



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations
Marine Operations Center
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VESSEL INSPECTION BULLETIN 04-10

Guidance for the inspection and testing of immersion suits

1. BACKGROUND:

NOAA has an extensive inventory of cold water immersion suits used throughout the small boat fleet. These suits require maintenance and inspection aside from the annual inspections conducted by the small boat inspection program.

2. DISCUSSION:

Since NOAA does not have a separate maintenance and inspection policy regarding immersion suits, this bulletin provides the necessary references to adequately maintain and test immersion suits used aboard NOAA small boats.

3. ACTION:

Effective immediately, all immersion suits used for the NOAA small boat program shall be inspected and maintained in accordance with U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Inspection Circular (NVIC) 01-08. This NVIC specifies discretionary air testing every 3 years on suits less than 10 years old and more frequently as per manufacturer's specifications on suits greater than 10 years old. The suits must be tested by an authorized facility. VOC's shall contact the immersion suit manufacturer to locate an authorized facility.

All immersion suits used aboard NOAA small boats shall be tested at least once on or prior to the 10th year anniversary from the date of manufacture stamped on the suit or prior to that date if the VOC feels the suit condition is questionable.

To further clarify this NVIC, immersion suits greater than 10 years old shall be mandatorily tested at intervals not greater than 3 years unless deemed necessary to test more frequently. Due to the cost of testing, some VOC's may opt for suit replacement if more frequent testing is required due to questionable suit condition.

Records shall be kept of all immersion suit tests for presentation at annual inspections.

4. SUMMARY:

Immersion suits are the last line of defense for personnel in an emergency. As history has proven, if they are not properly maintained they will fail at the crucial time of need.

5. REFERENCES:

- a. [USCG Navigation and Inspection Circular 01-08](#)
- b. Title 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (46 CFR) Parts 28, and 199.
- c. International Maritime Organization (IMO), Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) Circulars 1047 and 1114.



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