

Lifesaving in action

In 2008, Severn class lifeboats launched 824 times and rescued 1,132 people. In total, RNLI lifeboats launched 8,293 times, rescuing 7,612 people – an average of 21 people a day.

A light in the dark

On 13 January 2008, severe gale force winds in the English Channel changed a routine passage into a nightmare for the 6,395 gross tonne merchant vessel *Ice Prince* and her 20 crew.

Her cargo of timber shifted causing the vessel to list dangerously and gave one crewman a suspected broken leg. An hour later she lost power.

Mark Criddle, Coxswain of Torbay's Severn class lifeboat recalled: 'When we got the call, with the weather we'd had all day, I knew it was going to be a big incident.' After a 'very rough and uncomfortable passage' the lifeboat stood by while, with great difficulty and at much risk to themselves, a helicopter's crew managed to winch 12 men from *Ice Prince* before being forced to leave the scene. Mark made the decision to go in with the lifeboat for the remaining eight seamen.

Only the lifeboat's searchlight pierced the pitch-black night. It took all of Mark's



Photo: Chris Slack

experience and skill at the helm to make over 50 approaches to get them off. Each time, the lifeboat and her crew were at risk from the half-submerged, heavily rolling superstructure of the vessel and the unstable cargo. Several of the Torbay crew had to harness themselves onto the foredeck to help the men onto the lifeboat. All eight men were saved.

Mark said: 'As a Coxswain, I am extremely pleased with how the lifeboat performed and the crew were just marvellous. I remember looking out from the flying bridge and seeing the crew stretching out their arms to these complete strangers to get them off. It is an image I will never forget ...'

The crew

The lifeboat is the key piece of equipment that the RNLI provides its volunteer crews. There are over 4,500 lifeboat crew members in the UK and RoI. It is thanks to their willingness to exchange leisure, comfort and sleep for cold, wet and fatigue, and to spend many hours of their own time training to become highly skilled and efficient, that such a high proportion of the RNLI's money can be spent on first-class lifeboats and equipment, not on salaries. Without their courage, determination and skill, lives cannot be saved.



Photo: Rod Hancock

To find out how to visit our lifeboat stations go to rnli.org.uk/rnli_near_you

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

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Photo: Nigel Millard



Lifeboats

RNLI

SEVERN 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 Severn is an all-weather class of lifeboat (ALB).

Developed by the RNLI in the early 1990s, the Severn class lifeboat is the largest in the fleet. She is designed to lie afloat and is inherently self-righting. She also carries a small inflatable Y boat that can be launched with a crane.

There are currently five classes of ALB in the RNLI fleet: Tyne, Mersey, Trent, Severn and Tamar. These boats can be operated safely in all weathers. They can self-right in the event of a capsized and are fitted with navigation, location

and communication equipment. The RNLI allows its ALBs a working life of around 25 years.

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.

'The Severn class is a fine sea-keeping lifeboat. It's excellent for the kind of offshore, long jobs we sometimes face, and can handle the toughest weather. She's very manoeuvrable too, which is essential for situations where you need to be alongside a casualty.'

Coxswain Brian O'Driscoll, Castletownbere lifeboat station



Photo: Nigel Millard

The finer details

Introduced in 1995, the Severn is the largest boat in the RNLI fleet. The sheerline sweeps down for ease of survivor recovery.

Her propellers and rudders lie in partial tunnels set into the hull that, along with the two bilge keels, provide excellent protection from damage in shallow water.

In addition to her twin engines, the Severn is fitted with a hydraulic-powered bow thruster for improved manoeuvrability.

The comprehensive electronics include VHF and MF radios with DSC functionality, VHF direction finder, DGPS with electronic chart system and radar.

The Severn carries a Y boat, an inflatable daughter boat complete with a 15hp outboard engine. This small craft is used in moderate conditions to access areas where the lifeboat cannot reach.

Comprehensive first aid equipment includes stretchers, oxygen and entonox. Other equipment includes a portable salvage pump carried in a watertight container.

In return for their dedication and commitment, the RNLI makes a pledge to its volunteer crew that the 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. The frequency of this process for all-weather lifeboats depends upon several criteria, including its hull material, whether it is kept afloat or housed and its class.



Photo: Steve Bicknell/Census



Photo: Chris Slack

Date introduced:	1995
Displacement:	42 tonnes
Last built:	2005
Launch type:	Afloat
Number in fleet:	44
Fuel capacity:	5,600 litres
Length:	17.3m
Crew:	7
Beam/width:	5.9m
Max speed:	25 knots
Draught/depth:	1.78m
Range/endurance:	250 nautical miles

Construction:	Hull: fibre reinforced composite with single-skin section below the chine and 100mm thick foam-cored sandwich above; Deck and superstructure: 25mm foam-cored sandwich
Engines:	2 x Caterpillar 3412 TA marine diesel – 1,250hp each at 2,300rpm
Survivor capacity:	Self-righting: 28 Non self-righting: 124

*All figures correct at time of printing, April 2009



All-weather lifeboats

Inshore rescue craft