

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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16714/160.010/Gen

16714/160.027/Gen

July 1, 2015

To: Manufacturers of Coast Guard approved life float and rigid buoyant apparatus

Subj: PHASE-OUT OF LIFE FLOATS AND RIGID BUOYANT APPARATUS

In our letter dated April 6, 2011, we notified you that Section 609 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-281) added a new section 3104 to [Part B of 46 U.S. Code](#). Section 3104 prohibits the approval of survival craft unless that craft “ensures that no part of an individual is immersed in water” and allows craft currently in service that do not meet this standard to remain in service as approved survival craft only until January 1, 2015. In section 303 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-213), Congress directed the Coast Guard to submit a report on the carriage of survival craft that ensure no part of an individual is immersed in water, and to delay implementation of the elimination of survival craft that do not meet this standard until 30 months from the submission of the report. The Coast Guard submitted its report on August 26, 2013, making February 26, 2016, the date that existing survival craft that immerse any part of a body in water be replaced with survival craft that do not.

The Coast Guard has initiated a rulemaking (RIN 1625-AC19) to implement this statutory change, the effect of which is to phase out the approval and carriage of life floats and rigid buoyant apparatus in regulated applications. This statutory change does not affect inflatable buoyant apparatus, which meet the statutory requirement that survival craft do not immerse any part of an individual in water.

In the meanwhile, we have issued no new approvals for life floats and rigid buoyant apparatus, and existing approvals will expire on February 26, 2016.

Please feel free to contact me or Ms. Jacqi Yurkovich of my staff if you have any questions on this subject.

Sincerely,

B. A. BALDWIN
Chief, Lifesaving and Fire Safety Division
U. S. Coast Guard
By direction

Encl: Excerpts of P.L. 111-281 and P.L. 112-213
CG-ENG-4 Letter dated April 5, 2011

Copy: U.S. Marine Safety Association

Section 609 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-281)

Chapter 31 of title 46, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 3104. Survival craft

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary may not approve a survival craft as a safety device for purposes of this part, unless the craft ensures that no part of an individual is immersed in water.

(b) The Secretary may authorize a survival craft that does not provide protection described in subsection (a) to remain in service until not later than January 1, 2015, if—

- (1) it was approved by the Secretary before January 1, 2010; and
- (2) it is in serviceable condition.”

Section 303 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-213)

Section 3104 of title 46, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (b) by striking “January 1, 2015” and inserting “the date that is 30 months after the date on which the report described in subsection (c) is submitted”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Commandant of the Coast Guard shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on the carriage of survival craft that ensures no part of an individual is immersed in water, which shall include—

(1) the number of casualties, by vessel type and area of operation, as the result of immersion in water reported to the Coast Guard for each of fiscal years 1991 through 2011;

(2) the effect the carriage of such survival craft has on—

(A) vessel safety, including stability and safe navigation; and

(B) survivability of individuals, including persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly;

(3) the efficacy of alternative safety systems, devices, or measures;

(4) the cost and cost effectiveness of requiring the carriage of such survival craft on vessels; and

(5) the number of small businesses and nonprofit entities that would be affected by requiring the carriage of such survival craft on vessels.”

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16714/160.010/Gen.
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April 6, 2011

To: All Coast Guard approved life float and rigid buoyant apparatus manufacturers

Subj: PHASE-OUT OF LIFE FLOATS AND RIGID BUOYANT APPARATUS

Section 609 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-281) amended Title 46 of the United States Code by adding the following:

“§ 3104. Survival craft

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary may not approve a survival craft as a safety device for purposes of this part, unless the craft ensures that no part of an individual is immersed in water.

(b) The Secretary may authorize a survival craft that does not provide protection described in subsection (a) to remain in service until not later than January 1, 2015, if—

(1) it was approved by the Secretary before January 1, 2010; and

(2) it is in serviceable condition.”

The Coast Guard has initiated a rulemaking to implement this statutory change, the effect of which is to phase out the approval and carriage of life floats and rigid buoyant apparatus in regulated applications. In the meanwhile, we will not issue any new approvals for this equipment, or extend any existing approvals past January 1, 2015. By no later than January 1, 2015, vessels carrying life floats or rigid buoyant apparatus must remove them from the vessel and replace them with other approved survival craft. This statutory change does not affect inflatable buoyant apparatus, which meet the new requirement.

Please feel free to contact me or Ms. Jacqi Yurkovich of my staff if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K.J. HEINZ", written over the typed name and title.

K. J. HEINZ

Chief, Lifesaving and Fire Safety Division

U. S. Coast Guard

By direction

Encl: P.L. 111-281 excerpt

Copy: U.S. Marine Safety Association