

# Some Surprises Found Can Be Life-threatening

By FTTCM (SS/SW) Chris Clements,  
Naval Safety Center

**Y**ou never know what you might find during a safety survey. We recently conducted a safety survey aboard a submarine and discovered the crew was wearing unauthorized, commercial, marine-exposure suits while topside in cold weather.

The dangers of using this unauthorized equipment had become apparent when a research submarine suffered a structural casualty and flooding resulting in the crew abandoning her when damage-control efforts failed (the submarine was saved and towed to port for repairs). Sailors who had donned the commercial exposure suits reported that, after being in the water for a while, they had difficulty staying afloat, despite wearing a kapok life jacket over the suit.

It turns out the boat had ordered only large-sized exposure suits, as though one size fits all. However, when a Sailor of small stature donned one of the suits and entered the sea, the excess space filled with water and weighed him down to the point the kapok life-jacket was ineffective.

The Navy has a large selection of Naval Sea Systems Command-tested and approved exposure

clothing for use aboard submarines. AEL 2-330075127 lists exposure coveralls, boots, and mittens approved specifically for submarine use. Don't be misled by the many nifty-looking, available, commercial products that might appear to be better and cheaper than what you already have. If NAVSEA hasn't approved an article or piece or equipment, it not only is unauthorized—it might "bite" you during a real casualty. Don't use unapproved products! When in doubt about shipboard or submarine safety clothing, or if you are unsure about any safety-related topic, contact us at the Naval Safety Center. ☺



The red suit (left) might be worn aboard the starship *Enterprise*, but it is not allowed aboard Navy submarines. Only the orange exposure suit—the "pumpkin suit" (right)—is authorized.