

NATIONAL BOATING SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**April 4 – 6, 2009
Grand Bohemian Hotel
Orlando, Florida**

Resolution Number 2009-83-01

Requesting the U.S. Coast Guard work cooperatively with stakeholders to devise and implement within 3 years an improved regulatory approach to the testing and approval of personal flotation devices including life jackets

WHEREAS, the U.S. Coast Guard in its recently released *Marine Safety Performance Plan for FY 2009-2014*, established a number of objectives that directly relate to the design, approval and market for life jackets; AND

WHEREAS, Objective 1.1 of the *Performance Plan* calls on the Coast Guard to increase life jacket wear rates by working aggressively with its partners to assess factors affecting life jacket usage; AND

WHEREAS, Objective 3.2 - promote lifesaving innovation - of the *Performance Plan* committed the U.S. Coast Guard to develop performance-based lifesaving equipment standards that encourage innovation, and the development of new lifesaving devices that can be approved for a variety of applications; AND

WHEREAS, Objective 3.2 further committed the USCG to evaluate existing standards to identify industry segments needing non-traditional equipment, identify methods for alternative equipment standards that address gaps, and to further develop partnerships with manufacturers to promote innovative equipment, testing regimes, and standards development; AND

WHEREAS, The Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program sets a Program goal of increasing voluntary life jacket wear, and specifically increasing the observed adult life jacket wear-rate in open motorboats by 3% from the previous year's observed life jacket wear-rate, with the FY 2006 wear-rate at 4.5% and the FY 2007 target at 4.63%; AND

WHEREAS, There are significant concerns in the life jacket manufacturing and boating safety communities that the current life jacket approval process acts as an impediment for manufacturers to promptly, efficiently, and economically bring to market innovative and attractive designs required by boaters AND

WHEREAS, If these concerns are addressed, the voluntary wear rate of life jackets could be increased; AND

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WHEREAS, Currently there is only one U.S. Coast Guard approved organization that oversees the life jacket standards; and this organization also conducts initial product approval testing and conducts the extensive required follow up testing; **AND**

WHEREAS, This is an opportune moment to move to a consolidated North American Standard with the intent to harmonize with international standards so that each life jacket design would have a larger potential market and therefore provide an incentive for manufacturers to invest capital in new innovative designs; **AND**

WHEREAS, existing terminology in life jacket labeling results in confusion by the boating public and should be clarified and simplified as a component of any new process.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Boating Safety Advisory Council, meeting in regular session in Orlando, Florida on April 6, 2009 does hereby request the U.S. Coast Guard to develop a new program for life jacket design approval and follow up quality control to reduce barriers and enhance opportunities for life jacket innovation.


AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Coast Guard in developing this new program should:

1. Establish a workgroup by May 29, 2009 comprised of life jacket and component manufacturers, boating and boating safety organizations, and boating industry trade associations to advise and assist the U.S. Coast Guard in completing the following tasks:
 - a. Transition to a new consolidated North American standard that takes into account international standards by forming an ANSI compliant committee overseen by a standards development organization with extensive experience in developing and maintaining international and national marine standards by July 31, 2009.
 - b. Separate the standards development organization from the authorized testing laboratories by May 30, 2010.
 - c. Create a new process for certification and testing to ensure the continued safety of life jackets while providing enhanced opportunities for innovation, affordability, wearability, and use by May 30, 2010.
2. Provide more flexibility for the qualification of multiple organizations or businesses for initial and follow-up testing to facilitate expediting innovative products to market and enable competitive price structures for the entire product lifecycle by May 30, 2011.

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3. Modernize compliance and quality control processes to be more cost-effective and efficient by May 30, 2012. The Coast Guard should also consider the use of industry certification or ISO 9000 as an accepted quality control process.
4. Report on the Coast Guard's progress toward achieving these objectives at each NBSAC meeting until complete.


James P. Muldoon, Chairman
National Boating Safety Advisory Council