

# ON SCENE

The Journal of U. S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue



**This Issue:  
Exceptional SAR Stories**

**Summer 2008**

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The Journal of U.S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue  
Spring 2008

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Director of Response Policy

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# A Note from the Chief of Search and Rescue...

*Captain Christopher Hall*  
Chief, Office of Search and Rescue

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Men and women have been going out onto the water for thousands of years. There is something inherently adventurous about the sea, and those who make their living off-shore are a brave and daring group. Even the most seasoned mariner can get into trouble, and when they do, we are there. When circumstances are the worst, the Coast Guard is at its best. This issue of On-Scene details a series of extraordinary feats, where lives were saved in sometimes horrific conditions when all seemed lost. These cases describe the worst day in many peoples lives -- but not the last day.

Search and Rescue is the oldest and noblest Coast Guard mission. The whitest of white hat missions, our brave men and women selflessly place themselves in harm's way to save those that they have never met and may never know. SAR is an old mission, but it is always changing: new technologies (SAROPS, SLDMBs, R21), new frontiers (Arctic, Antarctic), and new partners (industry, interagency, international). As a Service, we owe our people the best possible equipment, procedures, training, and support, and that is what we in CG-534 strive to do every day.

We came into the Service from different backgrounds and for different reasons, but we all feel a sense of pride as members of the Coast Guard when we see the daring and heroic accomplishments of our friends and colleagues across the globe. Each one of us plays our role: some fly into foul weather at night, others cross the bar on a surfboat, and many patrol the seas. Every bit as important are those who work on the equipment, acquire the assets, and hire and train our operators in the field. Being part of the United States Coast Guard is truly more than just a job.

I've had the great fortune to be able to present many lifesaving awards over the past year. It has been thrilling and humbling to spend time with, and personally hear the stories of, many of those featured in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading about them. Pay particular attention to the wide range of SAR cases and, take note of the Amver cases where merchant mariners enter the fray to save their own.

There is no greater calling than saving lives. This issue is dedicated to those on the front lines. For those of you out there standing watch tonight, you're not alone. It's an honor to serve with you.

*Semper Paratus...*

# From the Director of Response Policy...

Rear Admiral Joseph Castillo

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As this edition of *On Scene* is being published, we are stepping into yet another SAR season. These are new and exhilarating times for the Coast Guard. We have more capable assets in place, such as the Response Boat Small 25', and are in the process of acquiring other key assets, such as the Response Boat Medium 45'. Faster boats and new technologies are dramatically improving the way we operate. It is certainly an exciting time for me to be stepping into the position of Director of Response Policy. I am thrilled to be a part of the strides in SAR technology and the forward movement in international SAR engagements.

As we move into another vigorous SAR season, remember how we started. Every once in awhile it is good to remind ourselves of how far our extraordinary maritime service has come. From the row boats used in 1807 at the first Coast Guard lifeboat station in Cohasset, Massachusetts, to our modern 47 foot motor lifeboat currently in service, search and rescue has come a long way.

In this edition of *On Scene*, we pay tribute to the search and rescue professionals-past and present- by reconnecting with an "old salt", BMCM Thomas McAdams, and highlighting the 2007 Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) award recipients.

The core values of the Coast Guard are simple yet powerful: Honor. Respect. Devotion to Duty. Think for a moment about that last value. "Devotion to duty" is the driving force behind why the men and women in the Coast Guard perform the essential mission of search and rescue. They are devoted, sometimes beyond even their own safety, to saving the lives of others.

As I step into my new position, I commend you on your devotion to saving lives at sea. You will forever make a difference in the lives of those you rescue. I challenge you to maintain your devotion to SAR and continue to train vigorously for the mission.

Be safe, get the job done, and have fun!

Semper Paratus!

# History of Search and Rescue

Written by Dr. Dennis L. Noble

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries large sections of the United States' eastern seaboard were sparsely populated. The crew of any ship running aground could expect very little, if any, help. As maritime trade increased, so did the demand for assistance for those wrecked near the shore. The chances of ships running aground is illustrated by examining the approaches to the nineteenth century port of New York, at the time the fastest growing city on the eastern seaboard. A sailing ship had to make a long funnel-like approach to the busy port, with the coast of New Jersey on the one side and the coast of Long Island, New York, on the other. During a strong nor'easter, a sailing craft could be driven upon New Jersey's lee shore. Both coasts contained sandbars located between 300 to 800 yards offshore. In a storm, any ship stranded on the sandbars usually went to pieces within a few hours. Few people could survive a 300 yard swim in 40 degree storm-tossed surf. Even if a few sailors managed somehow to reach the beach in winter, they stood a good chance of perishing from exposure on the largely uninhabited shore. On January 2, 1837 for example, the American bark Mexico wrecked on the New Jersey coast and all 112 emigrant passengers on board were lost.

The concept of assistance to shipwrecked mariners from shore based stations began with volunteer lifesaving services, spearheaded by the Massachusetts Humane Society. It was recognized that only small boats stood a chance in assisting those close to the beach. A sailing ship trying to help near to the shore stood a good chance of also running aground, especially if there were heavy onshore winds. The Massachusetts Humane Society founded the first lifeboat station at Cohasset, Massachusetts. The stations were small shed-like structures, holding rescue equipment that was to be used by volunteers in case of a wreck. The stations, however, were only near the approaches to busy ports and, thus, large gaps of coastline remained without lifesaving equipment.

In 1848 the federal government entered the shore based lifesaving business. William A. Newell, a Congressman from New Jersey, made a "vigorous and victorious" appeal to Congress for \$10,000 to provide "surf boats, rockets, carronades and other necessary apparatus for the better preservation of life and property from ship-wrecks on the coasts of New Jersey....." The Massachusetts Humane Society also requested, and received, funds for stations on the coastline. The stations were to be administered by the U.S. Revenue Marine (later called the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service), within the Treasury Department. Actually, once the stations were built, they were run like a volunteer fire department, but without anyone in charge, nor any inspection system to insure that men and equipment were up to standards.

The lifesaving system managed to continue under this type of organization for the next six years. Then a strong storm swept the East Coast in 1854. Many sailors died because there were not enough lifesaving stations and equipment had not been properly cared for. One town, in fact, used its lifeboat "alternately as a trough for mixing mortar and a tub for scalding hogs."

Again, Congress appropriated funds for more stations. This time, however, some of the money was used to employ a full-time keeper at each station. Also included was money to hire two superintendents to supervise the stations along the New Jersey and Long Island coasts. The problems, however, continued. As one old salt recalled, the 'only person on duty was a keeper who received \$200 a year, and if he discovered a vessel in distress he had to collect a volunteer crew. Along the wilds of Barnegat Beach, New Jersey a keeper would have to tramp miles before he could get a crew together, and perhaps by the time they reached the station, the vessel would be broken up and all hands lost.

The American Civil War caused the neglect of the government's shore based lifesaving network. This neglect continued until 1870, when another vicious storm ripped into the East Coast and many lives were lost. Newspaper editors began to call for reform to "check the terrible fatalities off our dangerous coasts" and to revamp the lifesaving system so that sailors could depend upon help "in the future." The year 1871 marked a turning point in the history of shore based federal lifesaving efforts.

Sumner Increase Kimball, a young lawyer from Maine, was appointed, in 1871, the chief of the Treasury Department's Revenue Marine Division. One of his first acts was to send Captain John Faunce, of the U.S. Revenue Marine, on an inspection of the lifesaving network. Faunce noted that rescue "apparatus was rusty for want of care and some of it ruined," some keepers were too old, few were competent, and politics had more influence in the selection of keepers than

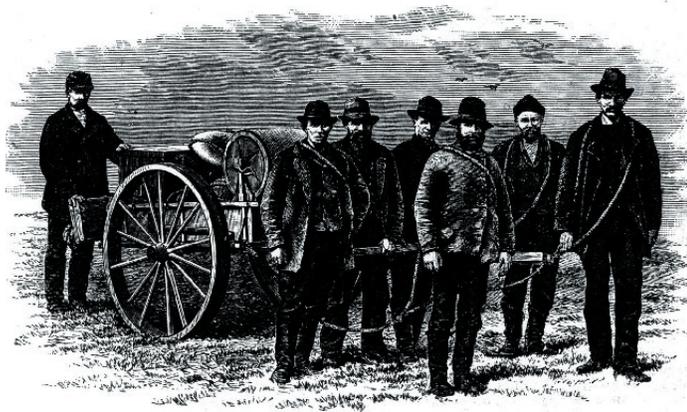


*Sumner Increase Kimball*

qualifications for handling boats. In short, the report painted a dismal picture. Kimball, using his own political know-how and reinforced with Faunce's report, proceeded to completely remake the lifesaving network. He succeeded in gaining an appropriation of \$200,000 and Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to employ crews of surfmen wherever they were needed and for as long as they were needed.

Kimball instituted six-man boat crews at all stations, built new stations, drew up regulations with standards of performance for crew members, set station routines, set physical standards, and, in short, set the organization on the road to professionalization.

The number of stations increased. In 1874, the stations were expanded to include the coast of Maine and ten locations south of Cape Henry, Virginia, including the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The next year, the network expanded to include the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia peninsula, the Great Lakes, and the coast of Florida. Eventually, the Gulf and West Coasts would be included, as well as one station at Nome, Alaska. In 1878 the growing network of lifesaving stations was finally organized as a separate agency of the Treasury Department and named the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Sumner I. Kimball was chosen as the General Superintendent of the Service. Kimball held tight reign over the Service and, in fact, remained the only General Superintendent of the organization. The law which created the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915, also provided for the retirement of Kimball. The Service's reputation for honest, efficient, and non-partisan administration, plus performance of duty, can be largely attributed to the efforts of this one man. The stations of the Service fell into three broad categories: lifesaving, lifeboat, and houses of refuge. Lifesaving stations were manned by full-time crews during the period when wrecks were most likely to occur. On the East Coast this was usually from November to April, and was called the "active season." By the turn of the century, the active season was year-round. Most stations were in isolated



areas and crewmen had to be able to perform open beach launchings. That is, they were required to launch their boats from the beach into the surf.

Lifeboat stations were located at or near port cities. Here, deep water, combined with piers and other waterfront structures, allowed the launching of heavy lifeboats directly into the water by marine railways on inclined ramps. In general, lifeboat stations were located on the Great Lakes, but some lifesaving stations were situated in the more isolated areas of the lakes. The active season on the Great Lakes stretched from April to December.

Houses of refuge made up the third, and last, class of Life Saving Service units. These stations were located on the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. A paid keeper and a small boat were assigned to each house, but the organization did not include active manning and rescue attempts. It was felt that along this stretch of coastline, shipwrecked sailors would not die of exposure to the cold in the winter as in the north. Therefore, only shelters would be needed.

The first stations consisted of one building measuring 42 by 18 feet. As the Service grew, so did the size of the stations. The early buildings were strictly utilitarian, but by the 1880s, they were becoming more fashionable and usually were made up of two or three structures. The main building contained the offices, boat house, and berthing area for the crew. It usually had a lookout tower on the roof. Some were built to resemble a Swiss chalet and one was even designed with a clock tower. By the 1890s, the architect A. B. Bibb designed stations that looked much like beach resort homes with lookout towers. The Life-Saving Service operated under a dual chain of command. The Life-Saving District Superintendents reported directly to Kimball and were responsible for most of the administrative matters of the stations, including such matters as pay and supply. The other channel of command was the Inspector of Life Saving Stations, a Captain in the U.S. Revenue Marine Service. The inspector assigned assistant inspectors, usually lieutenants of the U.S. Revenue Marine Service, to each district and they were responsible for the operational matters concerning the Service. The assistant inspectors held drills, investigations, and so forth. The Inspector of the Life-Saving Service also reported to Kimball, thus creating a system of checks and balances.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service had two means of rescuing people on board ships stranded near shore: by boat and by a strong line stretched from the beach to the wrecked vessel. The Service's boats were either a 700 to 1,000 pound, self-bailing, self-righting surfboat pulled by six surfmen with twelve to eighteen foot oars, or a two to four ton lifeboat. The surfboat could be pulled on a cart by crewmen, or horses, to a site near a wreck and then launched into the surf. The lifeboat, following a design originated in England, could be fitted with sails for work further offshore and was used in very heavy weather. Some crews, at first, viewed the lifeboat with skepticism because of its great weight and bulk. The skepticism soon changed and crews began to regard it as "something almost supernatural," for it enabled them to provide assistance "when the most powerful tugs and steam-craft refused to go out of the harbor. ..."

When a ship wrecked close to shore and the seas were too rough for boats, then the Service could use another method to reach the stranded mariners by stringing a strong hawser (line) from the shore to the ship. To propel the line to the ship, a cannon-like gun, called the Lyle gun, was used. This shot a projectile up to 600 yards. The projectile carried a small messenger line by which the shipwrecked sailors were

able to pull out the heavier hawser.

Once the line was secure, a life car could be pulled back and forth between the wreck and the safety of the shore. The life car looked like a tiny, primitive submarine. The life car could be hauled over, through, or even under the seas. After the hatch in the top of the car was sealed, there was enough air within the device to accommodate eleven people for three minutes. It is hard to envision eleven people crowding into the car's small compartment but, as one surfman put it, people "in that extremity are not apt to stand on the order of their going."

Typically, a life car carried four to six people. Life cars were heavy and difficult to handle. Also, as those in distress evolved from crowded immigrant packets with many on board to small commercial schooners with less than a dozen on board, the life car was widely replaced by the breeches buoy. A breeches buoy resembles a life preserver ring with canvas pants attached. It could be pulled out to the ship by pulleys, enabling the endangered sailor to step into the life ring and pants and then be pulled to safety much more easily than the heavier life car.

A beach apparatus cart carried all the equipment needed to rig the breeches buoy and could be pulled by the crew or horses to the wreck site. The boats, beach apparatus, and life cars were only as good as the surfmen who served in the U.S. Life-Saving Service. The man in charge of the station, officially known as the keeper, was called captain by his crew and was an expert in the handling of small boats and men.

Superintendents of the Life-Saving Districts were responsible for the selection of the keepers, who, in turn, were responsible for selecting the crews. Both keepers and crews were examined by a board of inspectors made up of an officer of the Revenue Marine Service, a surgeon of the Marine Hospital Service (later called the U.S. Public Health Service), and an expert surfman to determine their health, character, and skill. Keepers were required to be able bodied, of good character and habits, able to read and write and be under forty-five years of age and a master at handling boats, especially in rough weather. Most keepers tended to have long experience at fishing, or other maritime occupations, or had worked their way steadily through the ranks of the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Although many of the keepers transferred from station to station, a great many of the men remained at one station, or within a small radius. The long years of service in one area made the men experts on the weather and surf conditions. Furthermore, because the keepers tended to select men from the local community for their crews, the units of the Service, unlike many government agencies, remained principally a local affair.

