

Contributors



Gord Woodward

Gord Woodward is based in Nanaimo and writes for a variety of magazines and websites. In *WorkSafe Magazine*, he has covered everything from ergonomics in truck cabs to safety motivation. In this edition, he speaks with Bruce Logan about PFD use in Ask an Officer.



Heather Allen

From the mostly sunny and always beautiful vistas of Penticton, writer, editor, and newspaper columnist Heather Allen speaks with her own municipality about preventing asbestos exposure (page 13).



Marnie Douglas

West Kelowna-based journalist, writer, and communications professional Marnie Douglas has written about a variety of subjects for *WorkSafe Magazine*, from exposure control plans to the Paralympics. In this edition, she writes about health and safety in Prince Rupert (page 17).



Helena Bryan

North Vancouver-based writer Helena Bryan has written for *WorkSafe Magazine* for more than a decade. In this edition, she writes about two important occupational hygiene issues: silica (page 23) and lead (page 25).

Ask an officer

A PFD can save your life. If you're on deck, put it on



Bruce Logan Occupational safety officer

Region: Richmond
Years on the job: 10

This month, WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer Bruce Logan answers questions about the importance of personal flotation devices (PFDs) in the fishing industry.

Q. I've crewed on boats for years and never had any problems. So why do I need a PFD?

A. It's a big mistake to take safety for granted. It may be that nothing has happened to you, yet. Fishing is an industry with many potential hazards and associated risks. From 2011 to 2015, 10 people in the industry in B.C. never made it home from work. Besides being a requirement under the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation, PFDs save lives. In September of 2015, the tragic sinking of the *Caledonian* off the West Coast of Vancouver Island claimed the lives of three fishermen. The one fisherman who survived was wearing a PFD.

Q. I'm the boat owner but hire a skipper to run it. Isn't the skipper responsible for crew safety?

A. It's not enough for you to just give the keys to the vessel master. Both owners and masters (skippers) of fishing vessels are employers and have varying and overlapping duties and responsibilities. Masters have the primary responsibility for the health and safety of the crew while the vessel is being operated, and while owners may have little or no direct control over the crew, owners still retain the responsibility of ensuring the crew's health and safety. It is the owner's responsibility, as well as the master's, to ensure that everyone on board is in compliance with the *Workers Compensation Act* and OHS Regulation.

Q. What type of PFD is recommended?

A. We leave it to you to determine the best PFD, as long as it meets a standard acceptable to WorkSafeBC. Keep in mind that it needs to fit you comfortably and allow you to move freely while you work. It's buoyancy rating must also be appropriate for your weight and size, and it must be worn correctly, either zipped up or tabs fastened.

Q. How do we check our PFDs to make sure they're working properly?

A. They have to be on board and in good working order before sailing, so check them before you leave the dock, and maintain them regularly. For inherently buoyant PFDs (vest or coat types), check for tears. Visibly worn or damaged PFDs should be taken out of service. For maintaining inflatable PFD's, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Inflate them from time to time with the tube provided, to ensure there are no leaks in the bladder. Co² cartridges in inflatable PFDs will have an expiry date (usually five years) but always make sure the cartridge is good to go — auto-inflate PFDs have a colour-coded button that will show green if good to go and red if not.

Q. We rely on FishSafe for advice on PFDs. Aren't FishSafe and WorkSafeBC the same?

A. No. FishSafe is the industry safety association, which was set up with funding through WorkSafeBC. They provide a forum for industry stakeholders to discuss safety issues. They also provide on-the-ground assistance to certain fisheries, such as coordinating training and conducting emergency drills. FishSafe collaborates with us but has no regulatory authority.

WorkSafeBC is the provincial regulator. Our job is to ensure employers and workers in the fishing industry are in compliance with the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health

“It is the owner’s responsibility, as well as the master’s [or skipper’s], to ensure that everyone on board is in compliance with the *Workers Compensation Act* and OHS Regulation.”

—Bruce Logan, WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer

and Safety Regulation. We conduct inspections and have enforcement responsibilities. Where orders are written, owners and masters can contact FishSafe for assistance with compliance, but WorkSafeBC officers will make the determination as to whether compliance has been achieved.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. OHS regulations for the fishing industry can be found under Part 8 (Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment) and Part 24 (Diving, Fishing, and Other Marine Operations). You can also check out the booklet we produced in collaboration with FishSafe called *Gearing Up for Safety: Safe Work Practices for Commercial Fishing in B.C.* You'll also find safety pamphlets on the following topics on worksafebc.com:

- PFDs and lifejackets
- PFDs and lifejacket selection
- PFDs and lifejacket care and maintenance
- Immersion suits
- Commercial fishing personal protective equipment

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions? Send them to us at worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com, and we'll consider them for our next Ask an Officer feature. ☺

WorkSafeBC Prevention officers cannot and do not provide advice on specific cases or issues referenced in this article. WorkSafeBC and *WorkSafe Magazine* disclaim responsibility for any reliance on this information, which is provided for readers' general education only. For more specific information on Prevention matters, contact the WorkSafeBC Prevention Line at 604.276.3100 or toll-free at 1.888.621.7233.