safety and guidance for leisure craft that are not already covered by Statutory Provisions.

The Code is divided into two sections Part A covers the compulsory legislative provisions relating to leisure craft and part B covers specific guidelines relation to sailing craft, motor craft, jet skis etc. While the draft regulations in relation to the wearing of lifejackets or personal floatation devices on non-mechanically propelled pleasure craft do not cover surfboard users and windsurfers, there will be advisory provisions for these in the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft. Interested parties are asked to submit their views to the Maritime Safety Directorate by 15th September 2004, this will allow users to examine the Code in detail during the summer period.

The Minister said, "I would encourage everybody who is interested to submit their observations and contribute to the process of enhancing safety of pleasure boats on Irish waters."

A copy of both the Draft Regulations on the wearing of lifejackets or personal floatation devices on non-mechanically propelled pleasure craft and The Draft Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft are available on the Department's website at www.dcmnr.gov.ie or from the **Maritime Safety Directorate, Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2**. Phone No. (01) 6782382. Written observations should be sent to **Eoghan Beecher, Maritime Safety Directorate, Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2**. E-mail: eoghan.beecher@dcmnr.gov.ie

DEFINITION OF A LIFEJACKET:

Lifejackets of an approved type as used by the Merchant Marine & Fishing fleet are manufactured to a standard set by the International Maritime Organisation, this basic standard requires, inter alia, that they:

- Can be donned within 1 minute
- Are of a highly visible colour
- Can be worn correctly in only one way
- Allow wearer to jump into the water from a height of at least 4.5 m without injury
- Will lift the mouth of an exhausted or unconscious person not less than 120 mm clear of the water
- Turn the body of an unconscious person in the water from any position to one where the mouth is clear of the water in not more than 5 seconds
- Allow a person wearing it to swim a short distance and board a life raft
- If the lifejacket is of an inflatable type, can keep a person afloat with one chamber gone (lost buoyancy).