The men who made up the crews of the Service were known as surfman, because those on the East Coast, where the Service began, launched their boats from open beaches into the surf. Surfmen could be no older than forty-five and had to be



physically fit and adept at handling an oar. A glance at the muster rolls of the Service shows that most surfmen listed their occupations before entering the Life-Saving Service as "fisherman" or "mariner." The number of men composing a crew was determined by the number of oars needed to pull the largest boat at the station. This meant the crews ranged from six to eight, but by the turn of the century, some stations were staffed with at least ten men. Because keepers selected the crews, regulations were enacted to prevent nepotism. Many surfmen, like the keepers, remained at one station for long periods of time, but some moved on to other stations in order to be promoted. Surfmen were ranked by order of their experience, with Surfman Number 1 being the most experienced and second in command of a station.

In 1889, the Service became uniformed. The idea grew from stations on the Great Lakes which had adopted a naval uniform. Initially, this did not result in an esprit de corps but instead resulted in a shout of outrage. The surfmen were expected to pay for the uniforms out of their meager salaries. The rescues performed by the men of the U.S. Life-Saving Service captured the attention of nineteenth century America. Indeed, the sight of a keeper standing erect in the stern of his small boat, grasping his sweep oar, urging on his men at their oars as the boat rose and fell in high surf, could cause a reporter to write exciting copy. Terms such as "soldiers of the surf" and "storm warriors" were used to describe the lifesavers. The men did perform amazing rescues, but by far the largest amount of work for the crews revolved around drilling (practicing) with the rescue equipment, patrol and lookout duty, and general station upkeep.

Each day of the week, except Sunday, the surfmen were expected to drill or clean. On Mondays and Thursdays, for example, the crew practiced with the beach apparatus. The surfmen had to complete the entire procedure of rigging the equipment, including firing the Lyle gun at a practice pole shaped like a ship's mast. When the district inspectors arrived, the entire drill had to be completed within five minutes or the man slowing the operation could be dismissed from the Service. On Tuesday, the men were expected to practice with their boats. The craft were to be launched and landed through the surf. In order to have the men react automatically in an

emergency, the boats would be deliberately capsized and righted. This was a great crowd pleaser, one observer noting that “no sight is more impressive.” The remainder of the week was taken up with practice in signaling and first aid. Saturdays were devoted to cleaning the station. All of the drills, while not overly technical, were constantly hammered into the crew, which, in turn, insured that the men would react quickly and automatically during an emergency. This would pay large dividends when the surf was running and danger was high.

There remained one other important duty that took up a large portion of the surfmen’s routine, lookout and patrol duties. During the daylight hours, a surfman was assigned to scan the nearby water areas from the lookout tower. No seats were kept in the tower in order to prevent inattention to duty. At night, or when the weather grew foul, the surfmen performed beach patrols. Originally, the patrol distances were set up so that the beach patrol would meet the patrol from its neighboring station, thus providing a good coverage for isolated shorelines. As more and more of the coast came under the watchful eye of the Service, it became impossible to provide such coverage. In the areas where overlapping patrols could not be maintained, the surfmen patrolled for five miles or more. At the end of his patrol, there would be a stake with a patrol-clock key attached. The key was inserted into the patrol clock and the surfman would be able to prove that he had completed the patrol.

The beaches many times were “clad with ice” and, at best, were “pathless deserts in the night.” Often times “the soft sand, bewildering snowfalls, overwhelming winds, and bitter cold,” threatened to stop the men. Surfmen bundled up in oilskins and carried a patrol clock, if patrols did not overlap, and a pouch of coston signals. The coston signal was much like a flare and was used to warn ships that were approaching too close to the beach, or to let grounded ships know that they had been spotted and help was on the way. Mariners were fortunate that beach patrols were run in all weather. In 1899, for example, surfmen burning coston signals warned off 143 ships in danger of running aground. In October of the same year, Surfman Rasmus Midgett, of the Gull Shoals, North Carolina, Station, accomplished the amazing feat of rescuing ten people single-handedly from the wrecked Priscilla while on patrol.

The greatest days of the Service covered the ten years from 1871 to 1881. These were the years of its greatest growth and some of its greatest rescues were performed during this period. As the nineteenth century began to edge closer to the twentieth, however, two major problems began to develop for the Service. First, with the advent of steam powered ships, the age of sail was coming to an end. With improved navigational technology, ships were less at the mercy of the wind and were

in less danger of being driven into the beach. Secondly, at the turn of the century, the U.S. Life-Saving Service noted the increase of gasoline powered small boats, especially those used for recreational purposes. For example, the amount of cases involving these boats increased fifty-eight percent from 1905 to 1914. The Service was not equipped for this type of work. To be sure, it had experimented with motor lifeboats as early as 1899. Keeper Henry Clare, of the Marquette, Michigan, Station tested a 34-foot lifeboat equipped with a two cylinder, twelve horsepower Superior engine. By 1905, twelve power boats were in operation. It was, however, too little too late. The Service was essentially set up to move boats, or beach apparatus, by cart to the site of a major shipwreck. The procedures required to do this were fast enough for sailing and steam ships, but not for large numbers of pleasure boats.

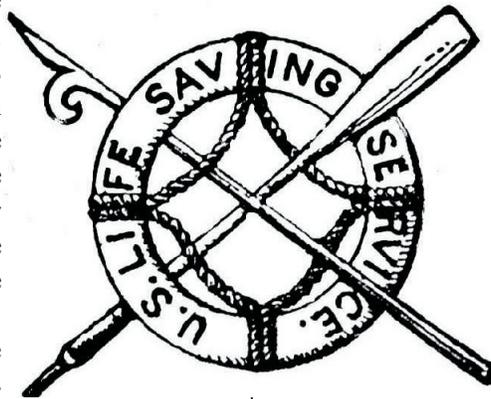
Other problems developed. There was no retirement system, nor any compensation for injured crewmen. Salaries became too low to attract new men and, with no retirement, it became difficult to gain promotion. By 1914 there “were

instances of keepers in their seventies manning the customary sweep oar while the strokes were manned by men in their sixties.” In 1914, after years of trying to obtain a retirement system, Kimball agreed that a merger of the U.S. Revenue Cutter System and the U.S. Life-Saving Service would be best for both services and the country.

The law which created the U.S. Coast Guard, on 28 January 1915, by combining the two services, also provided for the retirement of Kimball and many of the older keepers and surfmen. The U.S. Life-Saving Service performed nobly over its forty-four years of existence. During this period, “28,121 vessels and 178,741 persons became involved with its services.” Only “1,455 individuals lost their lives while exposed within the scope of Life-Saving Service operations.

The legacy of the U.S. Life Saving Service is great. The organization Kimball formed provided the basis for the new U.S. Coast Guard’s search and rescue organization for years to come. Indeed, one can find little fault with the drills and organization of Kimball’s routine. As late as 1959, U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Stations on the Great Lakes were still following a modified version of the old Life-Saving Service’s schedule for drills. For example, beach apparatus drills were still being held weekly to provide first aid and signaling practice. Further, lookout tower watches were also still in effect. The constant attention to practice with rescue equipment and inspections is still in use today. In short, the good practices of the Life-Saving Service remained in effect.

Kimball’s organization also allowed a small crew to perform a large mission. The perception of a small service doing a big job is as true for today’s Coast Guard as it was for yesterday’s Life-Saving Service. For instance, the aver-





age size of many U.S. Coast Guard stations in 1959 was no more than fifteen. Technology, however, has helped the U.S. Coast Guard to perform its mission more efficiently. Better motor lifeboats have increased the range of rescue efforts. Helicopters have greatly increased the ability to help those in distress. In fact, the combination of better boats and helicopters eventually caused the closure of many stations. In 1915, for example, there were twenty-nine life-saving stations on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Today, because of the impact of technology, there are now eight stations in the same area. The United States Coast Guard, building upon the



strong foundation established by the U.S. Life-Saving Service has become the recognized expert in search and rescue over the water. The development of the 36 and 44 foot motor lifeboats, the establishment of a search and rescue school, and the use of the helicopters have increased the U.S. Coast Guard's reputation as the leading agency for those "in peril upon the seas."

Today, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard carry on the traditions of service to others established by the crews of the U.S. Life-Saving Service; but with more sophisticated equipment, they are able

to surpass the records of their illustrious predecessor.



# AFRAS 2007 Awards Ceremony

## Gold, Silver, and AMVER Awardees

The Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) was formed in 1976 to foster traditional maritime search and rescue values through suitable recognition of deserving personnel. Every year AFRAS rewards a person or vessel that demonstrates selfless courage and heroism during a rescue of life at sea. The Gold Award is given to an enlisted Coast Guard member, the Silver Award is given to a Coast Guard Auxiliarist, and the AMVER award is given to a vessel participating in Automated Merchant Vessel Reporting (AMVER). The gold and silver medals are the highest search and rescue awards presented to a Coast Guard member by a civilian organization. Every year there are outstanding nominations, all demonstrating extreme bravery and determination in the face of danger. Some of the factors taken into consideration are number of lives saved, value of property saved, difficulty of the rescue, extraordinary distance of the rescue, time consumed in search and rescue efforts, and exercise of command and control throughout the incident. The ceremony was held in Washington D.C. and attended by members of Congress, AFRAS members, the Commandant of the Coast Guard and other senior Coast Guard personnel.

## Gold Medal Award



On the night of 29 April, 2006, Coast Guard helicopter CG 6041 departed Air Station Elizabeth City to rescue two people from the 60 foot sailing vessel OUR LUCK beset by weather and total darkness 25 nautical miles east of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Using radar and call outs on channel 16, the helo crew was able to quickly locate the vessel which had been experiencing deteriorating weather conditions for days and was dangerously close to nearby shoals.

Due to the sailing vessel's erratically swinging 75 foot mast, the crew had the survivors douse the sails to slow the speed of the vessel and deploy and enter the life raft for the rescue. As a result of the 25 foot violently pitching seas, this process took over an hour. During that time, Petty Officer Mitcheltree, serving as rescue swimmer aboard the helo kept a thermal and visual imaging system (FLIR) focused and trained on the vessel so the helo crew could monitor the master's actions on deck which was awash with the thrashing seas.

Once deployed, the raft immediately went astern of the sailing vessel. Fighting to hold a 65-85 foot hover over the turbulent seas and the vigorously swinging mast, the aircraft commander deployed Mitcheltree and began the hoisting process. Petty Officer Mitcheltree struggled mightily during his time in the churning ocean to reach the raft for each of the hoists. While preparing for the first hoist, both he and the survivor were thrown from the raft

by a crashing wave. The survivor was panicking and thrashing about wildly making the swim to the hoisting area



Helicopter used in rescue



AST2 Joshua Mitcheltree accepts award from Terry Cross (ADM, USCG Ret.) at the AFRAS ceremony

an added challenge. The second hoist also proved to be fraught with danger as the survivor was knocked from the basket after a wave dropped out from under it causing it to swing rapidly into an oncoming wave. Mitcheltree quickly repositioned the man into the basket in the tossing seas and he was hoisted to safety. Despite his extreme fatigue, Petty Officer Mitcheltree remembered his responsibilities and swam to the life raft one last time to cut and sink it.

The hoist to free Mitcheltree from the rolling cauldron proved to be every bit as dangerous as his efforts with the survivors, as he was stunned by the jerk of the rescue cable as it pulled him through the waves. Once on board CG 6041, he overcame his fatigue and temporary incapacity and rendered the necessary assistance to the survivors. With the rescue successfully accomplished, the crew flew through the foul weather and darkness to return the survivors to the safety of Air Station Elizabeth City and awaiting medical personnel. Joshua Mitcheltree's heroic actions and courageous performance along with the rest of his crew on CG 6041 directly resulted in the saving of two lives.

# Gold Medal Award



On 15 January, 2006, Station Cape Disappointment received a third party report on VHF-FM 16 that the 50 foot fishing vessel CATHRINE M was disabled with three people on board and drifting towards the breaking surf in Peacock Spit, Columbia River Bar. The unit immediately dispatched the Coast Guard Motor Lifeboat (MLB) 47248 and the MLB TRIUMPH to provide assistance.

Upon reaching the scene, Boatswain's Mate First Class (BM1) David Ramsey aboard CG 47248 recognized that the situation was much more critical than the initial report. On scene conditions were 25 to 35 foot seas with 25 foot breaking surf and the CATHRINE M had drifted into the treacherous Peacock Spit area. This area has earned the nickname "Graveyard of the Pacific" as it is the most dangerous area on the Columbia River Bar. Over recorded history, an extremely high volume of vessels have been lost in this area including the namesake USS PEACOCK. As such, this area is normally only entered by seasoned Surfmens with years of experience on the bar.

The crew of MLB 47248 had arrived on scene well ahead of MLB TRIUMPH which carried the experienced Coast Guard Surfman. Ramsey was faced with a difficult decision, and after consulting with both his crew and the Command Cadre positioned in the Cape Disappointment tower, the decision to render assistance was made.

The crew of MLB 47248 briefed and prepared the deck for a dangerous "slip tow" evolution. Ramsey focused on



navigating the tumultuous seas to reach the CATHRINE M to pass a towline to the stricken vessel. Under Ramsey's leadership, the crew courageously accepted the risk of working the deck for the passing of the towline. This was extremely dangerous due to the possibility of towline paying out uncontrollably through



*BM1 David Ramsey accepts award at AFRAS award ceremony*

the MLB's towing bitt upon attachment to the distressed vessel. Furthermore, the aft deck was being swept with large breaking seas making it incredibly hazardous.

The CG crew flawlessly took the CATHRINE M in tow on the first approach. This was a remarkable accomplishment and display of seamanship and courage particularly considering the extremely harsh conditions. With the CATHRINE M in stern tow, BM1 Ramsey then concentrated on exiting the surf zone as safely as possible utilizing the lifeboat to face the brunt of the 25 foot surf conditions and to shield the fishing vessel. Ramsey, working in perfect coordination with his crew, expertly maneuvered through the surf zone and transferred the tow to the MLB TRIUMPH when they reached calmer waters.

The crew of MLB 47248 demonstrated outstanding teamwork, expert seamanship, and courage in the face of extremely challenging sea conditions. David Ramsey's decision to send the MLB into Peacock Spit was critical given the deteriorating conditions and little room for error. The courage and unparalleled skill of David Ramsey was undoubtedly the factor in avoiding imminent loss of life and is synonymous with the spirit of the crew serving at Station Cape Disappointment – *risking their lives so that others may live.*

# Silver Medal Award



On the afternoon of 26 August, 2006, Auxiliarist Harold Robinson and his crew, Carol Owens, R. Alan Lindsay, and Susan Fitzgerald, overheard an Urgent

Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB) indicating distress. The vessel in distress was a nineteen foot powered canoe with an elderly father, his adult son, and three small children on board. The family was on their way home to Pennsgrove, NJ. The first part of the family's journey was calm and uneventful. Upon reaching the Delaware River, the family quickly realized that the conditions had become far too rough for them to handle and called 911 from their cell phone. The family tried to turn around which caused their canoe to be swamped by 3 to 4 foot waves and eventually capsize. The three children were placed on top of the canoe while the father and grandfather held the children in position from the water.

