



Approved Lifejackets

After making sure you have a good boat and the crew has appropriate training and experience, the next highest priority for safety is to stay on the boat. And the most basic and most important way to ensure that is the lifejacket, safety harness, and tether. The lifejacket has to work in offshore conditions and needs to be comfortable when worn for long periods of time. Boats and crews just need to get this right.

The OSRs and Vic-Maui Appendix A to the Notice of Race are quite clear on the requirements to get it right.

One the boats reading the Offshore Special Regulations came to the conclusion that the existing Mustang lifejackets that many crew already owned did not meet the requirements that call for certification to the ISO 12402-3 level 150 standard. The owner was preparing to buy a bunch of the fancy Spinlock lifejackets that everyone covets, but balked at the price tag and asked the Technical Committee for clarification.

But the Vic-Maui modifications to the Offshore Special Regulations state that lifejackets certified to the North American UL 1180 and the British EN 396 standards are acceptable, even if manufactured after 2011.

A check of the crew's existing lifejackets showed that they indeed had certification to the UL 1180 standard with Transport Canada modifications, had the required 150 N (33.7 lbs) of buoyancy, and incorporated an integral safety harness. Thus a big expenditure was saved and the owner could splurge on more interesting things like spinnakers.

A point to note: Lifejackets are also required to be equipped with crotch straps, spray hood, position indicating light, and a whistle. But these items do not have to be integral with the lifejacket and can be added to the basic set up. And don't forget to add the AIS crew overboard beacon.

And don't forget that the skipper needs to certify that they have personally checked each lifejacket (including a Vic-Maui strongly recommended a 4 hour air holding test).