

## Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

# Personal Flotation Device

## Life Jacket Fit

### Does Your Life Jacket Really Fit?

- How do you know if a life jacket really fits you? First, check the label to make sure the life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard approved. Life jackets (or PFDs) come in a couple of basic sizes: infant, child, and adult. Within those basic sizes, there will be a range (Small, Medium, Large, etc.) of sizes. The label will indicate the basic size and the size range, which will include a weight range and usually also a chest size range. After you check the label, make sure you move on to the second step, try it on! Before every boating season, try on your life jacket. Make sure that it fits correctly. What does a correct fit mean? It should be snug, but not tight. Lift your arms over your head, can you turn your head left, right, and over your shoulder or has the life jacket ridden up and is in the way of moving your head? For a child, have them stand with their arms to their sides. Lift the life jacket up by the shoulders. The life jacket should not move more than 3 inches, no higher than the child's ears. If the life jacket does move up more than 3 inches, it is too big and the child can slip right out—get a smaller life jacket! A younger child's life jacket should also include a crotch strap—this will help insure the life jacket stays on. Finally, practice using the life jacket in shallow water. Make sure it is snug enough to stay put and not ride up over the chin and ears when in shallow water. Have children practice in shallow water with their life jacket so they don't panic in case of emergency.