

## Saved by the Jacket!

Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
Subject: The importance of wearing a lifejacket (PFD)  
Theme: Lifejackets can prevent drownings, but only if you wear them.  
Goal: For students to understand the importance of wearing a lifejacket

### Objectives:

- Students will understand the importance of wearing a life jacket.
- Students will wear life jackets correctly.
- Students will identify items on a boat that could be used to help save lives.

### Background:

- Drowning can occur within 20-60 seconds.
- Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental deaths for children 14 years old and younger.
- A drowning person cannot yell or wave for help and they will look like they are splashing and playing in the water.
- Two out of three drowning victims had no intention of going into the water.
- Most drowning victims had a life jacket available, but did not wear it.
- Most boating fatalities are not the result of a collision, but victims unexpectedly entering the water as a result of a fall or capsized.
- Most fatalities involve boats that are less than 16 feet in length.
- Lifejackets are required in Arizona and Nevada for children 12 years old and younger.
- Items on board a boat can be used to rescue an individual in the water.

Activities: Sink Fast (see summary for description)  
We're Going Boating (see summary for description)

Key points: *Saved By The Jacket* stories

- Wearing a life jacket correctly is very important.
- Items on board a boat can be used to rescue someone in the water.
- Life jackets are required in Arizona and Nevada for children 12 years old
- and younger.

Each set of duffel bags contain the following items to be used in conjunction with the Water Safety Education programs:

- four life jackets (one adult size/three child size)
- one PFD Type IV throwable (cushion)
- one PFD TYPE IV throwable (ring)
- one rescue throw rope
- one cooler
- one towel

- one inflatable toy ring
- one stopwatch

Please be sure to keep the items together with the correct duffel.

**Other things to take with you to the programs:**

- Copy of your requested schedule
- Water safety education teacher evaluations
- Water safety education booklets (one for each student)
- Pencils or rulers (one for each student)

Summary of one way to do **Saved by the Jacket!**

Water safety education program  
submitted by Ellen Anderson  
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When I arrive to the classroom, I let the teacher know that I need to make a big open space for the students to sit on the floor. It usually means that desks and chairs need to be moved out of the way. After getting permission from the teacher, I instruct the students on where they need to move their desks.

Once everyone is sitting on the floor, I introduce myself, NPS mission, etc. and ask them what are their favorite summer activities at Lake Mead? They will most likely mention a water related activities. I tell them that I'm here today, because I'm concerned about their safety while they're enjoying the water activities available at the lake.

A few years ago at Boulder Beach swim area a 14-year-old boy drowned because he was not wearing a life jacket. He jumped off a raft to try a get a paddle that had dropped into the water. Most drownings at Lake Mead are due to people not wearing a life jacket.

These are the background facts that I use in this program:

1. Drowning can occur within 20-60 seconds.
2. Most drownings occur within 10-15 feet from safety.
3. Two out of three drowning victims had no intention of going into the water.
4. Most drowning victims had a PFD (life jacket) available, but did not wear it.
5. Items on board a boat can be used to rescue an individual in the water.

I begin by asking the question: If you were going boating, what kinds of things would you want to take with you? Of all the items mentioned, what do you think is the most important? *Lifejackets*

**SINK FAST**

I choose a few volunteers to get inside an imaginary boat that is in front of the class. I place enough lifejackets on the floor in front of them so everyone has one. I do not want them to put the life jackets on yet. We pretend that they're out on the lake and we notice that a storm is approaching. I mention that they're trying to get back to the launch ramp before the storm hits, but the waves are too big and suddenly the boat turns over. Depending on the class, sometimes I actually have the students that are not in the imaginary boat wave their arms like waves on the lake!

At the count of three, I tell them to put on their life jackets as fast as they can because the boat is sinking fast! I begin timing them to see just how quickly they can get on their life jackets. The students enjoy the game and the physical activity. After everyone has calmed down, I mention how funny this activity seems in the classroom, but situations like this have happened at Lake Mead and they have resulted in drownings. It only takes between 20-60 seconds for someone to drown. How long did it take them to put on their life jackets? What could they have done differently to prevent a possible drowning? Stress the importance of wearing a life jacket when on a boat at Lake Mead NRA. Either share a story about a drowning at Lake Mead due to a victim not wearing a lifejacket or share a story from the book *Saved By The Jacket*.

### **WE'RE GOING BOATING**

Ask four students to pretend they are going boating at Lake Mead. Have them come to the front of the class and sit them down in a space that will be an imaginary boat. Ask the class for a few ideas of items that they like to take with them when boating at the lake. Be sure to include some of the stuff from the duffel bags, especially the life jackets, throwable, and cooler. The students will mention other things such as gameboys, radios, etc.

When loading the boat, I always intentionally *do not put enough* life jackets for everyone. Now we're ready and the day is looking great for a boat trip. I instruct someone in the boat to point out a leak in the boat and the boat begins to sink quickly. Give all the students in the boat a few seconds to grab their life jackets and put them on fast! Since there are not enough life jackets to go around then the students will usually grab for some of the other items. That's o.k. There is usually a lot of laughter and wildness as the students scramble around. After everyone has grabbed something, then we discuss what each person grabbed and how it may or may not be the best thing. For example, if one student grabbed a life jacket that doesn't fit him/her, demonstrate how that life jacket didn't work for that student.

After we go around the group to check all the life jackets, I then mention the cooler. This little cooler probably wouldn't keep someone floating, but bigger coolers may float. Years ago, a family was boating at Lake Mead and the boat was sinking. The only person that survived was an uncle who was found clinging to a cooler. No one in the family was wearing a life jacket. Although a life jacket is required for everyone on board a boat, it can only save your life if you wear it!

### **SAVED BY THE JACKET**

Share a story or two from the *Saved By The Jacket* book or from situations that have happened at Lake Mead and discuss the importance of wearing a lifejacket.

When I give the Water Safety Education programs it never fails that I meet students who have had near drowning experiences. Occasionally students have had family members drown. A few years ago I spoke with a student who was at Boulder Beach when there was a drowning.

It definitely opened my eyes to the importance of what we do. Any of these students could be the next drowning victim at Lake Mead NRA. Our safety education programs can save lives. Please give these students your very best effort.