

*Updated June 7, 2021:*

## **COVID-19 Virus: Cleaning & Storing your Life Jackets**

**Our understanding of the risks of the COVID-19 virus being transmitted from the surface of a life jacket continues to evolve. Always refer to the CDC website for up-to-date guidance.**

### **UPDATE:**

On 7-May-2021, recent changes were summarized [Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission | CDC](#) and that summary refers to the following; on 5-April-2021 the CDC has released revised language and recommendations relating to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19:

“The virus that causes COVID-19 can land on surfaces. It’s possible for people to become infected if they touch those surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes. In most situations, the [risk of infection from touching a surface is low](#). The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to [regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer](#).”

While the apparent danger of transmission from surfaces (fomite transmission) has been reviewed by the CDC and is thought to be very low, little of the CDC recommendations for cleaning have changed. Further, there are not disinfectants [List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | US EPA](#) listed for laundering that are clearly appropriate for cleaning of life jackets.

Key items remain clear:

- Emphasize regular handwashing, social distancing, and mask wearing to all device users, since the primary transmission is through respiratory droplets.
- Have a plan for your organization to isolate and clean devices (and facilities) that are exposed to COVID-19.
- Routinely clean shared devices.

If you think your product has been exposed to a virus, clean as recommended (see below) and let dry in a warm, low humidity environment. The risk of fomite (from surfaces) transmission from any surface is minor after 3 days (72 hours).

Manufacturer’s recommendations for cleaning your Personal Flotation Device (PFD):

### **CLEANING AND STORING YOUR LIFE JACKET/PFD:**

- Hand wash or sponge with gloved hands - wash as hot as possible (< 60C/140F) to disrupt the virus.
  - For inflatable devices, take care not to submerge the inflator - or disarm the device in accordance with your manufacturer’s instructions prior to cleaning.

- Rinse your PFD with clean water and hang to dry on a plastic coat hanger.
- Do not dry-clean, use chlorine bleach, or apply direct heat.
- Store your fully dried PFD in a warm, dry, well ventilated place out of direct sunlight.
- Ideally dry the device for 72 hours before reuse as any virus is likely to expire in that time.

If you *must reuse* your product within 72 hours, the following precautionary guidance is suggested:

- Buckles, zippers, other hardware and hook/loop fasteners (e.g. Velcro®) are hard to clean due to crevasses and metal/plastic construction.
- Using a 60 - 90% solutions of alcohol sprayed/wetted on these components is acceptable.
- Ensuring complete drying is critical, heated air drying is encouraged < 60C.
- Avoid spraying or immersing life jackets with specific disinfectants that can be detrimental to the fabric (e.g. bleach-based products).
- Do not machine launder life jackets.

This pandemic is a continuing challenge and it is still not clear how effectively the virus is transmitted from surfaces, although the risk from surface transmission seems much lower than initially feared.

**DISCLAIMER:** *Remember it is not possible to carry out or guarantee complete disinfection, the goal is to minimize risk.*