



Changes to recreational vessel safety equipment requirements in WA

Frequently Asked Questions

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RECREATIONAL VESSEL SAFETY EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Why did DoT review the safety equipment required on recreational vessels in WA?

Safety equipment must be carried on recreational vessels as set out in the *Navigable Waters Regulations 1958* (the Regulations).

Since the Regulations were first drafted, they have only been updated as new types of vessels and equipment were introduced to the market. The last significant review of the Regulations, which looked at all recreational vessels and equipment, was conducted in 1992.

Since 1992 there has been significant changes on several fronts, such as:

- availability of improved statistical incident information;
- technological development and the introduction of new equipment to the market;
- new vessel types and increased popularity of water-based activities;
- other Australian states introducing mandatory wearing of lifejackets; and
- increasing globalisation in trade (international and interstate) and consequent use of national and international standards.

What was included in the review?

The review related to safety equipment requirements for recreational vessels only. Commercial vessels are regulated under Commonwealth laws.

Safety equipment considered as part of the review included:

- Lifesaving appliances (survival craft and aids to buoyancy such as lifejackets)
- Distress signals such as Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRB), Personal Locator Beacons (PLB), Electronic Visual Distress signals, flares, red parachute rockets and orange smoke signals.
- Communications (radios and distress signalling sheets)
- Navigation equipment (compasses and Global Positioning Systems)
- Equipment to extinguish or control fires.
- Miscellaneous equipment (including first aid, lighting, paddles, bilge pumps/bailers and anchors).

Was consultation undertaken as part of the review?

The Department of Transport (DoT) was committed to consultation as part of the review. An external reference group was formed and helped to guide the review, with representatives from various organisations with particular interests or expertise with particular vessel types, or from particular user groups with an interest in marine safety.

In March 2017, DoT released the *Recreational Vessel Safety Equipment Discussion Paper* and conducted an online survey to seek community input. More than 1,200 submissions were received. After careful consideration of the feedback, and consultation with the external reference group, DoT prepared a position paper detailing proposed changes to the safety equipment requirements for recreational vessels.

On 11 October 2019 the *Recreational Vessel Safety Equipment Position Paper* was released and triggered a second round of community consultation. During the 6-week consultation phase, DoT obtained feedback on 12 change proposals via an online survey which closed on 22 November 2019. To coincide with the release of the Position Paper, 9 community information sessions were held in metro and regional locations around the state.

Over 2200 people participated in the survey. DoT closely analysed the survey results and to further understand the survey response sentiment, also engaged consultants to facilitate a focus group session in November 2019.

What are the outcomes of the review?

The Recreational Vessel Safety Equipment Review Final Position Paper sets out 23 safety equipment changes to safety equipment requirements for recreational vessels. The position paper is available on the DoT website [Safety equipment review](#).

What are the changes?

The key change is the introduction of two sets of safety equipment requirements; one for registrable vessels and one for non-registrable vessels. This approach acknowledges the unique characteristics of different types of vessels and activities.

Will the wearing of lifejackets become mandatory in WA?

Yes, lifejacket wearing will be mandated in certain circumstances as follows:

- If you're on a registrable vessel less than 4.8 metres in length, operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters, you will need to wear a lifejacket with a minimum buoyancy of level 100 (type1) or
- If you're a child more than one year old but under the age of 12 you will be required to wear a lifejacket with a minimum buoyancy of level 100 (type 1) on any registrable vessel which is operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters.
- If you're operating a PWC you will need to wear a lifejacket with a minimum buoyancy of level 50s (type 3) in **all** waters.
- If you're on a non-registrable vessel less than 4.8 metres in length, operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters, you will need to wear a lifejacket with a minimum buoyancy of level 50s (type 3).
- If you're a child more than one year old but under the age of 12 you will be required to wear a lifejacket with a minimum buoyancy of level 50s (type 3) on any non-registrable vessel which is operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters.

What is a registrable vessel and a non-registrable vessel?

A registrable vessel is one that must be registered with DoT if they are in or are used in any navigable waters. They are any pleasure vessel (within the meaning of section 98 of the *Western Australian Marine Act 1982*), which is or may be propelled by mechanical power, including a vessel which is ordinarily propelled by sail only. These vessels are used wholly for recreational use or sporting activities and not for hire or reward.

Non-registrable vessels are not required to be registered with DoT. They include sailboards, kiteboards, non-motorised paddlecraft, tenders and sailing dinghies.

Stand-up paddleboards, non-motorised surfboards and boogie boards are not considered to be registrable or non-registrable vessels and therefore will continue not to be subject to any safety equipment requirements.

If you're unsure what category your vessels fits in, you can get advice by sending an email to safetysafetyequipmentreview@transport.wa.gov.au

Did the review affect people with personal watercraft, a canoe, or a windsurfer?

In conducting the review DoT did consider the application of safety equipment on all types of recreational vessels and activities and sought the specialist expertise represented on the External Reference Group and feedback during consultation activities.

Recreational vessels considered as part of the review included motorboats, personal water craft (jetskis), paddlecraft, sailing craft, paddle craft, hovercraft, submersibles, semi-submersibles, powered surf boards, sail boards / windsurfers and kite surfers.

I only use my boat on the river, or on lakes for waterskiing. Am I affected by the changes?

If you're on a registrable vessel you will now be required to carry enough lifejackets with a minimum buoyancy of level 100 (type1) lifejackets for each person on board in **all** waters. During consultation, the strengthening of current lifejacket carriage requirements was strongly supported.

The review assessed all safety equipment and the different ways and areas where it can be used, including in protected waters such as the river and lakes.

I paddle, wind surf and kite board, and safety equipment was only recently introduced for these activities. Will there be further changes as a result of the review?

During the review, the feedback from the paddling, kiting and wind surfing community was prominent, and DoT took their feedback on board. This feedback has resulted in very minor changes to current safety equipment requirements.

When will the new laws come into play?

This timeline is dependent on a number of factors and DoT will keep the community informed along the way.

Some of the new laws will have transitional periods, for example, 27 MHz radios will be phased out over five years.

Where can I get more information?

Further information can be obtained via DoT's website [Safety equipment review](#) or you can send an email to safetysafetyequipmentreview@transport.wa.gov.au