



FLOAT COATS

When you go overboard without meaning to, you'll want as much protection as possible. Float coats can provide the protection you need to keep from drowning and some offer defense against hypothermia. PS tested six models of coats in February 2007, including two inflatable coats and four foam coats. The Mustang Integrity Jacket was tapped as our Best Choice among foam-flotation jackets.

It offers more protection from cold weather than the wind-breaker style inflatable jackets. This \$260 coat is a waist-length jacket made of water-resistant nylon that uses closed-cell foam to provide insulation and buoyancy. The jacket has 17 pounds of buoyancy provided by six foam panels in the front, back, sleeves, and collar. The front zipper is protected by a 3-inch flap of reinforced nylon that seals over the zipper with Velcro closures. The jacket's cut makes it form fitting and comfortable both in and out of the water, and it does not ride up when worn in the water. The fleece-lined collar has a detachable hood with a reflective patch.

SURVIVAL SUITS

In July 2007, PS tested six survival suits, insulated "dry suits" that seal heat in and keep water out in extreme man-overboard situa-

GEAR OF THE YEAR

2-inch nylon webbing is supple and strong (breaking strength 5,000 pounds). The tether attachment point is a single quarter-inch D-ring (breaking strength 2,000 pounds). It also has a back patch to keep the straps from twisting. It got our pick for basic harness Best Choice.

tions. Testers did a thorough comparative analysis of the suits on land and in the water, paying particularly close attention to the details: weight, material, seam construction, zipper, reflective surface, boot and glove configuration, and air-purge valves. Testers donned the suits in simulated emergency conditions and spent more than 30 minutes in frigid water.

All six of the suits will prolong your life in cold water. The difference in the suits came down to the details. The Mustang Ocean Commander OC8001 edged out the other five suits to rate our Best Choice. It is a well-constructed suit that fulfilled its primary mission: keeping our testers warm and dry. The suit is made from a polyurethane-coated fabric with seams that are heat-impulse welded rather than stitched. The closed-cell foam lining seemed to compress less and provide better insulation around the legs than materials used in some other suits.

The suit has removable mittens along with deck gripping, neoprene-lined boots that work well in and out of the water. At \$595, the suit is not cheap and qualifies as a classic case of you get what you pay for. Of all of the suits tested, the Mustang was the only one that incorporated a well thought-out buddy tether with a wrist loop that answered the problem of how to disengage from a sinking ship or a delirious victim who's putting you at risk. A simple loop could be slipped from the wrist to make a timely escape ▲



Mustang Ocean Commander

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