

Three pieces of safety equipment a fool never has, uses or tests on board their Vessel

Safety on board a boat is a big subject, and should be at the front of all skippers minds. There is a lot of discussion on the web and in the real world about what safety equipment should be carried and tested when on a boat. There are many pieces of safety equipment that should defiantly be carried when on board a recreational boat, and these pieces of equipment are exceptionally worth while paying for as they can extremely increase your chances of survival in a marine distress situation.

The following are the three pieces of equipment, that i think every non-commercial vessel should carry, use and test:

1. A Vhf radio - Every boat should have at least a handheld VHF radio on board (it amazes me still that so many vessels go out onto the water without a radio, these can be a big lifesaver if used properly). But it would be allot better to have a built in VHF radio connected up to a Navigation system (eg. Garmin) when done like this there is usually a distress button and if registered with the coastguard (they will take details like your mmsi number from your navigation system, description of vessel, vessel name, vessel owner etc) you only have to press this button and the coastguard is immediately informed of your position, what boat and what other information they know about your vessel. But a this built in VHF radio can be used in the normal way, with mayday's and others marine distress calls. A VHF radio is a really important piece of safety equipment, and should be checked at the start of every journey/cruise, this can easily be done by contacting your closest coastguard via your radio and requesting a radio check if they receive the call and reply then your radio is all working and you are good to go.

2. A lifejacket - This is a vitally important piece of equipment, just as important if not more, as a VHF radio! This is such a big subject for safety at sea, there are so many different types, manual and automatic, with different pressure levels (measured in newtons, the higher the newton pressure the more buoyant the life jacket) if you are boater and frequently go out on a boat you should without a doubt have a life jacket that fits and has the right newton level for you! If you don't have one and wear it you are a Fool! Lifejackets are usually sold with pressure levels of the following, 150N, 190N and 275N. The 150N is for younger, smaller or lighter people. The New 190N is the one i have, and is the perfect lifejacket for most, these are also very good if you have a drysuit as it is recommend to have a higher Newton jacket to give more buoyancy. The 250N is mainly for commercial vessels and is used mostly on oil rigs and their staff/workers, who are frequently carrying heavy objects, wearing heavy baggy clothes and in treacherous, rough waters. The lifejacket is one of the most basic pieces of safety equipment and has been around and saved many lives for years.

Warning: a lifejacket will only save your life, if you wear it!

3. A navigation system - I mentioned this piece of equipment earlier. A good navigation system is not necessary and is not a piece of safety equipment but can be very helpful and save a lot of time in a distress situation, as it can reliably and quickly give you your exact position and if connected to your VHF radio it can be a lifesaver when needing to alert the coastguard of your distress when in a situation when you need to abandon ship quickly. When you leave your port, marina or where ever, the sea may be clear of fog and clouds, but it can soon drop down on top of you and you will not know where you are or what u can do, this is where your Navigation system comes in (you should have a back up, hand held GPS to) if you turn it on when you leave your starting position it will leave a track on

the map on the screen and you can easily, efficiently and safely turn around and follow your track back.