The 911 dispatcher called Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay which then broadcast an emergency message of the "overturned boat with five people on board (POB) in the Delaware River near the Christina River". After hearing the UMIB, Robinson and his crew immediately launched their vessel from Auxiliary Search and Rescue Detachment Wilmington, Delaware. Robinson and his crew located the capsized canoe just off the Delmarva Power Plant in Edgemoor Delaware and were on scene within fifteen minutes. Once on scene, they evaluated the severity of the situation and took decisive action. Realizing that the family was in the path of an approaching merchant ship and that attempting rescue in the rough conditions could jeopardize his vessel and crew, Robinson proceeded to safely execute a flawless recovery of the five victims. Robinson maintained his position in auxiliary vessel 279521 which served as a stable platform while Robinson's crew quickly and safely recovered all five nearly exhausted family members from the shipping channel. Seeing that the children exhibited symptoms of hypothermia, the crew wrapped them in blankets and administered first aid while transporting them back to shore to receive medical attention. The family had been in the water for approximately 30 minutes.

Once on shore, the family was given dry clothes and medical attention after which a member of the Auxiliary boat crew brought them home. "What a wonderful sight it was to see the Coast Guard boat approaching the five of us who were clinging so desperately to the bottom of an overturned boat and praying for help!...Exhaustion was taking its toll and I don't know how much longer we could have held on."  
– J. Lowell Wenger (Father of the three children)

Information compiled from article by Paul Eldridge *Quick Response Saves 5*



*Above: Harold Robinson accepts the Silver AFRAS award on behalf of himself and his crew*

*Below: CG Auxiliary members (left to right) Carol Owens (Hulligan), Harold Robinson, Susan Fitzgerald and Alan Lindsay along with the rescued family*



# Amver Plaque

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**LOCATION:** 115 nautical miles east of San Andres, Columbia

**10 August 2006:**

The motor vessel DAYANA, a 150 meter car carrying vessel, was steaming towards Panama when it began to rapidly take on water and sink approximately 115 nautical miles off the coast of Columbia. The crew had to abandon their ship; some of them managed to climb into the ship's life raft. At around 1600 hours, the PATAGONIA sighted the survivors from the sunken vessel and immediately commenced a search and rescue operation. The PATAGONIA transmitted an urgency broadcast on their VHF-FM radio and then notified the Panamanian Operations Center who, in turn, notified the United States Coast Guard.

The master of the PATAGONIA immediately initiated search and rescue operations and assumed the position of On Scene Coordinator. In this capacity, the PATAGONIA helped to direct other Amver vessels to possible survivors. Simultaneously, PATAGONIA's master communicated closely with the United States Coast Guard Cutter GALLATIN which was en route to the incident to assist. The CGC GALLATIN arrived on scene almost six hours after the initial distress. Prior to the Coast Guard's arrival, the PATAGONIA was able to carry out operations on their own and rescue five survivors including the DAYANA's master.

After arriving on scene, the CGC GALLATIN took charge as the On Scene Coordinator and the PATAGONIA continued to search under the Coast Guard's leadership. The following day (August 11), around 0626, the PATAGONIA sighted one more survivor alive and in the water. The PATAGONIA informed CGC GALLATIN and the person was recovered, alive, on board the Coast Guard Cutter.

*With Amver, rescue coordinators can identify participating ships in the area of distress and divert the best-suited ship or ships to respond such as in the rescue story above. AMVER is a volunteer-based system used by the Coast Guard to assist with search and rescue. A total of six lives were saved because of the volunteer efforts of AMVER vessel PATAGONIA.*



## *Remarks from Coast Guard Commandant from AFRAS 2007 Awards Ceremony*

ADM Thad Allen gave some very moving remarks at the AFRAS 2007 Rewards ceremony. In his remarks he referenced Alan Jackson's September 11, 2001 song titled 'Where were you when the world stopped turning?' In an excerpt from his speech, Admiral Allen related the Coast Guard's mission of search and rescue to this song.

*"What do you do when something so catastrophic happens that you don't know what to do? If you're in a 30-foot sailboat in 25-foot seas, and there's no way out, your world stops turning. If you're with your grandchildren in a canoe and it capsizes, your world has stopped turning. If you're about to enter Peacock Spit, and I've been there, you're contemplating that your world could stop turning.*

*We restart worlds. We give people back their lives and everybody that was recognized here this evening restarted a world and gave a family and people back their lives. There were no funerals, there was no grieving, and they are walking around and living full lives because you were on watch and you did your job – Thank you".*

-ADM Thad Allen, Commandant USCG



# SLDMB Failure

By: ENS Jodie Knox, USCG

*In December 2007, Captain Chris Hall, Chief of the Coast Guard's Office of Search and Rescue, and Commander Erin MacDonald, Chief of the SAR Office's Policy Division, visited the Coast Guard's Engineering and Logistics Center (ELC) to gain insight on possible reasons for recent Self-Locating Data Marker Bouy (SLDMB) failures in the field.*

*In preparation for this effort, Coast Guard field units were directed to return all long-expired SLDMBs to ELC. A team of Headquarters and ELC personnel that manage the SLDMB program assembled to examine over 50 returned SLDMBs. These SLDMBs were systematically deconstructed in an effort to identify issues in packaging, materials or design that may have contributed to recent failures.*

*Before examining even a single SLDMB it was evident from the variety of packaging (or lack there of) that storage was an issue. It was apparent that many field units had opened the packaging of the SLDMB including the vapor barrier wrap; others had stored the SLDMB where moisture clearly was present.*

*For two days the team conducted the exam. Although no single point of failure could be identified as "the source" of SLDMB failures, the team did identify some key factors which can cause problems that will lead to failure.*

## RELATED FACTORS

**PACKAGING:** Retaining the original shipping box and using this as the storage container for the SLDMB protected the internal packaging and reduced the risk of damaging the vapor barrier wrap. Boxes in poor shape and SLDMBs with missing boxes most often showed damage to the vapor barrier wrapping; the switch magnet on these SLDMBs was often out of place or missing altogether. Any storage (such as the aviation community's carry/storage bags) should aim to prevent tears or holes in the vapor barrier as moisture intrusion during storage will lead to failure. Many of the SLDMBs showed up with the vapor barrier wrap torn open; presumably personnel at the field unit wanted to see what was inside, not realizing that it should not be opened until just before deploying. The labeling did not help as it only stated the wrapper must be removed before deploying.

**SWITCH MAGNET:** A small square magnet is held in place on the outside of the SLDMB hull by water soluble tape. This magnet when removed, allows a small reed switch to close which then activates the SLDMB. Examined SLDMBs with the magnet still in place, even the long expired SLDMBs, had charge remaining in their batteries; many sufficient to operate. When the magnet was out of place or missing, the batteries discharged which frequently led to battery corrosion, leaking, and damage to the internal components of the SLDMB.

**WATER SOLUBLE TAPE:** Water soluble tape is used extensively in the deployment scheme of the current SLDMBs. It is used to hold the deployment package which consists of the folded arms, retracted antenna mast and the magnet switch in place. When moisture is allowed access to the packaged SLDMB via a breach in the vapor barrier, the tape weakens and failure could occur. Upon examination, some of the SLDMBs with the vapor barrier wrap intact showed signs of the tape stretching, in particular on the magnet. Although there is some tolerance for proximity of the magnet to the switch, it is possible that a stored SLDMB could have the magnet far enough away to allow the SLDMB to energize and discharge the batteries; leading to failure when later deployed.



Water soluble tape

# Proper Stowage

**STOWAGE:** When left in the protective sleeve, an SLDMB will survive in relative humidity of 100% and temperatures from -22°F (-30°C) to +95°F (+35°C) for up to 24 months.

\*If storage temperature exceeds 95°F (35° C) the operational life may be shortened due to batteries self-discharging.

*For Example: For every 6 months that a buoy is stored at 113 °F, the pack loses 10% of its capacity; therefore two years storage at 113 °F would deplete 40% of the capacity of the pack.*

## IMPROPER STOWAGE

*Improper stowage of an SLDMB is one of the prime reasons for equipment failure. The SLDMB must be left in the launch container in order to allow the SLDMB to self deploy. Opening the launch container will result in damage to the SLDMB.*

Degrees F	Degrees C	Time to Lose 10% of Capacity
95 to 104	35 to 40	10 months
113	45	6 months
122	50	2 months
131	55	1 month
140	60	2 weeks



*SLDMB without the protective sleeve. SLDMB must be left in this 'Sonotube' for proper function when deployed.*

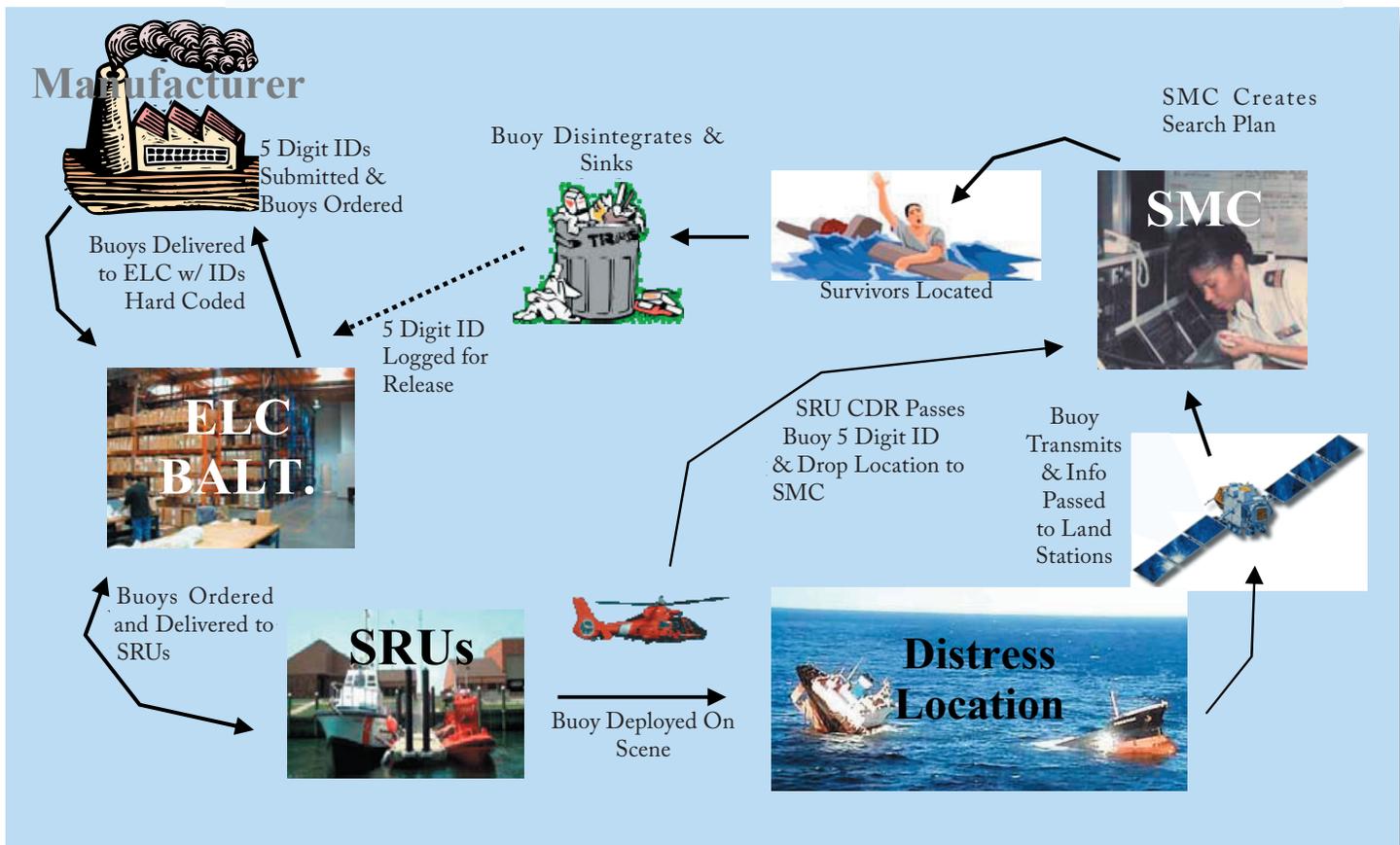
*SLDMB must be left in its protective vapor barrier wrapper (Buoy label is on white sticker on bottom left corner of package). \*The buoy label states the expiration date (SLDMBs have 2 years from manufacturing date).*



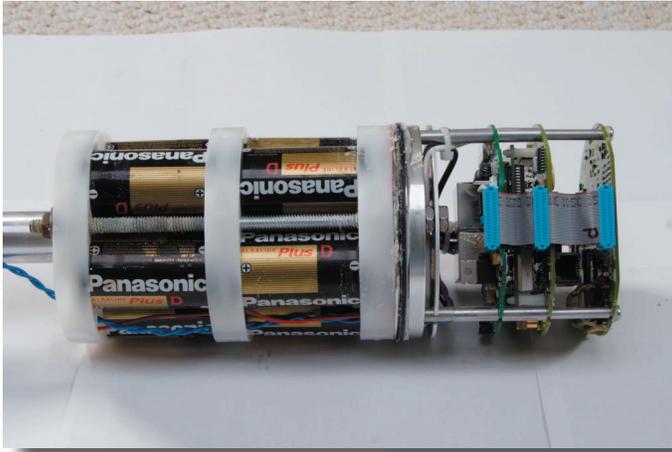
# SLDMB Lifecycle

The process starts with the Engineering and Logistics Center (ELC) in Baltimore, MD. ELC submits an order to the manufacturer with the 5 digit ID code already assigned. The IDs are hard coded into the SLDMBs at the manufacturing facility; the SLDMBs are delivered to the Search and Rescue units (SRU); the SRUs deploy the SLDMBs at the scene of distress. The Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) enters deployment information in the SLDMB website application. Once deployed, the SLDMB transmits information to the satellite which is then downloaded to the website and accessed by SMC. The SMC uses the information to plan a search that offers the highest probability of success for finding the target. Once the SLDMB has been used, it will disintegrate and sink on its own. The 5 digit code is automatically reported to ELC Baltimore so it can be logged for release. The end of the lifecycle marks the beginning of yet another cycle where a new SLDMB is ordered to replace the used one.

## Buoy Lifecycle



# Battery Corrosion



*These batteries are energized when the outside magnet (held on by soluble tape) is exposed to moisture/water.*

*Batteries internally corroded from improper storage*



*Internal corrosion from poor storage (vapor barrier removed).*

*Note the corrosion where the battery meets the electrical connections... not good.*



## Use of Tape to Store SLDMBs

*SLDMB had been removed from both the Sonotube and silver vapor barrier wrapper rendering it useless in an actual case.*



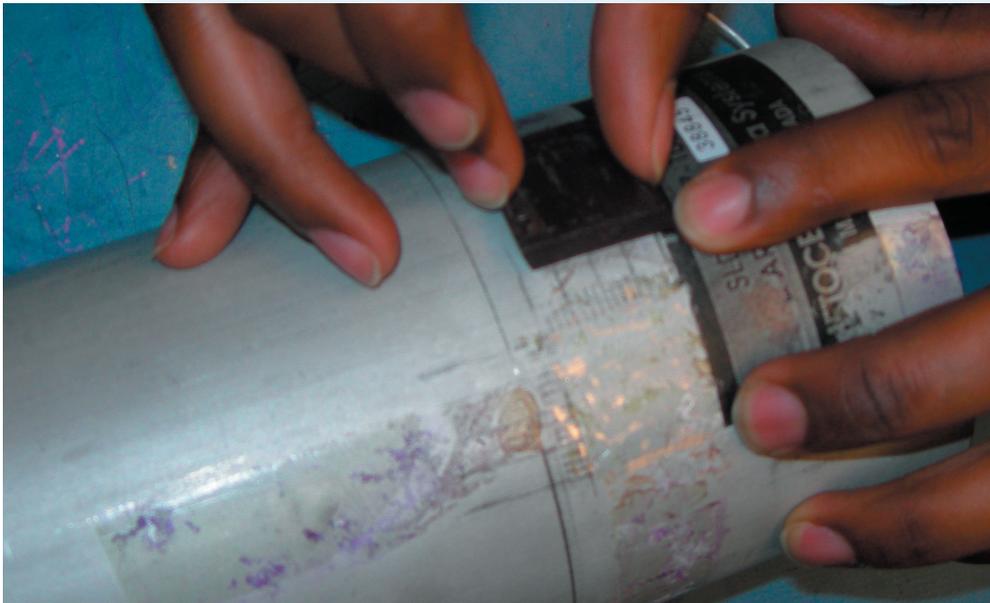
Editor's Note: These are two actual examples of SLDMBs that Coast Guard units were storing on their platforms as 'ready for use' prior to the recall.



