



Cell structure

The 'all-in-one' Life Cell floatable LSA box will be rolled out to UK fishermen as part of a local safety scheme, writes Barbara Buchanan

Local fishermen operating off the Cleveland, UK coast – known for its strong rip tides and 'scar' rock formations – are to benefit from a new buoyant safety box.

Wind farm operator EDF Energy Renewables has teamed up with Tees Valley Community Foundation and Coastwatch Redcar to offer 40 of Life Cell's self-titled units to fishermen operating between Hartlepool and Saltburn-by-the-Sea. Distributed in the UK by Pinpoint Electronics, the Life Cells have wristband straps and can hold essential rescue equipment, including AIS, flares, a torch, an air whistle, a heliograph and a handheld VHF radio (see *Ship & Boat International* January/February 2017, page 13).

Coastwatch Redcar is a part of the Sea Safety Group's chain of UK coastal surveillance stations, which provide assistance to HM Coastguard in effecting sea rescues. The group is staffed by volunteers and funded entirely by charitable donations.

Coastwatch Redcar chairman Trevor Smith says that the kit's buoyancy allows the AIS device to still be accessible, which constitutes a major plus. "We were very impressed," Smith adds. "It's a simple thing to put into a boat, full of equipment, and it doubles up as a floating device."

Storage reassessment

Australian Scott Smiles created the kit after nearly losing his life in a boating accident off the New South Wales coast five years ago. He was on a 12.8m flybridge motor cruiser with his 11-year-old son and a friend and his son.

"I saw smoke coming out of the exhaust and, within seconds, several tonnes of water were swelling around the engine," he recalls. "I grabbed the emergency position indicating radio beacon [EPIRB] and the Eski [floating cool box] as the boat sank within seconds."

They were plucked up by helicopter but Smiles considered they were lucky



EDF Energy Renewables has teamed up with Tees Valley Community Foundation and Coastwatch Redcar to offer 40 Life Cell units to local fishermen

to be alive. The experience made him realise how important it was to have rescue equipment easily to hand and in one place.

"The way safety gear is currently being stored is that it's under the seats or in the gunnels and almost always out of sight,"

"It's a simple thing to put into a boat, full of equipment, and it doubles up as a floating device"

he says. "Typically it is stored in a bag or a screw lid drum, both of which are not ideal in the water. If you can't get your hands on it within five seconds, it can cost you your life."

Another advantage is that fishermen can easily remove the Life Cell box from

their vessels at the end of a working day, to prevent potential theft of their LSAs.

Positive contribution

Life Cell kits are typically mounted on a bracket in a key location in a highly visible area onboard.

The company is currently working with another firm to integrate an AIS transmitter on the Life Cell. The device would be mounted on a three-way rotating bracket with the AIS activated once it hits the sea, thereby avoiding the need for a flare or use of the EPIRB.

The kit was launched in the UK late last year and has been installed aboard a number of patrol and governmental boats in Australia. Smiles says that the Life Cell is also currently undergoing US Coast Guard approval.

EDF has a 27-turbine wind farm near Redcar and decided to make a positive contribution to the fishing community by offering funding for the kits. The company's local fishing liaison officer, James Wilson, says: "Our aim has always been to ensure that the wind farm can co-exist safely and effectively with local fishing activities." **SBI**