

Will it Float?

Study on Mandatory PFD Wear Legislation in Canada

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Will *You* Float?

“Keeping a lifejacket handy versus wearing one is like attempting to buckle a seat belt just before the car crashes”

US Coast Guard official

CANADA

- Population of about 30 million people.
- More inland fresh water than any other country...plus 3 oceans.
- 40% of Canadians annually go boating.

Why do the Study?

- 140 fatalities each year is unacceptable.
- It is the mission of the CSBC to reduce fatalities and injuries.
- 89% of boaters who drown were found NOT wearing a PFD – increasing trend!
- Wear rate of about 21% is too low.

Independent Consultant

- SMARTRISK was hired to do the study, with funding from the Cook-Rees Memorial Fund.
- Incorporated existing Canadian and international data.
- Included new public opinion study in Canada and interviews with 45 international representatives, as well as Canadian experts.

Will it Float? Conclusions

1. Boating-related drownings warrant attention.
2. PFD wear is the risk factor to address to prevent these drownings.
3. Mandatory wear legislation is the intervention to employ to increase the PFD wear-rate.
4. Such legislation should be feasible in Canada.

Will it Float? Recommendations

The CSBC should work toward mandatory PFD wear legislation.

- Develop action plan
- Consult stakeholders
- Develop communications strategy
- Conduct additional research

Findings to Support Conclusions

1. Boating-related drownings warrant attention:
 - On average there are 140 recreational boating fatalities each year in Canada.
 - Canada's drowning rate is much higher than many other westernized countries.

Findings to Support Conclusions

2. PFD wear is the risk factor to address to prevent these drownings:
 - 89% of boaters who drowned were found NOT wearing a PFD.
 - Boaters who report that they have time to reach and don a PFD when they need to are wrong.

Findings to Support Conclusions

2. PFD wear is the risk factor to address to prevent these drownings cont'd:
 - The influence of cold water makes it even more difficult to don a PFD and survive the cold water shock.
 - **Of the ready points of leverage for drowning prevention, increasing PFD wear has the greatest potential to affect drowning rates.**

Findings to Support Conclusions

3. Mandatory wear legislation is the intervention to employ:

- The introduction of new PFDs and current promotional, incentive and communication campaigns have NOT increased the wear-rate.
- Boaters do not feel that they are at risk when they don't wear a PFD.

Findings to Support Conclusions

3. Mandatory legislation is the intervention to employ cont'd:
- Legislation requiring children to wear PFDs in the US has not increased the wear-rate for adults.
 - Tasmania, Australia which has mandatory legislation for all boaters, has a wear rate of 95% versus 49% before legislation.

Findings to Support Conclusions

3. Mandatory legislation is the intervention to employ cont'd:

- Seat belt usage has increased dramatically following the introduction of legislation.
- Bicycle helmet rates have also increased dramatically post-legislation.

Findings to Support Conclusions

4. Such legislation should be feasible in Canada:

- Public opinion survey for PFD legislation for all occupants on board was very strong – from 70% for pontoon boats to 87% for PWCs.
- Few supported PFD legislation for children only.
- Opposition to PFD legislation was minimal (5-7%).

Findings to Support Conclusions

4. Such legislation should be feasible in Canada cont'd:
- Mandatory wear legislation can't be any harder to enforce than the current mandatory carriage legislation....and it could be argued that it would be easier to enforce.

Will it Float? Recap

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Current CSBC Position

That there be mandatory PFD wear legislation for:

- All passengers in vessels for recreational use
- Vessels 6 meters (20 feet) or less
- While on deck (not in an enclosed cabin)
- While underway

CSBC Action Plan

- Present the Will it Float? findings to boating stakeholder groups across Canada and internationally.
- Conduct Town Hall meetings with the public and share findings.
- Seek and obtain endorsement letters to the CSBC position on mandatory wear legislation.
- Then work with Canadian government department to develop legislation.

More Information?

- Go to www.csbc.ca to download the Will it Float? study in PDF format.
- Contact information:
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Thank you