*Duct tape abuse: 1: it is useless because it was removed from its packaging. 2: impossible for SLDMB to deploy.*

Activation Magnet

The magnet is held on by water soluble tape. When the SLDMB is removed from its packaging, the magnet is exposed causing the soluble tape to deteriorate. When the tape is exposed, it deteriorates...the magnet falls off which activates the batteries causing them to lose their charge. Removing an SLDMB from its packaging exposes the magnet which causes the internal batteries to die and therefore renders the SMDLB useless.



—————  
*This magnet is loose because of improper stowage. The magnet is out of position and activates the SLDMB. The batteries drain before operational deployment and the SLDMB may fail.*  
—————



# SOLUTIONS

Help from the manufacturer: The Coast Guard went to the manufacturer with the results of the exam and they provided solutions to address the key factors.

*1) Added wider water soluble tape and additional layers of the tape around the SLDMB body to hold the switch magnet firmly in place. The added tape makes it less likely to stretch or be affected by low levels of moisture.*

*2) Replaced the label on the vapor barrier wrap, the new wording in large type will read: "STOP, do not open or remove sealed wrapper until deployment." And in smaller type "Removal of the sealed wrapper exposes the water-soluble tape to moisture. Water-soluble tape holds the on/off magnet in place and the SLDMB deployment package together. Removal of the magnet turns the SLDMB on."*

## Points of Contact

*For general application assistance or for active SAR case assistance contact:*

**OSC Customer Support**  
[OSC-CustomerSupport@uscg.mil](mailto:OSC-CustomerSupport@uscg.mil)  
(304) 264-2500

**Ms. Cindy King**, Engineering Logistics Center (ELC)  
[Cynthia.A.King@uscg.mil](mailto:Cynthia.A.King@uscg.mil)  
(410) 762-6484

For information/questions regarding SLDMB policy, usage, and funding issue contact:

**Mr. Richard Schaefer**, Office of Search and Rescue (CG-534)  
[Richard.R.Schaefer@uscg.mil](mailto:Richard.R.Schaefer@uscg.mil)  
(202) 372-2079

For information/questions regarding the SLDMB application contact:

**LT Anthony Hawes**, Office of Command and Control Capability (CG-761)  
[Anthony.H.Hawes@uscg.mil](mailto:Anthony.H.Hawes@uscg.mil)  
(202) 372-2496

For application account assistance contact:

**LTJG Michael Grochowski**, SLDMB Project Officer  
[Michael.J.Grochowski@uscg.mil](mailto:Michael.J.Grochowski@uscg.mil)  
(304) 264-7955

# Profile of a SAR Hero



*Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Thomas McAdams, USCG (ret)*

*With this issue of 'On Scene' featuring exceptional stories of search and rescue, I wanted to include something special. I took a trip to the Coast Guard's Historian's Office and asked, "if you were compiling a magazine featuring exceptional SAR stories, what else might you include?" The answer came right away, "why not do an article on a SAR hero?" I thought this was a great idea but wondered who would be a worthy candidate...the historian already had someone special in mind. "You ever heard of Master Chief McAdams?"*

*After collecting all of the information I could from the Historian's Office, I found myself fascinated with this man who, at 76 1/2 years of age is still saving lives. I had the pleasure of interviewing the old Master Chief and found exactly what I had expected, a tough, sharp, and salty man with a vast amount of stories to share. I will say that I was surprised to learn that he had given up his old cigar for aerobics!*

*-editor ENS Jodie Knox*

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## BMCM Thomas McAdams...

- Joined the Coast Guard on 7 December 1950 (26 years of service)
- Was personally involved in over 5,000 calls for assistance
- Is credited with saving the lives of more than 100 people
- Has been upside down or pitch-polled over 9 times in various CG Motor Life Boats ranging in lengths from 36- 52 feet
- Received the CG Medal, Gold Lifesaving Medal, Commendation Medal, Unit Commendation, Meritorious Achievement Medal, Letter of Commendation from the Commandant, and several Letters of Appreciation from the 13th Coast Guard District (all of these were for saving lives)
- Was the first recipient of Coast Guard Coxswain pin



# BMCM Thomas D. McAdams

*Written By: Dr. Dennis L. Noble*

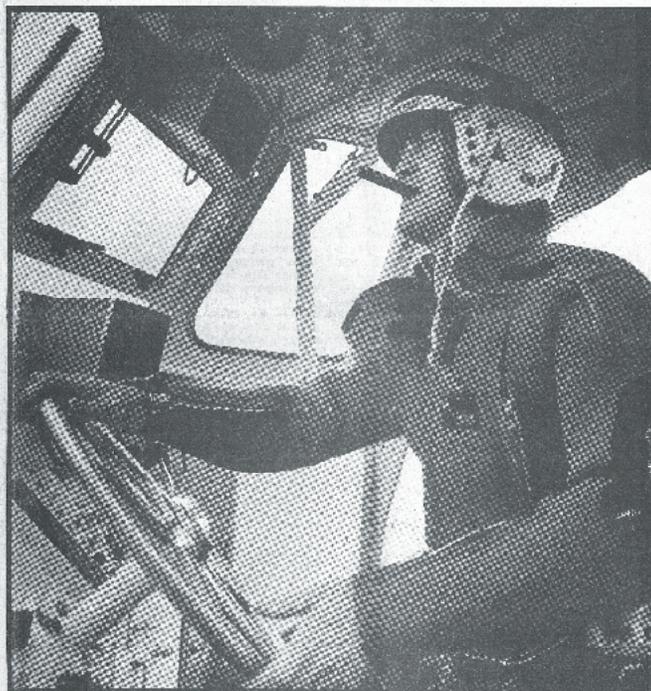
In 2000 I had a book published on the stations of the U.S. Coast Guard, entitled *Lifeboat Sailors*. To research the book, I lived for a period of time aboard units on the East and West Coasts and the Great Lakes.

While working in the Pacific Northwest, many senior Surfmen kept telling me I needed to talk to legendary Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Thomas (Tom) D. McAdams. While staying aboard Station Yaquina Bay, Newport, Oregon, I finally met the Master Chief. What everyone had told me proved correct. I obtained over ninety typed pages of information, way too much material for a chapter.

Next, I had the difficult task of deciding what to keep and ended up with one of the most pleasurable chapters to write. I have used material from that interview in two books. It is extremely difficult to condense the life of this amazing U.S. Coast Guardsman into a short sketch, but I would like to

relate an incident that happened and my observations of Master Chief McAdams.

## Cigar In Mouth, Wheel In Hand . . . *Still Works On The Water*



Master Chief Thomas McAdams retired from the U.S. Coast Guard in, I believe, 1976. I interviewed him around 1998. Prior to the interview I talked to a Boatswain's Mate on the mess deck of Station Yaquina Bay. "Boats" told me a few stories he had heard about Master Chief McAdams. When I told him I would be interviewing McAdams, Boats said, "I wonder if he regrets retiring from the Coast Guard?"

Much later, near the end of the interview, McAdams glanced out the window and saw a sailboat capsize—I really did not plan this. He jumped up, wondering if the communications watch had spotted the overturned boat. He was out the door in a flash and moving toward the operations room. (The boat was okay.)

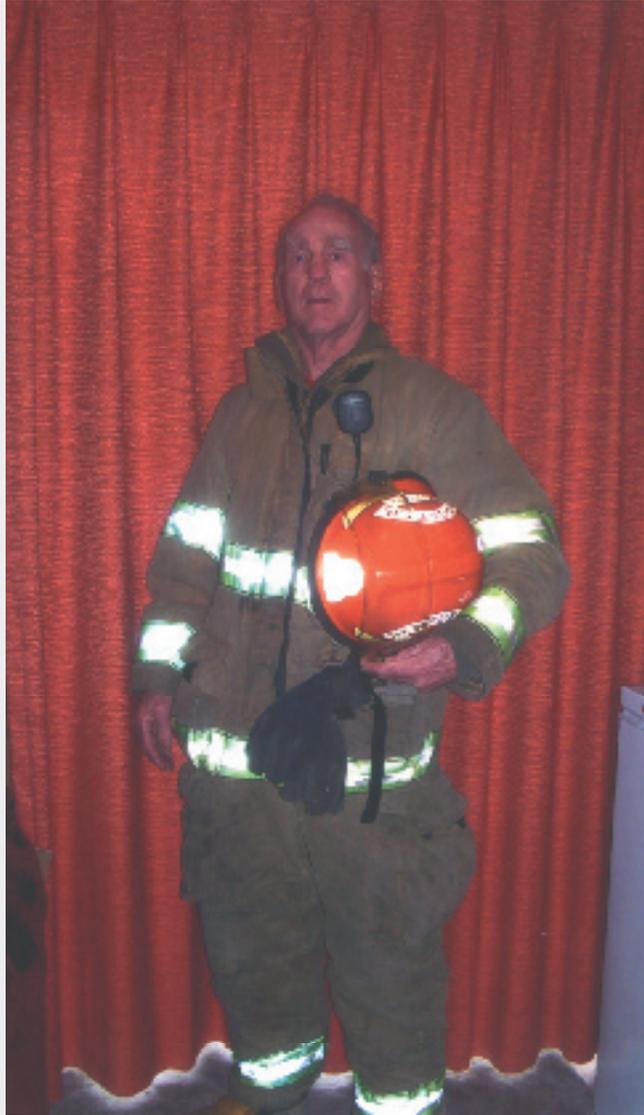
***"...the only thing Master Chief McAdams regrets is hearing the SAR alarm blaring over the station and not being able to run to the lifeboat, don his modified aviator's helmet, stick a cigar in his mouth, and push the throttles forward."***

## BMCM Thomas D. McAdams (cont.)

*Written By: Dr. Dennis L. Noble*

I would say the only thing Master Chief McAdams regrets is hearing the SAR alarm blaring over the station and not being able to run to the lifeboat, don his modified aviator's helmet, stick a cigar in his mouth, and push the throttles forward.

I last saw Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Thomas D. McAdams, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired) in 2007 on a research trip down the Oregon coast and stopped at Station Depoe Bay. He was still in SAR as an officer in the volunteer



fire department. I would wager that he can run up a ladder faster than a person thirty years his junior. And he still has that spark in his eyes for SAR.

In over fifty years of dealing with the U.S. Coast Guard, I have met many interesting people within its ranks, both officers and enlisted. I feel extremely fortunate enough to have met, interviewed, and have Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Thomas D. McAdams remember my name.

*-Dr. Dennis L.*

***“I would wager that he can run up a ladder faster than a person thirty years his junior. And he still has that spark in his eyes for SAR.”***

*Editor's Note: After a career in saving lives for the Coast Guard, BMCM Thomas D. McAdams moved onto saving lives with the Fire Department. McAdams is now a Captain at the Newport Volunteer Fire Department where he has served for 30 years. At 76 1/2 years old, BMCM Thomas McAdams is an inspiration to the entire search and rescue community. This picture was taken in February of 2008. Today, he is still making a difference.*

## BMCM Thomas McAdam's Exceptional SAR Story

*I think it was a Sunday, not a Saturday but a Sunday, yeah. Anyway, it was thick fog. It was going to be a sunny day but it hadn't burned off yet and the other boats had tows, so I said, "Grab three-men" and I took the 52-footer and I just was pulling out from the station and I got to the bridge and it came over the radio, "Capsizing, North Reef, 100 yards north of the North Jetty". The tide was flooding at that time and I'm in a 10-knot boat against a couple of knot current and I pushed the throttle full ahead but, you know, you're only doing eight knots and I've got a mile to a mile and a half to run to get around the jetty and people on the jetty are yelling and waving their arms, and out we go.*

*Well by the time we got around there to the jetty the reef was breaking but there are holes in it, you know. I came to the reef all right and I looked up and I could see the bottom of a 16/18-foot capsized boat and then I'd seen a couple of heads by it and I thought, "Oh my God, they're in the inter-breakers. We've got to get them out. They'll never make it", and there's a circling eddy by the jetty there that goes back around and that's what they were in. So I headed straight for them and the last swell just before I got to them I figured, "We're going to hit bottom. We're drawing six feet and when the swells go up we're going to hit bottom". So I rode the swell on up and as we rode on the swell I turned her so I'd be picking the swell up and let the swell break underneath my keel and carry me as far as I could because I was only probably drawing two or three feet of water, the whole side of the ship. When we came down we hit bottom and bounced and I wasn't over six feet from the capsized boat. I could see four people in the water and there was a man holding his wife and his wife was not in very good shape. Her head was kind of going down and he's yelling, "Help", and I said, "Grab them", and I didn't have a lifejacket on. I hadn't even put one on yet. In those days we didn't wear them too much, only when it really got rough and it didn't seem like it when we were going out because your adrenalin's flowing. But anyway, good thing I didn't have one on. Anyway, so I jumped off. I went right off the main deck, right out - you'd probably call it the quarterdeck - and I jumped right on top of the small boat and then dove off*

***"Oh my God, they're in the inter-breakers. We've got to get them out. They'll never make it"***

*of it and I swam, oh, it wasn't too far, and I grabbed the guy - and like I said, I was a pretty good swimmer - and he held onto his wife and I made it back to the boat. On the 52-footer we had lifelines that hang down, and I grabbed him and I got one arm in one and one in the other so he's got the boat but we're rolling and he would go underwater and come up and I did too a couple of times. I yelled to the fellows on deck and they grabbed the woman and they pulled her on up.*

*I got up myself and I heard, "Help", off the bow and the fellow up there was with his girlfriend and they had drifted away from the boat and he's yelling, "Help". I turned to one of the men and I said,*

*"Go get them", and the seaman is staring at me, (I told him) "You get a lifejacket on", and so he put on the old lifejacket and jumped overboard. He pulled the two back and he held them - the guy was in pretty good shape and the woman was pretty weak - into the lifelines.*

*I turned to one of my men and we grabbed the woman and got her up on deck and she wasn't breathing. I said, "Start resuscitation", (which was the Ogar Neil method in those days). So he's giving her the arm lift bullwhip and he's on the side of the house in the lee. We got the woman up first, and I stuffed her in a towing bit and she's conscience but very, very weak and just kind of moaning back and forth, and the towing bit has three legs on it and we got her in there; kind of stuffed in there, and got her husband. We got the guy aft and we're pulling him up onboard; he was a big man, 200 and some pounds, so it took a whole lot of pull. Then I got him up onboard and I said, "Okay, we've got everybody", and then I heard, "Help!" Well I said, "Who else is yelling help?" Well it was my seaman who I had sent overboard in the lifejacket and he's so tired now and cold from being in the water that all he could do is barely hang on the lifelines. About this time the woman started breathing, well the guy was working on her on the side the house. So we pulled our man onboard and I said, "Everybody down below deck", and we sent them all down below deck.*

*\*the man that dove overboard and myself got the Gold Lifesaving Medal. My other two crewmen got the Silver Lifesaving Medal.*

*-BMCM Thomas McAdams*

# SAR Humor

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*The following story was told by BMCM Thomas McAdams, USCG (ret)...*

We got a call for a capsized boat with two people on board, a man and a woman. We just so happened to find the woman first; we picked her up and put her back in the steering compartment. She was alive and well but cold and shook up about everything. The husband was about 50-feet away from the boat and we went to pick him up next.

