



Technical Circular

No.: 037/2016

Date: 18th October 2016

To Whomsoever it may concern

Subject: USCG Safety Alert Reg Periodic Maintenance of Inflatable Lifejackets.

- Failure of a life jacket to inflate properly can be life threatening. Unknown bladder leaks, fabric degradation or an improperly installed CO2 cylinder is all it takes to render an inflatable life jacket ineffective by preventing its inflation or ability to stay inflated.
- USCG has issued Safety Alert 13-16 (copy attached) highlighting the importance of periodic maintenance of inflatable life jackets.
- Inflatable life jackets to be serviced and inspected in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. USCG has provided below inspection checks for guidance and does not supersede any manufacturer recommendations or instructions.

➤ **Each voyage, prior to getting underway:**

- a) If there is a service indicator, check it to ensure it is GREEN. If the service indicator is RED the mechanism has been fired or is incorrectly fitted.
- b) Check for visible signs of wear or damage by ensuring that there are no rips, tears or holes; that the seams are securely sewn; and that the fabric, straps and hardware are still strong.
- c) For auto-inflating life jackets, ensure all auto components are armed and not expired. Following the manufacturer's instructions, reveal the inflation system and oral inflation tube. Check that the CO2 cylinder is firmly secured. Examine it for rust or corrosion. If CO2 cylinder is removed for inspection, carefully replace it without over-tightening.
- d) Repack the lifejacket as per manufacturer's instructions. Ensure the pull-tab lanyard is accessible and unlikely to be caught when being worn.

➤ **Periodic checks as recommended by the manufacturer or when in doubt:**

- a) Inflate the bladder using the oral tube and leave it overnight in a room with a constant temperature. If the bladder loses pressure, take the lifejacket to an authorized service center for further tests. Do not attempt to repair a life jacket yourself. If there is no obvious loss of pressure, deflate the life jacket by turning the cap of the inflation tube upside down and pressing it into the inflation tube. Gently squeeze the inflatable life jacket until all air has been expelled. To avoid damage do not wring or twist the life jacket.
- b) Repack the lifejacket as per manufacturer's instructions. Ensure the pull-tab lanyard is accessible and unlikely to be inadvertently snagged when being worn.

➤ **Storage and Handling:**

- a) Life jackets to be stored in a dry, well ventilated location away from dampness and direct sunlight.
 - b) Life jackets to be rinsed with fresh water after salt water exposure and dry it thoroughly prior to storage.
 - c) If the life jacket is set for auto-inflation, remove the auto-inflation cartridge prior to rinsing. Manufacturer's instruction to be followed for same.
- Ship owners/ operators and masters are advised to be guided by above and the attached USCG Safety Alert 13-16.

Enclosure:

1. USCG Marine Safety Alert 13-16 Reg Periodic Maintenance of Inflatable Lifejackets.