



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

Guidance

Safety Bulletin 16: PFDs and retrofitting of PLBs

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The MCA has been alerted to a potential safety issue surrounding the retrospective fitting of Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) into Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs). The concerns surround both suitability and functionality.

Summary of issue

In August 2020, the MCA was made aware of a potential safety issue regarding the retrofitting of PLBs into PFDs.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some users may not be considering the advice and guidance of both the PFD manufacturer and the PLB manufacturer when retrofitting PLBs into PFDs.

As a result there is potential that the functionality of both the PFD and the PLB could be compromised. This could have a negative effect on the safety benefits of these items of Lifesaving Apparatus.

This applies both to commercial and recreational users where the PLB has been fitted retrospectively into a PFD.

Actions to take

- Check and ensure that the PLB is approved for compatibility by the PFD manufacturer and, when fitting the PLB to the PFD, you follow the official guidance of the PFD manufacturers.
- If you have already fitted a PLB to a PFD, check that you have followed the PFD manufacturer's official guidance when doing so.
- Ensure you follow the PLB manufacturer's user instructions and self-test regime
- If in any doubt, contact the PFD manufacturer or their approved service agent (for both the PFD and PLB) for advice.

Further information

Equipment manufacturers or manufacturer approved service agents should be contacted for further information.

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