When we pulled him up, we asked, "Are you okay?" He said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine." I said, "Get the hook. Get the line in her", and we took a boat hook and we carved a notch in the back of the boat hook and then we had the small nylon line and the hook and the line just fit in the notch. It gave you an eight-foot handle was what it did and you could reach out and snap it into the bow eye. I said, "Get the hook. We'll get the boat. I think we can save it", and the guy said, "Do you think you can save the boat", and I said, "Yeah", and he hooked into that and we were going ahead and he said, "Thank God. I've got two beautiful salmon right up in the bow. Do you think you can save them?" I said, "Well we're going to right the boat and if they stay in the bow we'll get them. You were alone on the boat weren't you?" He said, "Oh God, my wife, my wife!" I said, "That alright, she's in the steering compartment", and he said, "Oh God, don't tell her I thought of the fish first." [Laughter] But those are the humorous ones and you came out good on them, and we had all kinds of calls like that out of here.

*"The sea is a wonder, a beautiful sight, that calmer were swells of a mountainous height. A challenge to man but with respect you must tread, for all too often you could end up dead."*

*-Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Thomas D. McAdams, USCG (ret)*

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# Pacific Island Countries and Territories Search and Rescue Conference, 2007

By: LT Marvin Kimmel, USCG



Participating Nations: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Federated States of Micronesia, Hong Kong, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu. Picture from -<http://www.hhs.gov/asl/images/oceania.gif>

During the week of 26-30 November, delegates from 17 nations converged upon Honolulu to participate in the inaugural Pacific Island Territories Search and Rescue conference, organized by Australia Maritime Safety Authority, Maritime New Zealand, United States Coast Guard, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Despite inherent differences in policy and resources all participants shared the same monumental hurdle, conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) across the Pacific Ocean.

Delegates were selected by their governments based on their positions and their responsibility for search and rescue within their country. Representatives held positions within the National Police, Maritime Safety Administration, Marine Transportation, and Maritime

Rescue Coordination services. The primary goals for the delegates were create an open dialog concerning best practices and limitations unique to each country and to take the initial steps in formalizing a regional SAR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the participating nations.

The 5-day conference began with presentations on each country's SAR resources and their maritime constraints. Each delegate provided a presentation on their country's SAR resources and the maritime challenges they faced. There were also presentations provided illustrating the various vessel reporting systems that are available and could be used to identify resources to assist with searches, including: Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER), Australian Ship Reporting

System (AUSREP), Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), Long Range Intercept and Tracking (LRIT) , and Automatic Identification System (AIS). The Australian delegation also gave an informative briefing on their ongoing Patrol Boat Program. This program initially provided vessels and ongoing training for the vessels' crew to many of the nearby island nations.

The attendees were divided into groups to discuss SAR scenarios likely to occur within their regions. Attendees were divided into smaller geographically oriented groups, by Search and Rescue Region, to conduct Table Top Exercises. Australia, New Zealand, and the United States facilitated the individual groups. Groups were tasked to develop a plan of action and response and then present their scenario and challenges to the rest of the delegates. Included in the conference were several live demonstrations. Australia, New Zealand and US representatives conducted actual search planning

simulations with their respective SAR planning tools, each showing how search plans were created. A live Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) demonstration was conducted to stress the importance and value of having an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). Attendees were invited outside to activate two 406MHz EPIRBs. All were then brought inside to observe the resulting feedback report from the United States Mission Control Center (USMCC). The report provided a near real-time position for the source of the EPIRB signal through a pre-formatted message sent to Joint Rescue Coordination Center HONOLULU.

“Overall, the delegates were most impressed with the accuracy of the distress signal and the short time elapsed from activation [of the beacon] to the receipt of the alert,” said LCDR Matt Salas (Chief of Coast Guard District 14 Joint Rescue Command Center).



At the end of the formal presentations and computer-based demonstrations the delegates were given the opportunity to tour Coast Guard Air Station Barber's Point where they toured an HH-65C Dolphin and took a ride in a USCG HC-130 Hercules. Then participants were transported back to Sand Island for tours of the

Coast Guard cutter WALNUT, a 225 foot long buoy tender, and the Coast Guard cutter AHI, an 87 foot long patrol cutter. Conference participants were then able to observe a SAR hoist demonstration using an HH-65, rescue litter, and rescue swimmer in Honolulu Harbor.

*"The most valuable aspect of the conference was the development of relationships that enable cooperation in Search and Rescue within the vast Pacific Ocean," said CDR Frank Genco (Chief, Incident Management Branch, District 14).*



# Exceptional SAR Stories

*Editor's Note: The stories in the pages that follow, illustrate the courage and bravery required of those who choose to risk their life to save another's. Search and rescue is a mission performed by the Coast Guard, AMVER, Air Force, and fellow mariners. SAR is an endeavor embraced by those that love the sea and simply do for others what they would hope would be done them if caught in the same bleak situation.*

## Coast Guard, Good Samaritan Rescue Master of PACIFIC LADY Case Highlights of Sarsat System

By: LCDR Michelle Webber, USCG

Edited By: PA1 Sara Francis, USCG

On 16 November 2007, veteran fisherman Alan Ryden, 47, from Kodiak, Alaska, was on his way home after two days underway. He had enjoyed fishing for black cod near Sand Point and was looking forward to his return home shortly before Thanksgiving. His boat, a 42-foot wooden fishing vessel, the PACIFIC LADY, was riding well in spite of the high winds gusting to 60-knots and the 25-foot seas.

Though the weather on this return trip was not ideal it wasn't anything Ryden hadn't conquered before. He skillfully maneuvered the boat to catch each wave at a slight angle to give him a better ride. Suddenly, a williwaw (a sudden burst of wind) caught his boat and heeled it to starboard. The vessel righted itself as the gust passed only to be hit again. This time the vessel heeled so far over water began coming into the pilot house and the vessel stayed on its side. Faced with a suddenly life threatening situation 70 nautical miles from shore, Ryden grabbed his survival suit with its white strobe light, called in a mayday across his VHF-FM radio and jumped into the Pacific Ocean with just a hard-sided Type IV PFD to float on. As he watched his boat slowly sink he prayed that the emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) worked correctly. Back in Juneau, at the Seventeenth Coast Guard District's Command Center, Lt. Herbert Law had come in for the 12-hour night shift. It was a fairly quiet watch until, at 8:31 p.m., the Search and Rescue Satellite (SARSAT) computer started humming. Its distinctive tat-a-tat-tat alert was notifying him that a 406 MHz EPIRB

registered to the Pacific Lady had been activated.

By this time, Ryden had been drifting in his survival suit for six hours in 44 degree Fahrenheit water. Law quickly called Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak to launch a HC-130 long range surveillance aircraft and an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter while his assistant duty officer, LTJG Mike Glinski asked the radio watchstanders in Kodiak, OS2 Jarred Reas and OS3 Cecil Ogden, to issue an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB) requesting nearby mariners to assist if possible. The radio watchstanders also made call-outs to try to raise the vessel on the radio. The 225-foot Coast Guard ocean-going buoy tender HICKORY was diverted from another mission to the scene – they were 43 nautical miles away.

Meanwhile, Law contacted Ryden's wife Amy to gather more information about his vessel and his intentions. LT Steven McKechnie, the pilot of the C-130,



*C-130 Aircraft Commander, LT Steven McKechnie, and survivor, Alan Ryden, examine the life raft deployed from the C-130. Photo by PA1 Kurt Frederickson*

quickly assessed the weather and briefed his crew consisting of CDR Paul Titcombe as co-pilot, AMT1 Shawn Callis, AET1 Kevin Duryea, AET3 Jason Maddux, AMT3 Colin Spencer, and AMT3 Cory Strobel. His first strategy would be to fly to the position indicated by the EPIRB and then commence a search pattern while listening for the audible 121.5 signal to home in on.

The pilot of the helicopter, LT Cody Brown, briefed co-pilot LT Micah Acree and his crew AMT2 Robert Debolt and AST3 Byron Cross. As the C-130 worked as on-scene coordinator, they would be flying low and slow looking for signs of the Pacific Lady. The District Command Center directed them to conduct a creeping line search. Everyone would be fighting darkness and freezing spray while trying to locate the survivor.

Upon arriving at the satellite position of the EPIRB, a crewmember on the C-130 sighted a white strobe light five nautical miles south. They went to investigate. Even while experiencing severe turbulence the drop master was able to drop a Mark 58 flare to light up the area and then a life raft from the hydraulic ramp of the C-130. After noticing a vessel on radar 11 nautical miles southwest of the strobe, the C-130 crew went to investigate. It was the fishing vessel HERITAGE. The crew confirmed they were not in distress. The crew of the HERITAGE agreed to steam toward the location of the strobe light and assist. The C-130 returned to scene and deployed a self-locating data marker buoy (SLDMB) and a regular data marker buoy (DMB).

Unknown to the flight crew at the time, they had been able to get the life raft to within 10-feet of Ryden and it bumped into him before he knew it was there. With great effort he was able to battle the sea conditions and got inside the life raft to await rescue. The C-130 stayed on scene until it was low on fuel, referred to as bingo fuel, and dropped two more flares to light up the area for the helicopter which was still en route. Brown and his helicopter crew were delayed because they had to swap aircraft due to a hydraulic malfunction. The plan was to have the C-130 refuel and return to scene.

The helicopter arrived on scene just two minutes



*Group photo, from left to right, MH-60 pilots, HERITAGE crewmember, survivor Alan Ryden, Heritage crewmember, C-130 Aircraft Commander LT Steven McKechnie, Heritage crewmember, behind the Coast Guard deployed raft. Photo by PAI Kurt Frederickson.*

after the C-130's departure. They began a search using night vision goggles and were able to guide the HERITAGE crew to the strobe and raft. Just after midnight the HERITAGE located Ryden in the deployed life raft, pulled him aboard and proceeded to Kodiak. They radioed the helicopter crew, "We got him". Ryden was cold, but otherwise in good health. Amazingly, his fleece underclothes, his survival suit and his ability to float on top of the Type IV PFD most of the time had kept his body temperature from plummeting. Since he was not hypothermic, he stayed aboard until the HERITAGE pulled into Kodiak the next evening at midnight.

#### *Editor's Note:*

*This success story highlights how the SRSAT system is effective in saving lives. Ryden's mayday call went unheard because he was outside the coverage area for the hi-level radio sites located near Kodiak. He spent six hours floating in the water before the PACIFIC LADY fully succumbed to the ocean and the EPIRB activated. Until then, it had been correctly and securely attached in the pilot house just above the water line.*

## Rescue of the Sailing Vessel UHURU

*By: D11/PACAREA Command Center*

At 0511U April 2007 the USCGC SHERMAN received a transmission over Channel 16 of a “May-day” 38NM NW of Cedros Island, Mexico. The CGC SHERMAN responded to the “MAYDAY,” that came from Mrs. Johnson onboard the 32-foot Sailing Vessel UHURU. Mrs. Johnson had momentarily gone below deck and when she returned, her husband, Mr. Craig Johnson, was no longer onboard the boat. Realizing that he had fallen overboard, she responded by deploying a life raft then went below deck to make a “MAYDAY” call on Channel 16. When she came up from making the request for help she could no longer see her husband. The seas were 9-10ft

The CGC SHERMAN notified the District Eleven/ Pacific Area Command Center of the situation and was directed to proceed to the position of the S/V UHURU. Mrs. Johnson reported to the CGC SHERMAN that she was an inexperienced sailor. She did not know how to engage the generator on the S/V to start the engines and maneuver under power. She also did not know how to sail the vessel in order to reverse course in the direction she came from to search for her husband.

District Eleven ran a CESH (Cold Exposure Survival Model), and based on the information, Mr. Johnson had 19.09 hours of functional time and 28.1 hours of predicted survival time in the water that was 62 degrees F. District Eleven prepared Air Station Sacramento to launch a C-130 in support of the case to conduct searches. District Eleven also ran an AMVER

Surface picture and located the M/V HIGH HARMONY transiting in the vicinity of the S/V UHURU. They were subsequently directed to divert and assist in the search.

District Eleven provided SAR Optimal Planning System search plans (SAROPS had been officially released for use in District Eleven that same week). With this new technology, District Eleven ran two different search objects; a person and a life raft. The search plans were passed to the C-130 crew. Mrs. Johnson reported that the S/V UHURU was beginning to take on water. Mrs. Johnson indicated that she feared for her life, as the seas were tossing the vessel, and she could not verify if the vessel was taking on water because of the heavy seas.

The CGC SHERMAN arrived on scene with the S/V UHURU. They launched their small boat and came along side the S/V UHURU, removed Mrs. Johnson from the vessel and assessed the situation. The CGC SHERMAN then recovered the small boat and was directed, by District Eleven, to proceed to the position Mrs. Johnson had passed where her husband had fallen overboard. Around the same time, M/V HIGH HARMONY reported that they had sighted a blinking light. The CGC SHERMAN launched an HH-65 to investigate and locate the source of the blinking light. The HH-65 immediately located the life raft and reported that Mr. Johnson was in it. The HH-65 vectored the small boat to the position of the life raft to recover Mr. Johnson and safely return him to his wife on board the CGC SHERMAN.



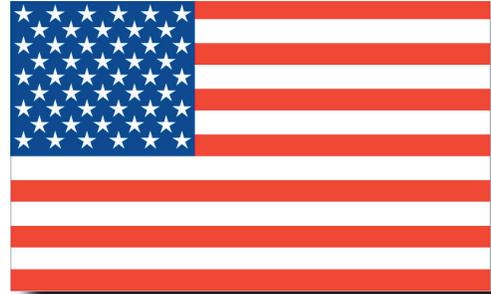
*Coast Guard Cutter Sherman*

## Group/Air Station Port Angeles - Rescue of Five Hikers on the West Coast Trail, Vancouver Island, BC. 11 June 2007

Written by: Jennifer Whitcomb

Wet and shivering inside an immense cavern on the southern coast of Vancouver Island, Neil Peterson and his family were lucky to be alive. Peterson, 63, along with his 22-year old son, Guy, 20-year-old daughter, Kelsey, and 28-year-old nephew Tim Kniffin, had been swept by an unexpected wave down a surge channel they were crossing just one day into their June 2007 hike of the West Coast Trail in British Columbia. Several hours into the ordeal, the group huddled for warmth deep inside the cavern, perched 30 feet above the waterline. Although they were managing to stay calm, the family was uncertain about how they would make it out.

