

HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1

As many hunters will remember, there have been some sad tragedies involving duck hunters over the years. The general public would think that this is because of the presence of firearms in our sport but it is not. It usually involves water. Boating accidents resulting in drownings happen every year throughout Australia and duck hunters figure in those statistics just as much as fishermen and recreational boaters.

In 2002, Marine Safety Victoria engaged Monash University Accident Research Centre to undertake a review of recreational boating incidents.

More recently, the State Coroner's Office has undertaken two studies into boating incidents in Victoria in response to the continual occurrences of boating-related drownings. Of the two reports that have been prepared, the first examined commercial vessel fatalities between 1991 and 2001, and the second examined recreational boating fatalities between 1999 and 2002.

These reports, together with the coronial findings over the past 13 years provide an insight into the circumstances that led to the unnecessary death of more than 60 Victorians. Many of these incidents involved a combination of factors: hazardous environmental conditions; vessel occupants suddenly and unexpectedly entering the water; and a lack of life jacket or Personal Flotation Device (PFD) usage.

Fatal incidents involving motorised vessels measuring less than 4 metres in length occurred mainly in inland waterways (75 per cent), and largely resulted from the vessel capsizing and throwing the occupants out.

Four-metre motorised vessels are the class used by duck hunters, inland fishermen, yabby and crayfishermen.

Victorian Coroner's recommendations

In Victoria over a three year period there were 40 fatalities resulting from recreational boating incidents.

Of these fatalities, 32 of the 40 deaths involved people who were not wearing PFD's at the time the incident occurred. Evidence suggests that some of these deaths may have been avoided had the person involved been wearing a PFD (State Coroner's Office, July 2003).

As a result of a recent Victorian coronial investigation, the Coroner recommended:

"Marine Safety Victoria, as the regulating body of the safety equipment required to be carried on board recreational vessels in Victoria, should seek to have amended the



Jarrod and Terry Woods can hunt comfortably and safely from their boat while wearing the new specially designed Hunter Inflatable PFD1 life jacket.

Marine Act 1988 and Marine Regulations 1999 to require occupants of recreational vessels in Victoria to wear a PFD Type-1 at all times in the event that PFD Type-1 standards are raised to at least the level of the international standards."

This has happened and a wide ranging review and legislative process is now drawing to a close. Impending legislation will make it mandatory for all persons to wear a PFD Type-1 at all times that a boat is not anchored or tethered. The introduction date was going to be September 1st but was delayed and now the introduction date is forecast to be December 1st so as to catch the peak summer boating period.

This will mean that all Victorian boat users, all fishermen and all duck hunters will have to wear a PFD Type-1 at all times when the boat is under way even on inland creeks, rivers, lakes and swamps no matter how shallow or where they are.

This is already the case for operators of canoes, kayaks and sneak boats although not many people are aware of it.

The current Regulation 232 in Marine Regulations 1999 requires persons under the age of 10 years to wear a PFD when on board a recreational vessel and not confined to an enclosed area of the vessel.

This requirement was introduced in the 1980s in response to a series of incidents involving children. When the Tasmanian Government mandated the wearing of PFDs for all occupants of vessels under 6 metres in length while the vessel is under way in 2001, the level of fatal incidents decreased to only three deaths in the first 18 months.

PFD Type-1

These garments provide the highest level of buoyancy, and are designed to keep the wearer's head above water and body in a safe floating position. They are designed to meet Australian Standard 1512.

There are two basic styles, the vest or yoke styles. The yoke style is available as either a solid foam garment, commonly referred to as a "pillow", which has a strap that tightens around the wearer's waist, or as an inflatable yoke garment, which the wearer inflates upon entering the water. The vest-style garments have a zipper closer and buckles that fasten around the wearer for a tight fit.

A PFD that is uncomfortable to wear is unlikely to be worn except in emergencies, where evidence from incidents suggests that it is too late to be of use, particularly when a vessel has capsized or a vessel occupant enters the water unexpectedly. For a duck hunter, the pillow and vest style jackets are



Shooting from a moving boat is still possible with the Hunter Inflatable PFD1.

too bulky and restrict movement. They also make it impossible to shoulder and fire a shotgun effectively and safely.

Modern life jacket designs now include inflatable PFD's which are lightweight and comfortable and able to be worn without severely restricting the movements of the wearer. These "yoke" style inflatable PFD's are the obvious choice for hunters and fishermen. The problem for hunters though is still that of shouldering and firing the shotgun. All of these jackets have the CO2 gas cylinder up where the gun has to be mounted. Apart from that, they were all bright yellow, red or navy blue. Not exactly what a hunter needs.

The staff at Feathers & Fur, having participated in the submission process of the public review, recognised that there was no PFD Type-1 in Australia that was suitable for duck hunters. American mail order websites and catalogues had jackets that are US Coastguard approved but they did not comply with Australian regulations. Neither do the European EN396 standard jackets. To import anything from China was cost prohibitive as it costs around \$20,000 to get the product tested to Australian standards and takes up to nine months to get approved.

An Australian manufacturer was sourced that could make a specially designed PFD for hunters. They had an Inflatable PFD General Purpose (GP) floatation device that exceeded Australian Standards A.S.1512 for

PFD Type 1. Several unique modifications were required to meet a hunter's needs and once they were done we had a life jacket perfectly designed for the hunter. It is appropriately called the **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1**.

The valise (outer cover) is manufactured from tough rip stop 420 denier woven nylon with a hook and a loop closure but red and yellow was no good. The colour of this jacket is now camouflaged in the same style as the Australian army's famous and highly effective "Oz-cam".

