

Comfort, Fit, and Flash

After a week of testing the gear, we found that a person's body size and shape should be a primary consideration when choosing foul-weather gear.

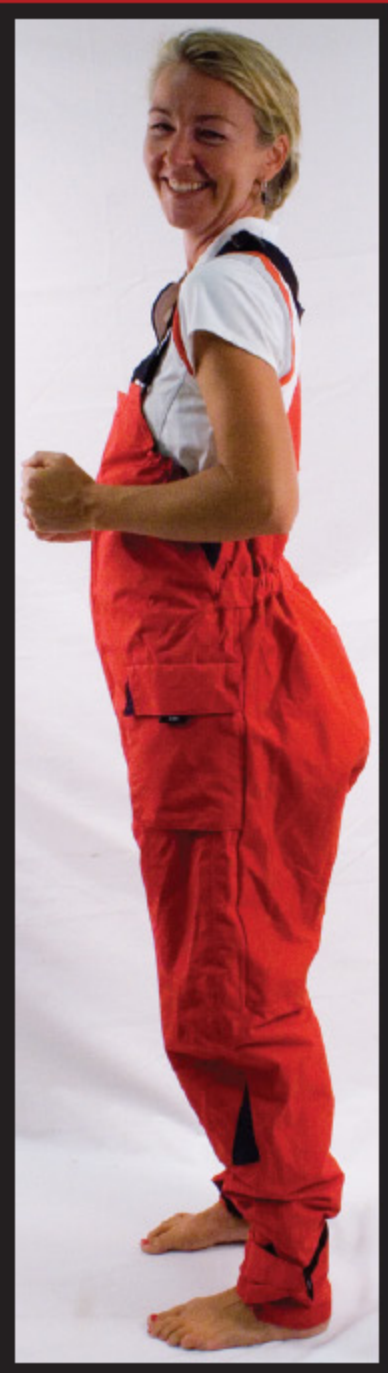
If a jacket doesn't fit properly, water and wind quickly make their way in at the collar. Any open space in zippers, fleece, or straps lets the wind funnel right in. If a jacket doesn't fit, the wrist closures have to be cinched so tight that they are not comfortable. And to make them windproof and waterproof, it can be like wearing a tourniquet. We found that those jackets with neoprene interior cuffs (Helly Hansen and Gill) were more comfortable to wear for an extended period of time with the Velcro tightened.

The jacket hoods throughout the test were another fit issue. Most of the hoods had two or three ways to adjust them, but testers still found drips running around the cheek area during water tests. A hard peak or brim was the most helpful at keeping water out. (Cheaters can always wear a baseball cap under the hood.)

The three sets of gear we tested that were men's/unisex sizes were less successful at making a good fit for our female testers. Both sets of Plastimo XM Yachting gear had bib backsides that were ridiculously huge on our testers. The overly large bibs did not seem to affect performance, though. They were just quite comical.

Testers felt a couple of the sets had unnecessary extras, like the Aquapac on the Helly Hansen jacket. The platform pocket broke almost immediately—a situation that would be frustrating for someone who had just spent \$250 on a jacket, but it had no affect on performance.

A number of the jackets and bibs were also a fairly dark color. They might look nice at the dock parties, but if you were to fall overboard, orange and fluorescent-yellow are a lot easier to spot than navy, black, or grey.



*Plastimo XM
Yachting Offshore*



*Helly Hansen
Fjord*

The difference in fit between the gear made for women and the men's/unisex gear was obvious.