Known for its rugged beauty and dramatic geological features, the southern coast of Vancouver Island draws hikers from across the world. Home to several long-distance coastal trails, hikers seek out the island for its windswept shoreline routes that are free of development and often accessible only by boat or aircraft. "You can't find terrain like this anywhere else in the world," said Darren Salisbury, a warden at Pacific Rim National Park. The best known - by far - of the island's trails is the West Coast Trail, so popular that hikers are subjected to a quota system to limit the numbers who begin the trek each day. In a given season, around six thousand hikers traverse the rock formations, ladders, beaches, log bridges, handpowered cable cars, and thick coastal forests that compose the trail from Port Renfrew west to Bamfield, British Columbia. The trek requires careful study of the tidal schedules, as parts of the route disappear underwater at high tide. Although the park is well outside of the U.S. Coast Guard's usual area of responsibility, help from Group/Air Station Port Angeles would soon be enlisted by Rescue Coordination Center Victoria, BC, to locate the five hikers, effect a tricky rescue, and transport them to safety.



Just the day before, the four hikers and their friend, Joe Ellis, 24, had attended the required pre-hike briefing given by park rangers at the start of the trail. Hikers are advised that rescuers, when needed, may take some time to arrive due to the trail's remote nature. "Park rangers often patrol offshore in rigid hull inflatable boats," said Salisbury, "but occasionally we have cases where we can't get to the people needing help, or we need a quicker response." According to Salisbury, hikers are advised to carry radios or cell phones for emergencies, and to not skimp on extra dry clothes, food, cooking fuel, and first aid equipment to cut down on pack weight. All hikers are handed blank safety information forms before departing; in the case of a mishap, they are to be hand carried to one of several relay points to alert the rangers. Ropes are also recommended for use in traversing slick, sometimes tricky rock formations, including surge channels. The five hikers were carefully attempting to traverse one of these deep gullies when an unexpected wave, its force amplified by the narrow channel, swept them violently inland, up into the cave. Had the group not found driftwood to cling to, the rush of the receding



water would have sucked them out to sea.

As rescue swimmer ASTC John Linnborn told Ellis after the case, the Air Station Port Angeles helicopter crew arrived on scene prepared to search for bodies in the water. Instead, they found two of the survivors waving their arms to attract their attention. Ellis was the only member of the group who wasn't swept inside the channel. Scouting the area around the cave, he discovered a small opening near the top. Through this hole, he dropped the other survivors his dry clothing and sleeping bag before running for help. Locating an empty ranger's cabin after a three-hour hike, Ellis broke in and found some rope while awaiting the ranger's return. When nobody arrived after a few hours, he left a note and made his way back to Owen Point with the rope. Running across some other hikers during his return, he enlisted their help in reporting the incident to the park authorities.

Back on scene with Kniffin and the Petersons, Ellis secured the rope to a tree and lowered the end through the hole at the top of the cavern. Although Guy and Kelsey Peterson were able to make their way out, Kniffin lost his grip near the top and fell back into the water. Neil Peterson was also unable to climb out. By this time, the park authorities had alerted RCC Victoria of the mishap.

Utilizing the closed-circuit SARTEL rescue network, Victoria was able to alert its US Coast Guard counterparts at Group/Air Station Port Angeles, District Thirteen Command Center, and the Vessel Traffic Service simultaneously, requesting assistance from whatever units could respond. Within an hour of this call, the Port Angeles helicopter crew arrived onscene

with the survivors more than 50 miles away from the air station. Finding Kelsey and Guy Peterson near the cave waving their arms, the helicopter lowered Linnborn to determine how to retrieve the remaining two survivors from the cavern. Attaching a harness to the end of a rope, he cleverly rigged a way for the group to pull Kniffin and Neil Peterson to safety. "They muscled them out of there," said Petty Officer C.J. Shunk, who was on duty as Group Port Angeles' SAR Controller at the time of the incident.

The helicopter then hoisted all five victims for transport to Port Renfrew, BC, where a waiting Canadian Forces Cormorant helicopter crew assessed their medical condition. Remarkably, aside from some cuts, scrapes, and mild hypothermia, none of the hikers was injured. "We're lucky to be alive," Neil Peterson told the Victoria Times Colonist later that day. "And I want to thank everybody that made these special efforts to get us out of there."

In addition to the two helicopters, several Canadian Coast Guard vessels and a U.S. Coast Guard 47-ft motor lifeboat from Station Neah Bay responded to the incident. The Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service also diverted the NOAA research vessel MILLER FREEMAN. This case highlights the U.S. and Canada's cooperative relationship when it comes to SAR response in the straits between the two countries. "We call in whoever is most able to assist," RCC Victoria's Captain John Edwards told the Victoria Times Colonist. Shunk agrees. "They'll hear us on the radio talking to a boat in US waters, and all of a sudden there's a Canadian hovercraft on scene," he said. "For cases such as the above, he says, "there is no border."

*"For cases such as the above...there is no border."*

## Tropical Storm Noel in the Dominican Republic

By: LCDR Flip P. Capistrano

During the aftermath of Tropical Storm Noel, the HH-65C Dolphin aircrew CG 6526 of CG Air Station Borinquen saved 21 lives and provided relief for over 71,500 villagers in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP).

On 01 November 2007, LCDR Hans Govertsen, Pilot-in-Command, LT Rodney Rios, CoPilot, Flight Mechanics (FM) AETI Kevin Rodriguez and AMT2 Michael Thompson, and Rescue Swimmers (RS) AST1 Eric Bednorz and AST2 Ryan White launched to Puerto Plata DOMREP to provide aid in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Noel. Torrential flooding in low-lying regions created wide-spread devastation and claimed more than 80 lives. With no access to food, water, electricity or medical care, it was only a matter of time before thousands more would perish. Upon arriving in theater, the aircrew was briefed on their mission to assess conditions, provide medevac and relief as necessary. CG 6526 was immediately airborne and by nightfall they had surveyed the flood stricken region, the terrain and villages worst hit by the storm to gather critical information required to effectively orchestrate rescue and relief efforts. For the next five days their mission would take them throughout the flood plains of the Central Northeast, Puerto Plata to San Isidro, and over mountains to the remote villages of Central Western DOMREP.

The conditions CG 6526 experienced during this grueling deployment were very challenging for any seasoned pilot, FM, or RS. The Caribbean heat, humidity and no wind conditions made hovering, landing, and take-off maneuvers extremely difficult with the helicopter heavily laden with food, water, and patients. The thick mud, extremely confined areas, rapid river currents, diverse medical cases, and mobs of starving

people added to the physical and emotional stress the aircrew courageously managed throughout this epic humanitarian effort.

During each sortie CG 6526 picked up between 300-800 pounds of food and water at the make-shift supply base in Arenoso, Puerto Plata, and San Isidro. Bags of rice, beans, macaroni, tomato paste, oil, pouches or bottles of clean water, and hygiene products were loaded into the helicopter by the hundreds. While flying over the flooded plains and river valleys they would respond to frantic villagers below. Often there was no place to land due to the excessive depth of the mud or location where the villagers congregated. Therefore, in places like Los Naranjos the FMs would distribute food and water to the people from a hover or slow air taxi. Flight maneuvers required exceptional operational risk and crew resource management as well as precision piloting. At the supply depot in Arenoso, departure was extremely difficult. With minimal wind, high temperatures, and at maximum gross weight due to supplies, CG 6526 had to clear palm trees, a building, power lines, and other obstacles just 10 ft from the aircraft.

At a small village east of Arenoso, they successfully landed on a strip of terrain only seven feet across where the land immediately dropped off on either side of the main landing gear. To the west, they safely performed dozens of maximum performance takeoffs just barely clearing the obstacles from a confined area composed of downed palm trees, livestock, and barbed wire fences. To the north, it was not unusual to land at the intersection of washed-out roads intertwined with power lines to deliver supplies reasonably accessible to the throngs of famished citizens. Deliveries were made to villagers on rooftops with palm trees less than 8ft from the aircraft. A soccer field to the north and a ball field in San Cristobal provided some maneuvering room, but with over 600 pounds of supplies, no wind, and mobs of villagers to contend with, getting airborne remained a challenge. Maintaining power to keep the aircraft from sinking into the mud, touching down with only one wheel on the ground on the side of a hill in Mucho Agua, flying over mountains to San Jose de Ocoa, and navigating through unfamiliar terrain, unmarked towers in inclement weather



became “ops normal” for this professional and spirited aircrew.

The pilots and crew of CG 6526 witnessed both the worst and best of human nature when plunged into this brutal survival situation in an already harsh and unforgiving living environment. Often villagers would rush the helicopter as it landed to deliver food and water. At times order was only maintained by town leaders brandishing cruel looking machetes. Risking their own safety, the FM and RS had to aggressively fend off hordes of frenetic villagers as they swarmed the helicopter and pushed their way into the cabin. Supplies were viciously ripped out of the FM's hands as desperate, hungry, and dehydrated villagers fought one another to get their share, most of who have been without food or clean water for the last three days. Wild dogs roamed the flooded and polluted towns. Insects, disease, and death lurked in buildings that were once schools, markets, or businesses. During a medevac of a very sick elderly man and pregnant woman, a disgusted Dominican soldier refused to take custody of patients for delivery to an ambulance. Recognizing her slim chances of survival, a teary, young mother offered her infant to the aircrew in hopes of a better future for her child. Entwined in these sad, disheartening, and demoralizing experiences were moments of triumph of selfless courage and compassion. At times, town leaders would aid the aircrew with crowd control, share local knowledge, form human chains to expedite unloading supplies, and proactively direct them to the most critical patients or more dire villages. Doctors or nurses would willingly fly with the aircrew to assist as best they could. The aircrew of CG 6526 experienced a traumatic clash of human emotions that few people have or ever will experience. In the performance of their duties they personified the CG's core values despite the despair that surrounded them.

The demanding search and rescue (SAR) efforts conducted by CG 6526 highlighted the outstanding leadership, training, and professionalism of CG aviation forces. The aircrew's quick response, dynamic ability to improvise and adapt to the ever-changing environment,

expertise in safely and effectively flying to the limits of their aircraft, but, most importantly, positive, can-do attitude allowed them to accomplish multiple harrowing SAR feats. In a village southwest of Arenoso, CG 6526 medevac'd a 90 pound elderly man left for dead in a rat-infested building. The FM and RS carried him across 100 yards of mud and human waste to the safety of the helicopter. The vigilance of the aircrew resulted in the daring rescue of a drowning villager who was caught in barbed wire as the rapid river currents overcame him. On three different occasions and localities, CG 6526 diligently transported to emergency care two pregnant women, one of whom lost her spouse to the storm, and expeditiously ensured a doctor was delivered on time to miraculously provide intensive care to a new born



in a remote village. Expert piloting, precision hoisting, sheer courage and stamina allowed the aircrew to save over nine villagers caught in the torrents of the Rio Camu River. As a truck carrying relief supplies was overturned by the rising flood waters, many were swept away or held on for dear life onto the bushes and trees that lined the river. Positioned with vegetation on three sides of the helicopter with branches

within inches of the main rotor blades, there was not enough time to execute normal basket pickups of the survivors. Therefore nine grueling successive physical grip recoveries of the villagers by the rescue swimmer were performed to save their lives. As the day ended, CG 6526 continued rescue efforts through the mountains to San Jose de Ocoa where they recovered a ten year old boy suffering from appendicitis and delivered him to medical teams in San Isidro. In addition to the rugged terrain and unfamiliar territory, CG 6526 made its way through heavy thunderstorms with less than a mile visibility to safely deliver its precious cargo.

Despite the long days and punishing environmental conditions, CG 6526 maintained a professional attitude and outstandingly represented the United States. Their positive interaction and diplomacy towards Dominican and other foreign governments, as well as numerous international relief agencies such as the

(cont. on pg. 40)

**Rescue of M/V HAI TONG 7**

*By : LT Marvin Kimmel*

Typhoon Man-Yi became a severe tropical storm on July 9, 2007 and at that time was passing near enough the Mariana Islands to knock down electrical lines and cause widespread power outages on Guam. The typhoon proceeded on a North West track towards Okinawa, Japan, gaining intensity. At approximately 1800Z on July 10th typhoon Man-Yi had intensified to sustained winds at 75 knots with gusts up to 90 knots. By 2000Z, despite setting an avoidance track for the storm, the master of the Motor Vessel (M/V) HAI TONG 7, Mr. Jian Zhong Liu, was preparing his crew to abandon ship.

The M/V HAI TONG 7, a 420' break-bulk freighter, carrying lumber from Papua New Guinea North Westerly



towards China was approximately 375 NM North West of Guam when it lost power. They had been pumping water out of their cargo hulls for the last several days that had been washing over the deck and into its cargo hatches. Both of the ship's life rafts were damaged by the shifting cargo as the vessel began to list. The master, Mr. Liu, in a statement made after his rescue passed that he mustered the crew to prepare to abandon ship and activated the vessel's 406MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), moving it from the ship's bridge wing to the middle of the bridge. Mr. Liu attempted to contact Regional Command Center Beijing via an INMARSAT C e-mail before the power failed, but was unsuccessful.

Coast Guard Sector Guam received the EPIRB first alert at 102102Z JUL 07; it was registered to a Panamanian vessel that was eventually traced to the M/V HAI TONG. The alert originated Northwest of Guam, about 20NM behind the path of typhoon Man-Yi. With the information at that time, there was a 50% likelihood of the vessel being within Guam's search and rescue region.

Sector Guam contacted numerous vessels through the Automated Mutual Assistance Vessel Rescue System (AMVER) near the area requesting they divert to the location to investigate the signal. Although many were hesitant due to concerns about the sea conditions, the M/V HORIZON FALCON agreed to divert to the location at 110113Z JUL

07. They would not be on scene until 112300Z JUL 07.

Located 260 NM from the storm's path, the crew of the ill-fated M/V HAI TONG 7 was prepared to abandon ship. All 22 crewmembers had donned life jackets. With no power, the vessel was unable to use their radio to call for help. Their last remaining lifeline was the 406MHz EPIRB which the master had watched cease signaling after two hours, due, he believed, to low battery power. As the crew stood mustered on the stern of the vessel, the M/V HAI TONG 7 capsized and sank due to it's cargo of logs shifting during the rough typhoon laden seas. All 22 members of the crew were forced into the dark and stormy water with very short warning, minimal protection and little lifesaving equipment.

Sector Guam continued to research contact information for the 406MHz beacon in an attempt to verify if the vessel was in distress. At 102259Z Sector Guam received what would be the final alert in the form of a composite position update (ambiguity resolution) from the M/V Hai Tong's EPIRB, verifying that the last known position of the vessel was 375 nm North West of Guam.

