

**Information sheet from the  
Emergency Sea Rescue Equipment Trade Federation (FSR)  
recommending lifespan timescales for inflatable and  
foam filled lifejackets and buoyancy aids**



**Status: September 2010**

**Inflatable lifejackets:**

The service life of a lifejacket must be limited by the very fact that materials degrade. These statistics are recommended and supplied by all FSR members as there are also legal reasons such as product liability and Health and Safety regulations that stipulate there must be a maximum lifespan during which the product is supported by the supplier. The lifespan of an inflatable lifejacket is thus limited to ten years.

Linked to this ten year period is the regular servicing of the device in periods of no more than two years and is strongly recommended for all lifejackets used in leisure boating. All products produced by members of the FSR have service interval discs fitted to show the month and year of the next service.

Servicing should be undertaken by the supplier or an authorized service station and can be recognized by the affixing of a new service interval sticker on the disc showing the next due service date. Commercial and Industrial use lifejackets may require more constant servicing depending on use but should be pre-agreed with contractors and the Safety Executive.

The standard two year service is only available up until the ninth year, thereafter it may only be serviced for another (10<sup>th</sup>) year.

After ten years the service disc may be updated annually but only by the supplier or his agent up to a maximum of 14 years. From the age of ten years, it is important that lifejackets should be removed from service on safety grounds because of the possibility of delamination of the fabrics and flotation bladder leading to porosity and failure. Other environmental conditions may have also played their part in the degradation of all parts of the product such as the inflation mechanism etc.

**Foam Filled Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aids:**

The maximum lifespan of a foam-filled lifejacket or buoyancy aid for leisure boating is ten years. This type of product is all but maintenance free, however an annual visual inspection is recommended. All damage to the material (eg: tears, abrasion, cuts in the cloth or webbing, colour change or damage to the buckles) that would affect the buoyancy (such as overheating, UV sun damage, incorrect storage or use), can lead to a life threatening reduction in safety offered by the product. All such products should be removed from service. If in doubt, contact your dealer, a certified service centre or directly to the supplier.

SOLAS foam filled lifejackets and those for commercial use are regulated to have a shorter lifespan and correspondingly shorter inspection intervals. In certain circumstances, an FSR service interval disc can be supplied with definitive inspection times. For more details contact your authorized dealer or supplier.