

Immersion Suit Inspection, Maintenance and Testing Requirements

The Law

46 CFR 28.140 requires the master or individual in charge of a commercial fishing vessel must ensure that each item of lifesaving equipment be maintained in good working order, ready for immediate use, and readily accessible before the vessel leaves port and at all times when the vessel is operated. This equipment must be maintained and inspected; (1) In accordance with table 28.140 (which in the case of Immersion Suits, requires them to be annually inspected, cleaned and repaired as necessary) – AND – (2) In accordance with manufacturer's guidelines.

Manufacturer's Guidelines

NOTE: Each of the below manufacturers (except Harvey) has confirmed to the Coast Guard that they require air pressure testing as part of their prescribed servicing and inspections.

1. Mustang Survival - Neoprene Immersion Suits and Ocean Commander Immersion Suits – Recommends a complete inspection by a factory authorized inspection & repair facility at intervals not exceeding every 2 years. Immersion suits 5 years old or older should be inspected annually.
2. Imperial International Immersion Suits – Recommends a complete inspection of immersion suits by a factory authorized inspection & repair facility at intervals no exceeding every 2 years. Immersion suits 5 years or older should be inspected annually.
3. Viking Immersion Suits - Must be serviced every 3 years. Immersion suits older than 10 years must be serviced more frequently.
4. Bayley Neoprene Immersion Suits – Bayley advises replacement of its suits after 10 years.
5. FitzWright Neoprene Immersion Suits – Immersion suits should be inspected at prescribed intervals in accordance with Coast Guard or other regulatory requirements. If no specified regulatory requirements are in force, the manufacturer's recommendations should be followed: FitzWright requires a complete visual inspection and leak test by a certified inspection/repair facility at least every two years. Immersion suits over 5 years of age must be inspected annually. NOTE: No FitzWright suits have been manufactured to U.S. Coast Guard standards or approvals since November of 2008.
6. Harvey's Neoprene Immersion Suits - No Harvey suits have been manufactured since 2000 (even though they may be stamped with "model 2002" and, to date no manufacturer's inspection/testing recommendations have been located.