"The Operations Unit Controller at Sector Guam, OS1 Graham, was persistent. Although we had one composite position followed by three missed passes shortly afterward [the EPIRB sent only two transmissions to satellites before it stopped signaling] [and] the vessel's owner was reporting that everything was fine onboard, OS1 Graham stood by his correlated information of the SARSAT hit and weather to push for [additional] assets," said OSC Douglas Samp.

The M/V HORIZON FALCON arrived on scene at 112310Z JUL 07, and immediately reported an oil slick and debris in the area. Logs were found all throughout the area as the M/V HORIZON FALCON searched for survivors. Joint Rescue Sub Center (JRSC) and Joint Rescue Command Center (JRCC) Honolulu coordinated with United States Navy Pacific Command for the launching of two United States Navy 7th Fleet P-3 aircraft from Japan to assist in search efforts. Additionally, two CG C-130's were deployed from Air Station Barbers Point with three flight crews and the CGC SEQUOIA made preparations and was underway from Guam in half of their projected departure time.



By 120124Z JUL, the M/V HORIZON FALCON had

spotted three people in the water (PIW) and began recovery attempt efforts. They launched their lifeboat to recover the PIWs and were successful in pulling two onboard the rescue craft. After transferring the first survivor from the lifeboat, attempts were made to transfer the second survivor to the pilot ladder. When the lifeboat arrived they were unable to transfer the survivor to the pilot ladder due to the 25 foot sea state and confused sea conditions. As an alternate solution, M/V HORIZON FALCON made an attempt to hoist the life boat back into its cradle on the stern. This proved more difficult and unsuccessful because of the inability to connect both hoisting cables. The lifeboat returned to the pilot ladder to transfer all crew and survivors to the ship. After many attempts to transfer the crew from their inoperable liferaft, they were successful in bringing all persons onboard the M/V HORIZON FALCON.

After the transfer, the M/V HORIZON FALCON was forced to abandon their lifeboat to the sea.

At 120556Z JUL, the M/V HORIZON FALCON resumed their search for more survivors when they were notified by the first Navy P-3 on scene of multiple survivor locations. Due to the sea state and winds, they were unsuccessful on the first attempt to recover a PIW with a grappling hook via their pilot ladder. Every time the ship maneuvered into position, the survivor would be pushed away by the winds and wave action off the side of the M/V HORIZON FALCON. The vessel abandoned this tactic due to concerns for crew safety.

The M/V CORAL EMERALD pulled two more of the survivors from the ocean at 120800Z. The M/V IKAN BILIS and the M/V CORAL EMERALD, were both AMVER vessels which had recently arrived on scene with the M/V Horizon Falcon. In total 09 AMVER vessels diverted hundreds of miles to answer the Coast Guard request for assistance during the search for the crew of the M/V HAI TONG 7.

OSC Samp noted that the standard 200nm search for assistance vessels in the AMVER system had to be expanded to 500nm before Sector Guam was able to identify “the M/V HORIZON FALCON, who was the only one willing to divert in the weather conditions out of 6 AMVER vessels that were

closer. The M/V HORIZON FALCON destroyed their life capsule trying to bring it back aboard. While alongside, the life capsule slammed against the M/V HORIZON FALCON’s hull, knocking out the engine and damaging the capsule.”

The Navy P-3 located two more survivors at 120850Z JUL and directed the M/V HORIZON FALCON toward their location. After observing the last rescue attempt, the First Assistant Engineer realized they would be unsuccessful again if someone did not go down the pilot ladder with a safety harness to effect the rescue. Mr. John Dacuag volunteered and realized quickly when attempting to connect the grappling hook that this would not work unless he was in the water assisting. Despite grave risk to his personal safety and with no prompting, Mr. Dacuag hung from the pilot ladder in 15 - 25 foot seas. During the evolution, Mr. Dacuag was

submerged several times in waters over his head in attempts to rescue the severely fatigued survivor who was in grave danger of drowning and had been in the water for over 36 hours. Mr. Dacuag made contact with the survivor several times, but due to the ship’s forward motion and the forces of the wind and sea continuing to separate the two, he was unable to secure his hold on

the survivor. Without consideration for his own life, Mr. Dacuag then jumped into the extremely hazardous waters and swam through 24 foot seas to the survivor. Mr. Dacuag struggled to attach the grappling hook during the intense storm laden seas and ferocious winds, overcoming adversity and attaching the grappling hook and line to hoist the survivor on board.

Eight more survivors were reported aboard the M/V IKAN BILIS. Two of those rescued had serious injuries requiring Medical Evacuation. Due to the continuing poor weather conditions the M/V IKAN BILIS diverted from the rescue effort to transport the injured crew to a rendezvous with the HSC 25 Naval Helicopter unit out of Guam. At 131700Z HSC 25 flight RESCUE 63 hoisted the injured survivors from the M/V IKAN BILIS and successfully transported them to Naval Hospital Guam. The CGC ASSATEAGUE then rendezvoused with the M/V IKAN BILIS and recovered the remaining survivors for transport back to Guam.

(cont. on pg. 40)



## Rescue of a Firefighter and his Family

*This story was submitted by Keith Moore, a firefighter from Texas who took his family out for day on the water. Although Keith was someone who was in the business of saving lives, he found himself needing to call for help.*

On Feb 3, 2006, Jeanie, my wife and our girls: Sarah (5) and Amy (18 months) went to Port O'Connor, TX to go fishing. We got there at about 1 pm and were on the water by 2. It was a mostly sunny day, about 74 degrees and the wind was blowing about 10mph. With our lifejackets on, we left the Fishing Center and went to the big jetties. Matagorda Bay was fairly calm with about 2-3 foot waves. I had borrowed my brother's 16' deck boat that sits pretty much above the water. As we were crossing, we were not getting wet and the ride was what you would consider smooth. We reached the big jetties in about 30 minutes; then the wind started to pick up.

I said we needed to head back before it got worse. So we pulled up the anchor and started back. It was mostly sunny but the temperature was dropping as the wind increased. By the time we reached the mouth of the big jetties, the wind was blowing 15-20mph and gusting to about 25, and the waves were splashing into the boat getting us wet. Jeanie was holding onto both girls and trying her best to shield them from the water coming in the boat. It took us about 1 hour to get halfway across Matagorda Bay. The wind was now blowing consistently 40-50mph and gusting to around 55mph. The waves were 8-10 feet tall and dumping water into the boat each time they hit us. We were all drenched and the temperature had dropped into the 60s.

Just after we passed the halfway point, the fuel line became disconnected from the gas tank and the motor died. I was able to get the line reconnected, but as I was returning to the center console, a wave emptied itself into the boat leaving about 300 gallons of water. The water was now up to our feet inside the boat.

The wind had pushed us about a 1/4 mile to the south before I was able to restart the motor. We started to head towards the ship channel and small jetties when the fuel line came undone a second time. I immediately reached for my cell phone and called 9-1-1. Amazingly I reached an operator and was able to tell her "I am south of the jetties outside of Port O'Connor. I have myself, my wife, and two small girls on my boat. We are taking on water and need help!" the operator told me she would have to hang up in order to call the Coast Guard. I handed the phone to Jeanie and reconnected the fuel line. As I was trying to start the motor, a wave came and turned the boat up on its side. Jeanie, Amy and the cell

phone were thrown from the boat, and I, thinking the boat was going to flip over and trap Sarah and myself under it or hit us as it came down, grab Sarah and jumped into the water. The waves are pounding us and making it impossible for us to swim any distance. Sarah is concerned about the sharks and is trying to climb me like a tree. I told her the sharks were smarter than to be in this water when it was so rough, that they swim out into the deep when a storm comes. This explanation seemed to satisfy Sarah and she calmed down. Jeanie, holding Amy, was trying to swim away from the boat and towards the shore. I told them all we had to get back to the boat, that the boat would not sink and that there was no way we could swim the 2-3 miles from where we were to shore.

Now I did not know if there were sharks or if the boat would sink, but I knew we had to keep calm. When Jeanie and I got the girls back to the boat it was submerged about 6 inches beneath the level of the water, but it was floating. We held onto the side of the boat, I with Sarah and Jeanie with Amy, keeping them between the boat and ourselves trying to protect them from the waves that were coming at us 8-10 feet tall.

Jeanie and Sarah had been praying since the fuel line came undone the first time and now we were all praying "God, your word says you can stop the wind and the waves and we believe you can. Lord, please help us now." Not wanting to limit Him to just stopping the wind and the waves we prayed "Lord, please bring us help. Direct our path to land." We held onto the side of the boat for about 15-20 minutes. Feeling pretty confident the boat would not sink, and becoming increasingly tired, we climbed in. We had to sit on opposite sides to keep the boat balanced, again with Jeanie holding Amy and I holding Sarah. The water was 65 degrees and warmer than the air so we placed the girls in the water inside the boat. Each wave continued to swamp over the boat with some coming onto the girls' faces. We were all developing hypothermia, we were all shivering and the girls' lips were turning blue. We were crying out loud "God, please save us, please stop the wind and the waves, please bring us help and direct us to dry land." At the same time I was saying "We have to stay clam and do our part."

We had been in the water for about 45 minutes to an hour when we saw a helicopter in the distance; it came

within 3-4 miles and headed away from us. Jeanie and Sarah started to yell “Help! Help!” I urged them to conserve their strength, telling them that the crew could not hear us. Inside I was praying to God, pleading with Him, “No, God, that is not your will for my daughters to die this way, for my wife to die this way. Please God, save my family.”

After another 30-45 minutes, we saw another helicopter, this time it came within a mile or two and I could tell it was in search mode. I assured the girls, “They are in a search pattern, he is flying in a grid, and they are out looking for us.” After a short while we saw the pilot set down on an island for a few minutes and then again the helicopter took off, again in a direction away from us. I reassured my family that the Coast Guard knew we were out there and that they were looking for us. Shortly after the helicopter left, my 18 month old Amy, started going into shock. She had her eyes closed and her muscles were too tired and too cold to shiver anymore. Jeanie was holding onto her trying to shield her from the wind and the waves.

We continued to drift and pray for about another 30-45 minutes; eventually the boat beached itself about 20 feet from a small island. The water was shallow enough for us to carry the girls onto shore. Sarah was now in shock, with her eyes rolled back in her head; she was unable to walk or speak. Too cold and tired to respond at all, she was dead weight in my arms as I carried her onto shore.

We found a small decomposing log on the shore where I laid the girls down. Jeannie took the life jacket off Amy, and held her and Sarah to her body trying to warm them. I went back to the boat and ripped the back rest of one of the bench seats to the boat and planted it in the sand against the log to create a shield from the wind. I returned to the boat several times ripping pieces of the canopy from its frame to cover ourselves, which worked surprisingly well. As we lay in the sand under the make shift shelter we began to blow the warmth of our breath onto the girls faces. Amy was now struggling to breathe and Sarah was deteriorating. I had retrieved the fuel tank which had landed 30 yards or so down the shore and the flares to the boat, but

they were to wet to ignite. I checked for a pulse on each girl, first Amy, then Sarah and found none I knew both girls were suffering from severe hypothermia and re-warming was their only hope. In my 12 years of being in the fire department, I had seen enough death from traumatic events and injuries to know the signs of immanent death. I looked into my wife’s eyes and told her “Amy is not going to make it, she does not have 30 minutes to live out here, and Sarah does not have much longer than that. We have got to do something. God has got to do something or these girls are going to die here!” Jeannie began praying “Jesus, save us, save us!”

Within minutes we heard the sound of a helicopter. I jumped out and began to flag them to our location with a yellow and red life jacket that I managed to hold onto. It was the Coast Guard; they had spotted us and were coming our way. Hovering just down the shore from us, they lowered a rescuer down. We were lifted off the island in a metal basket, placed in the helicopter and given blankets.

I asked if they had warming packs; they said they did, so we placed these on the armpits and groins of the girls. We attempted to get temperatures on Sarah and Amy, but they were too cold to register. We gave both girls oxygen, and tried to get pulses and blood pressures. Their little bodies were just too cold to register. We waited approximately 20 minutes for an advanced life support ambulance that had a paramedic on it with neither of the girls’ condition changing. When the ALS ambulance arrived, we transferred into it and put the girls into fresh blankets and warming packs. Continuing with the treatment we waited for a life support helicopter to take Amy to the children’s Level 1 trauma center in Corpus Christi. After about 40-45 minutes, Amy’s first temperature was 82 degrees and Sarah’s was 83 degrees.

Sarah slowly began to respond to the treatment; she began to shiver again, and was regaining some of her color. She had been such a brave girl during this ordeal and did not complain once in the boat or in the ambulance. Amy went through an agonizing process; as the warmth crept through her body, so did the feeling of



Rescuers: PO David Warner (on left) and PO Justin Brown

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## **Rescue of a Firefighter and his Family (cont.)**

pain. Amy moaned and cried as we tried to comfort her. I assured Jeannie that as hard as it was to witness, this was a good sign. Sarah and I were to go by ambulance to the local hospital while Amy and Jeannie were going to Corpus. By the time we separated, both girls were stable and had temperatures of 96 degrees. The hospitals ran test on both girls and continued to re-warm them. They were given something to eat and were checked from head to toe. Both girls were given a clean bill of health and released about 1 am. This was 12 hours from the time we had arrived at the Fishing Center. Neither Sarah nor Amy have developed even a cold or fever as a result of what we went through.

Before we left for the hospitals, one of the Coast Guard members told us that no other calls to them had been made that day, but in their search for us they had pulled 20 other people out of the water. He said there had been five or six other boats that went down. The Coast Guard helicopter had come from Corpus and were flagged down by all of those other people while searching for us. The Corpus Christi newspaper reported the next day that 14 people, including ourselves, had been rescued by the Coast Guard.

I have received several phone calls from other fire-fighters asking about what had happened and would like to share this with all of those who might not have heard our story. I would also like to thank all of those who prayed for us and expressed their concern.

*The crew on duty that night was CDR Benoist, LTJG Cagle, PO Brown & PO Warner. They saved nine people that night. Another crew consisting of LT Troup, LT Hill, PO Cybulski, PO Torres & PO Graham also picked up five people. This is a detailed testament to the kind of work that we do and how we impact lives. It cannot be done without the support of the Airman all the way to the CAPT's. Be proud of whatever role you serve, and serve it to the best of your abilities. -LT Jeff Henderson, USCG*

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## **Tropical Storm Noel in the Dominican Republic (cont. from pg. 35)**

World Food Program, was vital to ensuring smooth operations in the melee of this critical rescue and relief effort. With U.S. forces fighting in other parts of the world and rescue teams battling natural disasters on the home front, this unique mission portrayed the dynamic ability of the Coast Guard to respond on an international level doing what they have done best for over 217 years, saving lives. Aggressive confrontations with desperate people on the brink of survival, the political influence that affected operations and logistics, pushing beyond the limits of man and machine, and the “roller coaster ride” of human emotions made heroes of this crew on a daily basis. In the end, CG 6526 executed 61 confined area landings and conducted 11 RS deployments which saved over 21 lives and provided relief for over 71,500 villagers. They demonstrated the best of helicopter aviation, the core values of the Coast Guard, and the pride of America in its never ending effort to help those in need throughout the world.

