

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

U.S. Coast Guard (CG-5214)  
2100 Second St. S.W. Stop 7126  
Washington, DC 20593-7126  
Phone: (202) 372-1392  
FAX: (202) 372-1924  
E-mail: Kurt.J.Heinz@uscg.mil  
<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg5214/>

16714/160.010/Gen.  
16714/160.027/Gen.  
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

**“§ 2117. Termination for unsafe operation**

“An individual authorized to enforce this title—

“(1) may remove a certificate required by this title from a vessel that is operating in a condition that does not comply with the provisions of the certificate;

“(2) may order the individual in charge of a vessel that is operating that does not have on board the certificate required by this title to return the vessel to a mooring and to remain there until the vessel is in compliance with this title; and

“(3) may direct the individual in charge of a vessel to which this title applies to immediately take reasonable steps necessary for the safety of individuals on board the vessel if the official observes the vessel being operated in an unsafe condition that the official believes creates an especially hazardous condition, including ordering the individual in charge to return the vessel to a mooring and to remain there until the situation creating the hazard is corrected or ended.

**“§ 2118. Establishment of equipment standards**

“(a) In establishing standards for approved equipment required on vessels subject to part B of this title, the Secretary shall establish standards that are—

“(1) based on performance using the best available technology that is economically achievable; and

“(2) operationally practical.

“(b) Using the standards established under subsection (a), the Secretary may also certify lifesaving equipment that is not required to be carried on vessels subject to part B of this title to ensure that such equipment is suitable for its intended purpose.

“(c) At least once every 10 years the Secretary shall review and revise the standards established under subsection (a) to ensure that the standards meet the requirements of this section.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“2117. Termination for unsafe operation.

“2118. Establishment of equipment standards.”

**SEC. 609. APPROVAL OF SURVIVAL CRAFT.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—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.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following:

“3104. Survival craft.”

Deadline.  
Review.

46 USC 2101.

46 USC 3101.