

New Australian Standards on lifejackets started from January 1, 2021



From January 1, 2021 all lifejackets must comply with the new Australian Standard – AS4758. If yours don't, now is the time to update them.

What is the new Australian Standard on lifejackets: AS4758?

Anyone boating or planning on setting sail needs to be aware that under the new change, all life jackets used on the water must contain the same Australian Standards number – AS4758 – printed somewhere on the jacket's label. This standard replaces old lifejackets sold in Australia before 2010 and those that contain soon-to-be-superseded Australian Standards numbers including AS1512, AS1499 and AS2260.

Why do we need to update our lifejackets?

In 2010, the Australian Standard for lifejackets was updated to Australian Standards number AS4758 in a bid to make lifejackets safer across the country. As of January 2021 that grace period is up and those who take to the water, must now comply.

What's the difference between the old and the new?

The new standard has to do with buoyancy. All lifejackets that comply with the new standard are indeed the most buoyant they have ever been – which also makes them the safest. The new lifejackets also abide by a new rating system.

The new lifejacket rating system explained.

Under the old system, depending on the level of flotation they provided, lifejackets were marked with either Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3. Under the new system, life jackets are rated according to how much buoyancy they provide, which is measured in Newtons. These Newtons are marked on the lifejackets in levels, including Level 150, Level 100, Level 50, and Level 50S.

Level 150: these lifejackets offer the best level of support and replace the old Type 1 jackets. They're best used for regular boaters who spend lots of time offshore in an array of weather conditions.

Level 100: these lifejackets also offer the best level of support and replace the old Type 1 jackets. They're best used for near-shore activities and enclosed waters closer to shore where the water conditions tend to be calmer.

Level 50: these replace the old Type 2 jackets. Because they don't offer any head support, they're recommended for smooth waters and are mainly good for kayaking and personal watercrafts like jet skis.

Keep in mind, lifejackets from Level 50 and below cannot be used as lifejackets on a boat because they don't provide the appropriate level of support needed for harsher water conditions.

Level 50S: these replace the old Type 3 jackets, and the 'S' stands for 'Special Purpose'. These jackets don't offer any head support and do not comply with colour requirements that make the wearer easier to spot in the water. Level 50S lifejackets should only be worn in smooth waters.

What makes the new lifejackets safer than the old?

Should you find yourself in trouble at sea, the new Australian Standard AS4758 lifejackets are more likely to keep you afloat in the water because they are super buoyant. To put things into perspective, the outdated PFD foam lifejackets under the old standard contained 87 Newtons, whereas the new Level 100 lifejackets contain 100 Newtons. This means with more buoyancy, if you do happen to fall into the water, you'll float higher and be more visible to others, increasing your chance of survival and safety.

How do I know if I need to update my lifejackets to comply?

The best way to get your head around the new changes is to inspect your lifejackets. If they're marked with either PDF Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3 they're outdated. These need to be updated immediately to lifejackets that are marked with the Australian Standards number – AS4758 – printed somewhere on the label and are either Level 150, Level 100, Level 50 or Level 50S.

How often should I update my lifejackets?

It's recommended that the average lifespan of a lifejacket is 10 years. It's suggested to buy new lifejackets every decade to ensure your safety while boating, but regardless of whether they're foam or inflatable, make sure they have the Australian Standards number – AS4758 – printed somewhere on the label.

Should I service my life jacket?

An important aspect of owning lifejackets is to regularly service them. At least twice a year. Inspect your lifejackets to make sure they're free of damage and are in proper working order. Some lifejackets may require a thorough check-over at an authorised service centre once a year. You can check the jacket's label to see if what is required for the type of lifejacket you own.

Why do I need to wear a lifejacket?

Lifejackets are the most important piece of safety equipment on any recreational vessel. An approved lifejacket must be carried for each person on board most vessels and must be the correct size for the wearer and in good working condition. Depending on your state laws, if you fail to carry or wear a lifejacket while boating, you could cop a hefty fine.

Protect your boat

Ensure to safeguard your vessel on and off the water by securing helpful insurance. [NRMA Boat Insurance](#) covers your boat anywhere in Australia against accidental damage, collision or crash, earthquake, explosion, fire, flood, storm, theft or attempted theft, tsunamis, vandalism or a malicious act.

But most importantly, ensure the safety of you and your loved ones when boating by always wearing a lifejacket and keeping safety at the top of mind.