

Safety Report

Lifejackets – Not Just Ornaments!

(The following is a summary of three marine incidents where people lost their lives unnecessarily)

Narrative

Incident 1 – in 2001, a 55 year old male person fell overboard from a tinnie which was on a dam in western Queensland. The master of the tinnie turned to recover the person who fell overboard, but capsized the vessel in the process. Both started swimming to shore, but the passenger disappeared, and drowned. **The victim was not wearing a lifejacket.**

Incident 2 – in 2002, a recreational vessel capsized whilst negotiating the Wide Bay Bar. The 69 year old male master drowned. His 60 year old female passenger survived, being picked up by another passing boat a short time later. **The victim, who was a non-swimmer, was not wearing a lifejacket. The survivor was wearing a lifejacket.**

Incident 3 - in 2003, a 51 year old male occupant of a tinnie on a dam in central Queensland fell overboard and drowned. **The victim, described as a poor swimmer, was not wearing a lifejacket.**

Lessons

- 1. The lesson from this report is very clear. THESE PEOPLE DID NOT NEED TO DIE. If they had been wearing a lifejacket, they would have survived.**
- 2. Lifejackets should not be considered a boat accessory that gets stowed and forgotten. Wear them at all times, regardless of your swimming ability – you never know when an unforeseen circumstance might place you suddenly in the water.**
- 3. Whilst many people consider lifejackets too bulky and uncomfortable for all-time use, there are many life preservers on the market which can be easily and comfortably worn. However, the use of many of these life preservers does not preclude carrying the approved types of Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs).**
- 4. Contact your local MSQ office, or refer to the Queensland Boating Safety Handbook for information on the correct type of PFD required for the use of your vessel.**

Safety Reports are prepared by the Investigations Unit, Executive Services and Compliance Branch, Maritime Safety Queensland. Safety reports are intended to draw the attention of the marine community to the lessons arising out of investigations into marine accidents. Consequently, the reports do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability.

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