

## Lifesaving in action

In 2008, E class lifeboats launched 635 times and rescued 201 people. In total, RNLI lifeboats launched 8,293 times, rescuing 7,612 people – an average of 21 people a day..

### A family saved

When a father saw his 2-year-old son fall into the river off their family houseboat in early January, he did what any parent would do: jumped straight in after him. But in the cold water and strong current he soon started to struggle to keep them both afloat. In the meantime, his wife rang 999 before attempting to get into their rowing boat to go and help. In her panic, she capsized the boat and all three found themselves in the water.

Thankfully the Chiswick E class was there within minutes. Station Manager Wayne Bellamy explained: 'It was so close to being a massive tragedy. The potential existed for an entire family to have died.'

Following the incident the father kindly wrote to the station: 'Just a brief note to thank the crew who warmed up myself, my wife and



Photo: Picasa 2.0

my son after he fell in the river. Your speedy response and help, not to mention somebody's woolly hat, were very much appreciated. I work onboard the [house]boat and see you patrolling day in, day out in all weathers. I've always been reassured by your presence. Thank you for being there.'

### The crew

Time is of the essence on any shout, but especially on the River Thames where many rescues involve people already in the water. Therefore, a mix of full timers and volunteers are needed at the four lifeboat stations along the river to ensure a fast enough response. They can launch within 90 seconds and aim to reach 95% of casualties on the river between Canvey Island in Essex and Teddington within 15 minutes.



Photo: Nathan Williams

To find out how to visit our lifeboat stations go to [rnli.org.uk/rnli\\_near\\_you](http://rnli.org.uk/rnli_near_you)

## The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

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Photo: James Reid

# RNLI

## E CLASS LIFEBOAT

The RNLI provides, on call, a 24-hour lifeboat search and rescue service to 100 nautical miles out from the coast of the UK and RoI.

RNLI lifeboats can be divided into two categories: all-weather and inshore. The E class is an inshore lifeboat (ILB). Found only at RNLI stations on the River Thames, the E class is the fastest lifeboat in the fleet and specially designed to meet the demands of the River. With its fast-running tide, powerful undercurrents, hidden debris and heavy traffic, the River Thames is surprisingly hostile for those on and by the water.

E class lifeboat stations are located at Gravesend in Kent; Tower in the heart of

London and Chiswick to the west. The E class is kept afloat for quick response.

Different classes of lifeboat are needed for various locations, primarily depending on geographical features, the kind of rescue work that the station is asked to do and the cover provided by neighbouring stations. The RNLI carries out a 5-yearly review of lifeboat stations, looking at the incidents they launch to and the changing pattern of marine activities to ensure that the existing and future lifeboat coverage are appropriate.

RNLI designers and engineers continually make improvements to existing craft to meet the changing needs of the lifeboat service and develop new classes of lifeboat as required.

'Fast, tough and buoyant, the E class is perfect for us here on the Thames. We can access the river's shallow areas, the jets are intrinsically safe and the solid sponson makes it easy to retrieve people from the water. We have lots of deck space to carry out first aid. I always feel safe in her.'

Helmsman Carl Schofield, Tower lifeboat station

Photo: Nathan Williams



Photo: Louise Taylor



Photo: James Reid

## The finer details

The E class lifeboat is used solely on the River Thames, and is the fastest boat in the RNLI fleet.

The boat is powered by waterjets that give it excellent manoeuvrability in the rapidly moving river flow. The E class also features a working platform at the stern that makes it easier to recover survivors from the water. In the unlikely event of a capsize she can be righted by a manually activated system using a bag on top of the roll bar.

The equipment includes radar, GPS with electronic chart, VHF radio, police radio, blue lights, siren and night vision equipment.

Towed inflatable rescue craft are strategically positioned along the river and can be attached to the E class to accommodate a further 60 survivors whenever necessary.

In return for their dedication and commitment, the RNLI makes a pledge to our volunteer crew that its rescue equipment is maintained to the highest standards and able to respond to emergencies at sea. The lifeboat refit process sees the entire craft stripped and rebuilt with any part found to be worn, torn or broken being repaired or replaced.



Photo: Nathan Williams



Photo: J Trenque

<b>Date introduced:</b>	2002	<b>Draught/depth:</b>	0.67m
<b>Displacement:</b>	3.86 tonnes	<b>Range/endurance:</b>	4 hours at full speed
<b>Launch type:</b>	Afloat	<b>Construction:</b>	Marine-grade aluminium alloy with a closed-cell polythene foam collar
<b>Number in fleet:</b>	6	<b>Engines:</b>	2 x Steyr 246 marine diesel – 240hp each at 4,100rpm
<b>Fuel capacity:</b>	520 litres	<b>Survivor capacity:</b>	20
<b>Length:</b>	9m		
<b>Crew:</b>	3		
<b>Beam/width:</b>	2.94m		
<b>Max speed:</b>	40 knots		

\*All figures correct at time of printing, April 2009

