

VESSEL INSPECTION BULLETIN 01-09

1. BACKGROUND:

In reviewing recent inspection reports from NOAA's small boat fleet, a common thread of discrepancies with personal flotation device (PFD) light batteries is prevalent. PFD lights that are powered with removable disposable batteries were initially tested with a specific type of battery during the Coast Guard approval process. This ensures that the light will meet minimum performance standards required by the specification.

2. DISCUSSION:

Current commercial vessel regulations regarding the change intervals of lifesaving equipment batteries were written prior to the availability of lithium batteries. After researching PFD light USCG Certificates of Approval and speaking with the PFD light manufacturers, the choices for types of batteries and their use is discussed below.

3. ACTION:

Install alkaline batteries in the PFD lights and record the date in the vessel lifesaving equipment maintenance log and replace all of them annually no more than 1 year from that date, OR

Install lithium batteries in the PFD lights and record the date in the vessel lifesaving equipment maintenance log. They can be in service no longer than 5 years from installation and in no case past the expiry of the battery which ever comes first.

4. SUMMARY:

VOC's must decide to either use alkaline or lithium batteries on the vessel. Mixing alkaline batteries and lithium batteries in the PFD lights are prohibited. This would cause a logistics nightmare of tracking each PFD light. If no dates were recorded when the batteries were installed, a requirement will be issued to replace the batteries and record the date of installation. The use of rechargeable batteries in PFD lights is also prohibited as there are no USCG Certificates of Approval that include their suitability for use.

5. REFERENCES:

ACR Electronics tech support, CG Approval number 162.012/36/0 and 162.012/41/0