



## GEAR OF THE YEAR

### Staying safe without spending a small fortune

**P**ractical Sailor began the year with a look at results from the 2005 Crew Overboard Retrieval Symposium, a four-day event on San Francisco Bay, which involved 115 people in 15 boats. Results from that test revealed the West Marine Lifesling 2 (\$100, [www.westmarine.com](http://www.westmarine.com)) as the most useful aid. That event prompted our own test of throw bags (May 2006), which rated the West Marine Deluxe throw bag (\$66) best.

We also conducted two lifejacket tests: one for youths weighing from 50 to 90 pounds, and a second that tested life vests for infants (under 30 pounds) and toddlers (30-50 pounds). Among the lifejackets for youths, only two really stood out in terms of comfort, fit, and buoyancy. The Stearns 3630 (\$50, [eangler.com](http://eangler.com))

and the Mustang MV3160's (\$60, [www.westmarine.com](http://www.westmarine.com)) earned our top picks. The Stearns was the only one with reflective tape, while the Mustang featured a lifting strap at the collar. Among the Infant and toddler PFDs, the MTI Bay Bee 201 (\$35, [www.mtiadventurewear.com](http://www.mtiadventurewear.com)) was a clear favorite. It featured an oversized YKK zipper, secure lifting straps, and a comfortable collar.

#### CONTACTS

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*MTI Bay Bee 201*



*Lifesling2*



*West Marine Deluxe throw bag*