

Human Stories of the U.S. Coast Guard

WILLIAM R. FLORES



On January 28, 1980, the Coast Guard Cutter BLACKTHORN collided with the tanker CAPRICORN near the entrance to Tampa Bay, Florida. As the BLACKTHORN began to capsize, Seaman Apprentice William R. Flores threw lifejackets to his shipmates already in the water and used his trouser belt to secure the lifejacket locker door in the open position allowing more to float to the surface. After most of the survivors had abandoned ship, nineteen-year-old Flores chose to remain on board the sinking ship to assist trapped crew members and sacrificed his own life in the process. Flores posthumously received the Coast Guard Medal for his unselfish acts of heroism.

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