

DON'T ASSUME NEW = SAFE

This owner's story illustrates why it's important to always inspect the spanking new equipment that just arrived by courier. Make it part of your SOPs.



// Life vest with light and CO₂ cylinder.

Back before...

I haven't always had good luck with life vests. The first time I used one was in Lyttelton Harbour during RNZAF pilot training. Even though Wigram had a perfectly good swimming pool we could have used, someone decided it was important to our professional development to be kicked out of a hovering Huey into the not particularly warm sea.

As we'd been trained to, once in the water I gave the inflation handle a sharp pull to trigger the CO₂ cylinder, which inflated my vest with a satisfying hiss. Sadly, this was followed by a much less satisfying hiss as the jacket immediately deflated. (In fairness this was a training unit, so had probably had a pretty hard life.)

I should have known the manual inflation valve wouldn't be much help, but drills are drills, so I gave it a go. No dice.

Ordinarily I'd have been out of options. That day though, just for fun, I'd packed a toy rubber duck in the pocket of my flying overalls (carefully tethered with string).

I deployed my duck. It filled with water and turned over.

Luckily, part two of the exercise was to be winched back into the Iroquois and flown to a nearby pub, so my lack of buoyancy that day was more annoying than fatal.

And now...

I was reminded of this first experience earlier this year when upgrading my aircraft's passenger life vests because the old ones were due an inspection. »

» After a bit of research, I settled on a set of waistbelt-mounted replacements that conformed to New Zealand Standard NZ5823¹, and ordered them in from a local specialist supplier.

As all good over-water aviators know, a key requirement for aviation life vests is a light.

For some reason mine hadn't been fitted when I stopped by to collect my order, so rather than keep me waiting the retailer gave me three light units, an instruction slip and some fasteners so I could DIY them.

I don't know about you, but I don't open up life vests very often, so was quite interested to see what was in there (and hopeful I'd be able to get them back in their pouches afterwards).

The big reveal

And interesting it was! Two of the three were exactly as you'd expect, with a CO₂ bottle, trigger mechanism and manual inflation valve to attach the light to. The third one just had an empty fitting where the gas bottle was meant to go.

I fly a single-engine aircraft and, IFR routes being what they are, a lot of that flying is over water. In some cases, an engine failure would end, all going well, with me and my passengers swimming.

If I hadn't agreed to fit my own lights, I might not have known about the missing cylinder until its next annual inspection. Or, if I'd been especially unlucky, halfway across Cook Strait trying to remind my sinking passenger how to use the manual inflation valve.

Naturally, I informed the retailer, who sent me the missing CO₂ cartridge and promised to carry out an internal investigation.

I also reported it as a safety incident at aviation.govt.nz/report.

And in the future...

I will always double-check my safety gear when I buy it, and after it's been serviced.

As aircraft owners, we're religious about making sure our engines are properly maintained and checked before every flight. It makes just as much sense to pay attention to the gear we'll rely on if that first line of defence fails. 🙏

SUSTAINABLE VECTOR

For a while now, the *Vector* team has been looking for ways to deliver the magazine to you that are kinder to the environment. This is what we've come up with, as our first step in that journey.

This copy of *Vector* has arrived at your place in a bag made of fast-degradable material that, depending on your local council's recycling guidelines, you may be able to dispose of in your recycling bin. It has a recycling code of 4 LDPE (low-density polyethylene). To check, go to www.recycle.co.nz. Even if the material ends up in landfills, because it degrades faster than standard plastic, it's less likely to escape into the environment, block drains and waterways, become a visual pollutant and harm wildlife. To learn more about the material, which is made in New Zealand, go to www.epi-global.com.

Vector also now has a recyclable address cover sheet. We've stopped using a sticky label for your address because the glue wasn't environmentally friendly.

The material for the cover sheet and the magazine itself is sourced from sustainable, ethically harvested forests. That's what the FSC logo bottom right of page 2 is all about: it stands for Forest Stewardship Council – a global not-for-profit organisation that sets the standards for what a responsibly managed forest is, both environmentally and socially.

Both the cover sheet and magazine are printed using vegetable-based inks and water-based sealers.

At *Vector*, we will continue to look for ways we can get even better at supporting the environment. In the meantime, please think about recycling the bag and cover sheet.

And should you wish to also discard – *gasp* – the magazine, that too can be recycled. 🙏

¹ These are a marine life jacket accepted for aviation use under Part 91 Appendix A.14 Emergency equipment.