

Boats To Have Flotation Gear

JUNEAU — All recreational boats 16 feet and longer are required by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry one wearable personal flotation device for each person on board, plus one throwable device per boat.

Boats less than 16 feet in length and all canoes and kayaks must carry either a wearable or throwable device for each person on board.

The throwable device has been a must since Oct. 1, 1973. There are only two throwable devices approved by the Coast Guard. They are the buoyant cushion and the ring buoy. Neither are designed to be worn.

Coast Guard boarding officers have reported many cases where a person is found wearing a buoyant cushion on his back. This can be deadly.

It is important to realize that when a person enters the water with a buoyant cushion strapped to his back, the cushion then becomes a killer rather than a life saver.

Since all the flotation material is located on the back and none in front, the person will be forced to float face down.

However, there is a safe way to wear a buoyant cushion if the need should arise. Place both arms through the straps and hug the cushion. Since the throwable device is designed for throwing to a person already in the water, it must always be immediately available.

For more information on how to be a safer boater, contact your local Coast Guard unit, or write to Boating Safety Office, P.O. Box 3-5000, Juneau, Alaska 99801.