It has a 38mm waist belt with a side release buckle and 25mm back strap with step lock adjuster. As the vest is designed for constant wear, it is not reversible and donning is simple and easy with donning instructions sewn to the valise. A floating D-ring was also placed on the waist belt so that the outboard motor kill switch can be attached and be out of the way. This is far more useful than wearing a wrist strap that impedes hand movement.

The Inflatable bladder is manufactured from radio frequency welded yellow polyurethane coated nylon oxford buoyancy fabric (high quality fabric) and consists of a combined oral inflation tube and a CO2 inflation



manifold. This is the same bladder used by the Australian SAS and Commando units.

Standard location aids in the form of SOLAS retro-reflective tape and a whistle are fitted in convenient locations on the inflated faces of the bladder. Victorian PFD's differ from other Australian state's versions. Victoria has additional requirements. The PFD's are basically the same except the Victorian versions are covered with six pieces of

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Holloway & Naughton Field SxS	\$645
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Merkel Field 117E SxS	\$2,250
Neumann Freres Belgium SxS	\$780
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While picking up the decoys the boat hits a log and the hunter, complete with jacket and waders, goes over board. He is saved

reflective tape instead of the standard two. Don't get caught buying a PFD not specifically made for Victoria.

To be suitable for hunting, the gas bottle had to be moved lower down and the top of the jacket had to be narrower so as to allow for shouldering and firing the gun. This was achieved by making the jacket longer at the front. The valise is sitting higher up towards the chest to enable more movement and comfort.



The **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1** series Inflatable Life Jackets has single buoyancy and is approved by the Marine Board of Victoria to Marine regulations 103 "Approved Life Jacket".

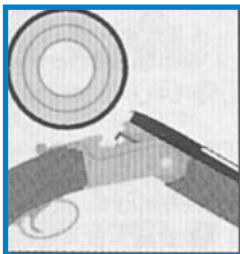
They are available in manual or automatic operation. Features include 150N of buoyancy, reflective tape,

whistle, an oral inflation tube, a 33gm disposable cylinder and adjustable back and waist belt. Total weight is approx. 750gm.

The inflatable PFD'S low bulk is the most comfortable way to wear a buoyancy jacket. Manual inflation is by pulling a cord to trigger a 33gm CO2 cylinder. As a back up the PFD is equipped for oral inflation. The Auto has automatic inflation (when submersed in water it will inflate) as well as a manual pull cord for inflation.

The auto inflation model protects a person who may go into the water due to being knocked unconscious from overhead branches or banging their head on the boat as they fall out.

The ease of wearing a **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1** makes it an ideal safety vest for hunters when wading in strange or new areas.



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because he was wearing a Hunter Inflatable PFD1 life jacket.

Especially in the dark before dawn or after sunset. Old farm dams, creek or river beds or just plain deep holes can make some lakes and swamps very hazardous when wading. An auto inflation model would not be a good idea here though, as hunters often trip over logs and get wet. The manual would be best suited here. Boat drivers should however consider the auto model. To deck out a boat for two hunters it would probably be best to get one of each.

Even though the gas cylinder has been moved to allow for shooting, the oral tube is still set high to allow for mouth inflation. To solve this problem, the **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1** is available in both left and right hand models.

Special Features

- Unique design of the bladder which closes itself together when inflated (No strap required in between the yoke)
- Comfortable and Durable
- Design to float in a better position with the head facing 45° upwards angle in the water
- Reliable
- Light weight
- Competitive price.

There are no other Inflatable PFD's on the Australian market that are perfectly suited for duck hunting and are camouflaged. Don't get caught by buying one off the net from overseas as they are not Australian approved and will probably not be legal. Even interstate jackets do not comply for Victoria. Most inflatable PFD's on the market sell for well over \$200 dollars. The **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1** (manual) is priced at \$195. The auto is \$50 extra. Postage and packing is \$10.

The legislation proposing the compulsory wearing of life jackets is scheduled to be in place by the 1st of December. Anyone going fishing before duck season will need to wear a PFD so you may as well get it now. Getting quantities of these specialised life jackets manufactured in time for the duck season is not going to be easy considering that the entire Victorian boating industry will be wanting standard style jackets made as well.

It is suggested that you get your order in now and don't wait for the legislation or the duck season to be announced. Available in limited quantities. First come will be first served! Ladies, this could be the ideal Christmas present for your partner to make sure he is safe while on that next hunting or fishing trip.

To order your **HUNTER INFLATABLE PFD1** fill in the order form on page 55 or phone (03) 9775 6744 with your credit card details.



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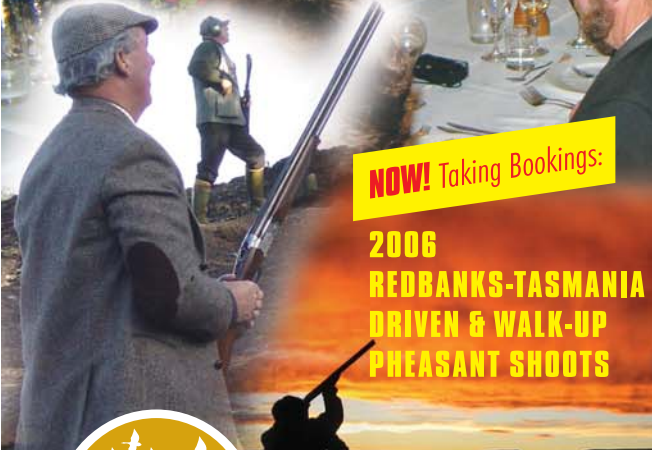
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