



MUCH ADO ABOUT RING LIFE BOUYS

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The Coast Guard Commandant's approval and associated number, the amount, size, length of attached line, color, markings, availability, and condition are all requirements for ring life buoys on board commercial fishing industry vessels. This article will briefly identify where exactly these requirements are found in Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 28 (46 CFR 28).

According to 46 CFR 28.105(b), lifesaving equipment must be approved by the Commandant of the Coast Guard. However the acceptable approval numbers; whether a buoyant cushion, ring life buoy, or no throwable flotation device is required; the amount; the size; and the color are all specified in 46 CFR 28.115 on Table 28.115, and depend on the length of the vessel. A copy of the table is provided below.

Table 28.115--Throwable Flotation Devices	
<i>Vessel length</i>	<i>Devices required</i>
Less than 16 feet (4.9 meters)	None.
16 feet (4.9 meters) or more but less than 26 feet (7.9 meters)	1 buoyant cushion, or ring life buoy (Type IV PFD).
26 feet (7.9 meters) or more, but	1 ring life buoy

less than 65 feet (19.8 meters)	approval number starting with 160.009 or 160.050; orange; at least 24 inch (0.61meters) size.
65 feet (19.8 meters) or more	3 ring life buoys, approval Number 160.050; orange; at last 24 inch (0.61 meters) size.

In addition to the above table, 46 CFR 28.115 (a) describes the length of line (60 feet or 90 feet) needed for at least one life ring buoy on board, again depending on the length of the vessel (less than 65 feet, or 65 feet and greater).

Also, according to 46 CFR 28.115 (b), if certain conditions are met, the size of the ring life buoy may be 20 inches or larger, instead of the 24 inch or larger size described in Table 28.115.

Markings for ring life buoys are covered in 46 CFR 28.135, Table 28.135, and include the requirement for the name of the vessel to be in block capital letters, and the requirement that Type II retroflective material be arranged to meet IMO Resolution A.658(16).

Finally, the requirement for the ring life buoys to be readily accessible and in good working order is covered in 46 CFR 28.140.

When it comes to ring life buoys, it seems apparent from the applicable regulations that the smaller the vessel, the fewer the requirements.