

Be safe when rock fishing

New laws are coming into place

From 1 March 2022, rock fishers must wear a lifejacket at 10 high-risk sites across Victoria.

Lifejackets save lives. To help prevent further rock fishing drownings in Victoria, a two-year trial will require rock fishers to wear a lifejacket at high-risk areas. However, no matter where you are, always wear a lifejacket when rock fishing.

Why do I have to wear a lifejacket?

We want fishers to enjoy rock-fishing, but we also want fishers to get home safely.

None of the 21 rock fishers who have drowned in Victoria since July 2000 years were wearing a lifejacket.

A lifejacket that fits properly and is well looked after will help you stay afloat and will significantly reduce the chance of drowning should you be washed into the water.

What happens if I don't wear a lifejacket?

Fines apply if you don't wear a lifejacket at any of the 10 high-risk sites.

Authorised officers from the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) will lead enforcement of the proposed laws. However, to help with the transition to the new arrangements, the VFA will take an educative approach to compliance in the first six months of the trial.

Which lifejacket is best for rock fishing?

A wide range of affordable and comfortable lifejackets are available at retail stores.

This includes several styles ideal for rock fishing that won't hinder fishing or your ability to swim.

Under the new laws, adults rock fishing must wear a Level 50S or greater lifejacket at high-risk sites.



However, it is recommended that you wear a Level 100 or greater lifejacket if you are not a confident swimmer.

Children under 12 under the supervision of a rock fisher must wear a Level 100 lifejacket at high-risk sites, even if they are not fishing.

More information on suitable rock fishing lifejackets is available on the VFA website at: vfa.vic.gov.au/rockfishing or scan the QR code over the page.

Do I need to wear a lifejacket if I am spear fishing or diving?

Spear fishers and divers are exempt from the lifejacket requirements at high-risk sites.

You do not need to wear a lifejacket if you are only carrying a hand-held spear, spear gun or diving equipment.

However, if you have other recreational fishing equipment (other than an abalone tool) in your possession, you must wear a lifejacket.

What if I am not fishing?

If you are on a rock platform but not fishing, the VFA encourages you to wear a lifejacket, but you are not required by law to wear one.

What should I do if someone falls in?

Don't jump in if someone is washed in, call for help.

The best thing you can do to help someone who has fallen in is to call 000. Don't jump into the water and avoid going close to the edge to help. It's important that you don't end up in the water with them.

If the person is wearing a lifejacket, they should be OK. They should be able to swim away from the edge and wait for help to arrive or find a safe place to get out.

Will I have to pay for a lifejacket?

Some rock fishers will be required to purchase and maintain a suitable lifejacket.

The VFA acknowledges there will be additional financial costs for some rock fishers. However, these costs will be limited (a AS4758 compliant lifejacket can be purchased for under \$100 each), and over time will form only a small component of the total cost of a rock fishing trip when compared to the costs of equipment, bait, fuel and accommodation.

Why is this not required on all rock fishing platforms?

The two-year trial is being limited to high-risk locations to start with to give people time to adjust and comply with the new rules.

However, the VFA recommends that no matter where you are, always wear a lifejacket when rock fishing.

The trial may be extended in the future to help prevent further fishers from drowning. However, any such move would be subject to consultation with key recreational fishing groups.

Why aren't angel rings being installed at rock fishing sites?

Angel rings can result in more than one person being washed into the water.

Angel rings can be heavy and difficult to throw. An average person may throw an angel ring about 10 meters.

This means the person throwing the ring needs to get close to the person in the water, and they could possibly be washed in themselves.

If the person is wearing a lifejacket, they should be OK. They should be able to swim away from the edge and wait for help to arrive or find a safe place to get out.

Why aren't anchor points being installed at rock fishing sites?

Anchor points are impractical and could reduce the quality of the fishing experience.

Most people rock fishing move around the platform when fishing. A rope dragging across rocks behind a person while fishing could cause impeded movement or cause the person to trip if they need to move quickly away from a wave.

Are recreational fishing licence funds being used on this?

No, the trial is not being funded by recreational fishing licence fees.

The trial is being funded through the VFA's annual budget from the State Government, rather than through recreational fishing licence fees.

More information

For more information about staying safe while rock fishing, including booklets in several languages, please visit the VFA website at: vfa.vic.gov.au/rockfishing or scan the QR code below.

