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FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC
TO AIG 4901
AIG 4909
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SUBJ: INFLATABLE PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE (PFD) SAFETY ADVISORY (PPE 001/14)

A. Coast Guard Rescue and Survival Systems Manual, COMDTINST M10470.10(series)

B. U.S. Coast Guard Boat Operations and Training Manual Vol II, COMDTINST M16114.33A

C. Boatcrew Seamanship Manual, COMDTINST M16114.5C

1. PURPOSE. This message raises field awareness of differences between inflatable PFDs types, training required to wear inflatable PFDs and unit consideration.

2. BACKGROUND.

A. During two recent PIW cases, PFDs did not automatically inflate upon the members entry into the water although both PFDs were found to be properly functioning.

B. Inflatable PFDs with automatic inflation systems authorized in Ref A will either inflate after triggering a hydrostatic valve or a dissolving pill. The authorized Mustang PFDs are the only ones to employ the hydrostatic inflator valve. All other authorized PFDs with a manual/automatic inflation systems use the dissolving pill.

3. DISCUSSION.

For PFDs with the hydrostatic inflation valve, the inflator must be submerged at a constant depth of at least 4 inches for 2 to 10 seconds to activate. The activation time varies due to residual air in bladder, aeration in water, and how the PFD was packed. These variables could lengthen the time or depth needed to automatically inflate the PFD. Testing shows the deeper the hydrostatic valve is submerged, the quicker the automatic inflation occurs.

4. ACTION.

A. Unit Officers in Charge should evaluate the pros and cons of each PFD type and determine which type best suits your units operations.

B. CONDUCT REFRESHER TRAINING: Ref B and C require the completion of PFD specific PQS prior to wearing inflatable vests. All units with inflatable PFDs shall conduct refresher training with all personnel authorized to wear an inflatable PFD. This training shall include characteristic of the PFD, modes of inflation and actions to take if the PFD does not inflate.

C. PULL LANYARD UPON WATER ENTRY: Any time a member enters the water with an inflatable PFD, the first and immediate action shall be to pull the manual cord to activate, whether they are automatic or manual.

D. REPORTING NON-INFLATION: When Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) does not operate as expected, units should contact CG-731 immediately and isolate the gear for further evaluation. Units should refrain from attempting to troubleshoot the item without guidance from

program or the manufacturer. When reporting MISHAPS involving potential PPE failures, include the make and model of the PFD in the MISHAP report.

5. ADMIN. A copy of this message shall be maintained in front of Ref A.

6. POC: CWO Don Slowik, 202 372 2459, Donald.j.slowik(at)uscg.mil.

7. Internet release is not authorized.

8. CAPT T. C. Wiemers, Chief, Office of Boat Forces, sends.

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