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## **Rescue of the M/V HAI TONG 7 (cont. from pg. 37)**

On July 16th at 1323Z, the Active Search was Suspended (ACTSUS) for the remaining crew of the M/V HAI TONG 7. Overall, the monumental rescue effort for the M/V HAI TONG 7 and its 22 crew needed every cog in the SAR organization to successfully render aid to those in need. Through interagency cooperation and responsiveness a total of thirteen survivors and three deceased were recovered using nine AMVER ships, two Navy P-3's, two USCG C-130's, USCGC SEQUOIA, and USCGC ASSATEAGUE. A total of 10,000 square nautical miles were searched for 134 consecutive hours involving both Sector Guam and District 14 Command Centers.

In retrospect LT Chris Nolen of the D14 Command Center said, “The drift was extremely accurate. This case was a great validation to me personally that SAROPS actually works. Most of the PIWs and debris were found in those areas assigned the highest probability by the program.”

*Editor's Note: Captain Tom McDorr of the M/V HORIZON FALCON recieved the “Amver-Assisted Rescue at Sea Award” for this rescue at the Lloyd's List London 2008 Award Banquet. This was the first time he sailed as a Captain.*

# COSPAS SARSAT: 25 Years of Saving Lives

Written By: LCDR Kathy Niles, USCG

Cospas-Sarsat is a humanitarian Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) System that became operational in 1982 when the first satellite in the System was launched and the first emergency distress beacon signal from a downed aircraft was picked up by a low earth-orbiting satellite. Three people were saved. 2007 marked the 25th year of successful operation for the International Cospas-Sarsat System which has been credited with more



than 22,000 rescues worldwide, including more than 5,700 in the United States and its surrounding waters. In 2007, there were 353 people saved in the U.S. with the assistance of Cospas-Sarsat alert information. The system has continued to track and locate activated emergency beacons carried by ships (EPIRBs), aircraft (ELTs), and individuals (PLBs) in distress ever since. In many cases this system has proven to be the last resort for people in trouble at sea or in the wilderness. The International Cospas-Sarsat Program is a partnership between the U.S., Canada, France, and Russia and involves nearly 40 other countries that participate in the System. The U.S. component of the SARSAT system is managed and operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

## Will your satellite beacon save you after February 2009?

Beginning 1 February 2009, the 121.5 MHz signal used on older emergency beacons will no longer be processed by search and rescue satellites that make up the Cospas-Sarsat System. Beacons that transmit to satellites on the 121.5 and 243 megahertz frequencies should be replaced by early 2009, when 406 megahertz beacons will become the new standard and the only type of satellite beacon that will automatically alert search and rescue authorities. It's critical that everyone gets the message now to make the switch to 406 MHz beacons.

At present there are two internationally sanctioned satellite alerting distress frequencies—406 MHz (digital) and 121.5 MHz (analog). Older model EPIRBs and ELTs send a distress signal on only 121.5 MHz (243 MHz for some military beacons). This signal is little more than a homing signal. The newer, more advanced models send out an encoded, digital 406 MHz transmission which provides more accurate location and identification information. PLBs have only been manufactured with 406 MHz alerting capabilities



## Remember the date-- 1 February 2009!

Beacon owners and search and rescue personnel should be aware of the change that will happen on 1 February 2009, when the 121.5 MHz and 243 MHz frequency bands will no longer be processed by search and rescue satellites. They should also know why the decision was made. It was a decision made by the International Cospas-Sarsat Program with guidance from the United Nations due to numerous signal reception problems, a high incidence of false alerts (over 99%) and a host of other limitations associated with the 121.5 MHz frequency.

Over the years, 406 MHz beacons have proven superior performance capabilities. They transmit a much stronger signal, are more accurate, verifiable and traceable. Each 406 MHz beacon has a unique ID encoded with its signal. As long as the beacon ID has been registered (which is required by law), search and rescue authorities can quickly confirm that the distress is real, who they are looking for and where they should look. This means a search can be launched even before a final distress location has been determined.

It should be noted that even 406 MHz beacons contain an integral 121.5 MHz signal, but this signal is not transmitted to the satellites, it is only used for homing or direction finding purposes by search personnel once they are near the activated beacon location.

## Using distress beacons properly

The search and rescue satellite system called Cospas-Sarsat has truly been a lifesaver for thousands of people around the globe. It is international in scope, operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is free of charge to anyone in distress. Unfortunately, with all the successes attributed to beacons, there are still too many false alerts that are primarily caused by human error during beacon installation, maintenance, testing and disposal. Not only does this needlessly endanger rescue personnel, but it also degrades the search and rescue resources available to respond to actual emergencies. Beacon owners must realize that they have a responsibility to keep the system working as effectively as possible. Here are some things to remember:

All 406 MHz EPIRBs, PLBs, and ELTs in the U.S. are required to be registered with NOAA.

This registration is free and can be done on the internet ([www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov)) or mailed/faxed to NOAA. Beacon registrations are good for two years, but must be updated when information such as emergency contact phone numbers and other vital information changes. This registration information is protected and only available to authorized search and rescue personnel.



Class A, B, and S 121.5 MHz EPIRBs became prohibited for use in the U.S. on 01 January 2007.

There are a few exceptions to this regulation and it does not prohibit Man Overboard devices that transmit a signal for local homing operations. Owners with a prohibited EPIRB should replace it with a 406 MHz beacon as soon as possible.

Handle beacons carefully and know how they work.

Beacon owners should prevent mishandling of beacons by inexperienced persons to avoid possible damage to the beacon or transmitting a false alert. (Note: Certain beacon models can be placed in their bracket backwards. As a result, the magnet, which prevents automatic activation when stowed in the beacon bracket/housing, can't work properly.) Beacon self-tests should only be conducted according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer. This is important to ensure that the beacon is working properly and to avoid an accidental activation.

Care and maintenance.

EPIRBs, ELTs, PLBs, and mounting brackets or housing units should be examined regularly for any physical damage. If there appears to be any damage, corrosion, cracking, water ingress, etc., the beacon should be replaced immediately. When taking a beacon out of regular use (i.e.: putting in storage or transporting between locations) ensure the beacon is turned off and/or the battery is disconnected.

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The U. S. Coast Guard Office of Search and Rescue (CG-534) manages the SARSAT program along with partners from NOAA, the U.S. Air Force, and NASA. See the following sites for more information on each agency's efforts:

- *USCG Office of Search and Rescue: [www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/g-opr.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/g-opr.htm)*
- *NOAA SARSAT Program: [www.sarsat.noaa.gov](http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov)*
- *U.S. Air Force Rescue Coordination Center: [www.1af.acc.af.mil/units/afrc/](http://www.1af.acc.af.mil/units/afrc/)*
- *NASA Search and Rescue: [searchandrescue.gsfc.nasa.gov](http://searchandrescue.gsfc.nasa.gov)*
- *International Cospas-Sarsat website: [www.cospas-sarsat.org](http://www.cospas-sarsat.org)*

There are four types of Cospas-Sarsat distress beacons available for use:

- *EPIRBs (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons)—for boats and vessels;*
- *ELTs (Emergency Locator Transmitter beacons) – for aircraft;*
- *PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons)—for general outdoor use (hiking, mountain climbing, etc.);*
- *SSAS (Ship Security Alert Safety beacons)—for discreet alerting in cases of piracy or other hostile acts against a ship and crew*

## USCG Auxiliary Qualified Interpreters



*Steven Budar, the National Commodore of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, wrote an informative letter explaining the purpose and use of the Auxiliary Interpreter Corps. An excerpt from his letter has been included to educate the SAR community on how to take advantage of this beneficial service.*

The USCG Auxiliary Interpreter Corps was established in 1997 to provide exceptional linguistic assets to any level of the Coast Guard. This is a well managed program under the operational control of the Auxiliary's International Affairs and Interpreter Support Directorate.

Over the past 10 years, these highly qualified Interpreters have successfully supported numerous Operations Missions, such as Air Medevac, Boarding Teams, Cutter Deployments, Communications Watch Standing, Foreign VIP Tours, Foreign SAR Training Events, Foreign MSO Training Events, Translations of USCG documents into a foreign language and a foreign document into English, foreign speeches, media articles, translations of MSO guidelines, and many other authorized CG missions.

The procedures necessary to identify and obtain the services of these certified interpreters is exceedingly simple. One has only to access <http://cgwebs.net/interpreter/> through the CG Work Station to locate any Auxiliary interpreter anywhere in the U.S. without requiring a password. For example, if you are looking for a Russian Interpreter in San Francisco, select the Russian menu and click San Francisco. The database will provide you data on all Russian interpreters in the San Francisco Area plus provide you a photograph of the Auxiliary interpreter. If there are none listed that meets your needs, you just enhance the geographical area searched. Once you identify an interpreter that meets your needs, you can use their contact telephone number to determine if they can accept your mission. It is that simple. It is recommended to contact one or more interpreters direct to determine availability and suitability for the mission at hand.

USCG Auxiliary Interpreters are volunteers and don't get paid. They normally travel under reimbursable CG orders issued by the requesting unit. In the event of high profile missions; such as, obtaining interpreter services for high ranking foreign military visitors, our Interpreter Support Division will provide selection assistance based on proven past performance.

Give serious consideration to utilizing this valuable asset to foster your mission accomplishment. It's a significant capability that is basically yours for the asking!

For further information, please contact Mr. Klaus Baumann, Deputy Director for Interpreter Support (904) 829-3957 or [kbaumann@se.rr.com](mailto:kbaumann@se.rr.com)



## *Around the World with:*

By Benjamin Strong

### *The year in review*

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to reflect on the successes of the previous year. For the Amver program 2007 was another year of growth. First and foremost, 450 lives were saved in 2007 including the 154 passengers and crew from the cruise ship Explorer which sank near Antarctica. Those passengers were rescued by Amver participating cruise ship Nordnorge.



Incredibly, there were no serious injuries during the rescue which was reminiscent of another Amver success story; the Princendam sinking 28 years earlier.

1,182 additional vessels were added to the Amver system which helped Amver reach a record 3,392 vessels on plot for a 24 hour period on November. The average number of vessels on plot for 2007 increased to 3,245. Interest in the Amver website surged in 2007 with over 450,000 visits, a 61% increase over 2006.

*The Cruise Ship Nordnorge cruising Antarctica; picture taken by Hurtigruten/John Chardine*

### *50 years of saving lives at sea*

Amver is also embarking on its 50th anniversary. July 18, 1958 the Amver system became operational. The original plan for the implementation and operation of the merchant vessel reporting program, dated 1 April 1958, stated Amver's mission:

*To establish and maintain a comprehensive and effective merchant ship position reporting system in the North Atlantic Ocean Maritime Region (as defined in the National SAR Plan) in order to improve SAR procedures by reducing the time element in search procedures through having available a maximum number of vessel positions for immediate use, improving the probability of successful rescue through prior position knowledge, and reducing the cost of searches through having previous knowledge of distressed vessel and rescue vessel positions which enables better control of motor vessel and government vessel positions.*



*U.S. Customs House Bowling Green. Electronic apparatus used in the Amver program, a Coast Guard safety program that covers the entire Atlantic Ocean December 19, 1962. Picture by: The Port of New York Authority*

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Since 1958 Amver has grown to encompass the entire world and, as a result of support from the entire commercial shipping industry, saved countless lives. In 1966 Rear Admiral Irvin Stephens demonstrated the Amver system to a crowd of 200 guests of the New York Shipping Association of New York City. Admiral Stephens decided to give an unscheduled demonstration of the efficiency of the Amver system. He called the Amver headquarters in the Customs House

in Bowling Green and reported a vessel in distress 400 miles east of Cape Race. According to the New York Times article, while the admiral held the telephone punch cards began to fall into place in the computer, and in about two minutes the information came back identifying 12 ships within 200 miles of the position. Amver has certainly come a long way in 50 years. The entire process now takes seconds.

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### ***Amver vessel rescues sailor 230 miles from Maui***

A 43 year old Wailuku man was rescued by the Amver participating merchant ship CS Victory after his 30 foot sailing vessel began taking on water 230 miles off the coast of Maui December 13. The sailor notified United States Coast Guard rescue coordinators and activated his 406 MHz emergency beacon after the starboard bow broke off and the center hull began taking on water.

In a multi- agency response, the United States Coast Guard diverted a U.S. Navy P-3 Orion along with the USCG Cutter Galveston to assist. It was the 585 foot Panamanian flagged merchant ship CS Victory, however, that arrived on scene and rescued the Hawaiian sailor.

The CS Victory was approximately four hours away from the distress position. Captain Toshiyuki Fukuhara, master of the CS Victory, braved 20 knot winds to coordinate the rescue operations. Within six hours of the initial notification Captain Fukuhara had the survivor safely on board this ship.



*The M/V CS Victory. Picture by: Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd.*

## *Amver tanker rescues 5 from sailboat*

Five men on a voyage from Bermuda to Cruz Bay, St. John's suffered a rudder casualty on their sailboat and were rescued by the Amver participating tanker Atlantic Prosperity approximately 195 nautical miles north of St. Thomas.



*The sailing vessel Epiphany alongside the M/V Atlantic Prosperity. Picture by: Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd*

The men were aboard the sailing vessel Epiphany, sailing from Bermuda to St. John's when they suffered the rudder malfunction. As weather conditions began to deteriorate the master of the Epiphany activated his emergency beacon and was contacted by U.S. Coast Guard personnel. The Coast Guard immediately diverted the Atlantic Prosperity, a Panamanian flagged tanker, 70 miles from its course to rescue the sailors.

The master of the Atlantic Prosperity, despite 30 knot winds and 10 foot seas, quickly embarked the crew of the Epiphany. The survivors were taken to San Juan, Puerto Rico. "We are very pleased with our master and crew's professional rescue operation which rescued five sailors from the distressed sailing boat safely under difficult sea conditions" stated Yoshikazu Hirose, spokesperson for the Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, owner of the Atlantic Prosperity. "The tanker crew was very accommodating" said the crew of the Epiphany. "We are very appreciative of the work the tanker and U.S. Coast Guard to coordinate our rescue" they added.



*M/V Atlantic Prosperity Picture by: Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd*

## SAR PROGRAM POINTS OF CONTACT

USCG Headquarters Room 3106  
 Phone: 202-372-2075 / Fax: 202-372-2912  
[www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/sar.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/sar.htm)

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Ms. Dara Sanders .....202-372-2075  
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### SAR Publications:

*SAR publications currently available via the SAR Program's web site include:*

**U.S. National SAR Plan (NSP)** - The federal plan for coordinating civil search and rescue services to meet domestic needs and international commitments.

**U.S. National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS)** to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual - Provides guidance to federal agencies concerning implementation of the NSP and builds on the baseline established by the IAMSAR Manual. The NSS provides guidance to all federal forces, military and civilian, that support civil search and rescue operations.

**U.S. Coast Guard Addendum (CGADD)** to the U.S. National SAR Supplement - Establishes policy, guidelines, procedures and general information for Coast Guard use in search and rescue operations. The CGADD both compliments and supplements the NSS and IAMSAR.

## SHARE YOUR ON SCENE

When you have finished reading your copy of On Scene, please take the opportunity to share it with someone interested in Search and Rescue. **o/s**

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