



Be Prepared

I don't know about you, but I feel waterlogged! The past week (or two) has given us much needed rain, and while it may seem like on a day like today, paddling to get from point A to point B may be more effective than driving, we have to keep in mind that fall weather (ok, we still have one week until summer is officially over) is unpredictable. With all the hurricanes moving through the Gulf Coast and the residual precipitation heading our way, we face the constant threat of excessive rain.

In addition to the rain, we have been experiencing temperature changes. The air temperature has been all over the board this month - some days seem picture perfect, while others may leave you wondering whether or not you need two or three layers! Weather conditions dictate how we paddle, when we paddle and where we paddle. Glenna has put together a short article on *Wacky Weather Paddling*. There is no reason to put your kayaks away just yet! Fall paddling offers many new experiences - just think of the changing colors along the coast line and the migratory birds to be seen!

Glenna also continues her series on Safety this month with an article about PFD's. *What to Look For in a PFD (oops!) PFD* will educate you about the Classifications of PFD's and what you should be looking for in this Number One Safety Essential! Comfort, Fit, and Function are all key to finding the right PFD.

We hope this edition of the GLK newsletter serves you well on and off the water!

Happy Paddling!

Heidi Holmberg

What to Look For in a PDF (oops!) PFD

Glenna O'Doul

Many of you who are new to kayaking have asked what "PFD" actually means. The three-letter acronym stands for Personal Flotation Device. In the old days we used to call them "Life Vests". The name was changed because the name Life Vest implied that the vests' flotation would, by itself, save your life. This was and is still not quite the case, so the name was changed to more adequately describe the function of a Personal Flotation Device. In addition to changing the name of Life Vests, the US Coast Guard assigned five type classifications to further identify the attributes of the vest. Type III PFD's are most popular with kayakers and canoeists. Type III PFD's are designed to be worn comfortably for extended periods of time; they come in a variety of styles and designs, and are made in a variety of colors that can be easily seen on the water. These PFD's may not float an unresponsive wearer face-up, and may not have enough buoyancy to keep an unresponsive paddler's face out of the water if they are face up. Type III PFD's are not designed for extended wear in rough water; in fact, in rough water the wearer's face may often be covered by waves. None-the-less, Type III PFD's are what most of us wear when we are kayaking and what you will find in most kayaking shops. (See the chart below for more details on the Coast Guards Type Classification System)

We feel the most important attributes a PFD has is Comfort and Fit. We all know that this great garment is something we should have on at all times when we are paddling or even near the water. A great PFD can be adjusted at several different points to facilitate a comfortable fit, whether you are wearing a rash guard shirt or a dry suit with lots of layers underneath. Your PFD should fit your comfortably and correctly no matter what you do or do not have on underneath it. One of the keys to knowing if your PFD is adjusted appropriately is to test its fit. Once you have adjusted to comfort, hook your thumbs under the shoulder harness or straps of the PFD and lift up. If you are able to lift the vest up to your ears, the PFD is too loose. Conversely, it is not a good fit if you have already tightened it down to the point that you cannot breathe. When your lungs are full of air they act as a flotation device for your body. You should be able to expand your chest and abdomen fully to achieve maximum lung capacity. If you cannot achieve both proper fit and maximum lung capacity you need to try a different model or size.

Besides comfort and fit another important point to consider is Function.

1. What kind of paddling will you be doing?
2. Where will you be doing it?
3. At what experience level to see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

The more paddling you do and the higher degree of difficulty you challenge yourself with, the more you rely on your PFD to not only float you but to stow all the safety gear you need in any given condition you find yourself in. Pockets are important things to consider as they just may hold the keys to your survival one day. Pockets to hold flares, a marine radio, snacks, on-water repair kits, on-water first aid kits, and possibly even a small survival kit should you become separated from your kayak.

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What to Look For in a PDF (oops!) PFD (*continued*)

As I mentioned in my first article, one of the wonderful things your PFD provides, yet we tend to overlook, is insulation. This wonderful product adds anywhere from two to three inches of foam insulation right where we need it most: our core. This is just another reason to always wear your PFD. It can help regulate and protect your body by insulating out the cold and keeping in the heat!

The last thing anyone should consider when purchasing a PFD is Price! When I bought my first PFD 10 years ago; I did not know too much and I purchased the cheapest PFD I could find. I don't remember what brand it was, but I do remember the first time I capsized. I nearly floated right out of my PFD, despite the fact it was so tight I could barely breathe! When I tried to get back in my kayak with a paddle float re-entry it was quite hilarious! The only thing I could get out of the water was my arms. The next day, I went out and got myself another PFD and did not think about price. Nine years later, I still have and use that PFD. It's a little worn because it gets used a lot in both fresh and salt water, but the right PFD has served me well! Nine years ago I was wondering if I had lost my mind spending \$125.00 on a PFD! Today, that same PFD is only \$142.00 and it is Kokatat's MS Fit Tour! Knowing what my MS Fit Tour has been through and what I expect of it, \$142.00 is a bargain. (Do not let Kokatat know, they may raise the price).

Our staff feels these PFD's also give a great degree of Comfort, Fit, and Function: Kokatat OutFIT Tour, Stohlquist Men's and Women's Motion, and Stohlquist Betsea (for women). Great Lakes Kayak carries both Kokatat and Stohlquist PFD's. If we do not have what you want in stock in the size or color you are looking for, we will be happy to special order it for you!

Happy Paddling!

Next issue: *The Art of Chill Cheating*

U.S. COAST GUARD'S PFD CLASSIFICATIONS

- Type I: Offshore Life Jacket**
Used in Emergencies for unconscious wearers
Min. Buoyancy: 22 lbs
- Type II: Near Shore Buoyancy Vest**
Can turn unconscious wearer face up.
Min. Buoyancy: 15.5 lbs
- Type III: Flotation Aid**
Wearer can keep face out of the water.
Min. Buoyancy: 15.5-17 lbs
- Type IV: Throwable Device**
Backup measure
Min. Buoyancy: 16.5-18 lbs
- Type V: Special Purpose**
Turning performance rated according to PFD types I, II, & III
comes in a variety of styles.



For more information on U.S. Coast Guard Recommendations please visit
http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/fedreqs/equ_pfd.htm

Wacky Weather Paddling!

Glenna O'Doul

If you are planning to paddle in the coming weeks, please be aware of the water conditions where you will be paddling! A great resource for additional safety information is the Illinois Paddling Council

<http://www.illinoispadding.org/>.

Lake Michigan paddlers need to be aware of the possible rip currents and E-coli contamination. For more information on rip currents please read this recent article from the ABC News, [Deadly Waters: Rip currents in Lake Michigan](#). Information about E-coli contamination can be obtained from your local park district. We find that Wilmette's recorded message at 847-256-0333 is particularly helpful in determining area levels.

River paddlers need to be aware of debris and fast moving water. Some sections of our local rivers may even be closed to paddlers. For up-to-date information please visit <http://www.paddleaway.com/advisory>.

Thermoforming Explained

Eddyline kayaks are constructed of recyclable Carbonlite 2000 material. This special plastic is molded to shape through a process called Thermoforming. Eddyline was the innovator of this awesome process! Wavelength Magazine featured a great article on the Eddyline Thermoforming Process. Please visit www.Eddyline.com to read *Thermoforming: The New Kid on the Block*. Simply go to the Technology and Innovations page.

Enjoy!