

## **GENERAL — Personal Flotation Device Updates (Housekeeping)**

### **What is being considered?**

The Department needs to update its regulations regarding personal flotation devices (PFDs). The United States Coast Guard has updated its labeling requirements for PFDs so that new PFDs no longer are solely identified by class (e.g., Class I, Class II, etc.). PFDs are now marked with new icons explaining the intended use. For now, that means that both new and old PFDs are in use, so the Department's regulations must recognize the possibility that either type of PFD may be onboard a vessel and meet the PFD requirements for the activity in which individuals are engaged.

### **Why is this change necessary?**

Department regulations currently require individuals to have certain types of flotation devices on board. The United States Coast Guard allows additional types of flotation devices. In order for those additional flotation devices to be acceptable under Maryland regulation, the Department must update its requirements. The Department previously discussed this idea but discovered additional conflicts with the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. During the 2025 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed [House Bill 719](#), which addressed the conflicts in the Annotated Code. That bill will be effective on October 1, 2025. Since those conflicts have been resolved, the Department is now beginning the process to resolve the conflicts in regulation.

### **Who will this affect?**

All boaters.

### **Additional Information**

[U.S. Coast Guard Information for Wearing PFDs](#)

### **When will this be effective?**

The Department anticipates that this change could be effective in the winter of 2025. The Department will follow our normal [procedures](#) if this topic moves forward.

### **Has this change been discussed with advisory bodies or other interested individuals?**

This concept was previously discussed both with the Boat Act Advisory Committee and with the public in 2022. There weren't any significant comments at that time. The Department was not able to proceed at that time due to conflicting provisions in the Natural Resources Article. Due to the passage of HB 719, those conflicts have been addressed, and the Department is starting the scoping process again because so much time has passed.