

Fishermen experience fear factor at RNLI event



Freezing cold water, large waves and heavy rain were among the challenges faced by 16 fishermen who took part in a two-day event at the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) HQ in Poole, Dorset last month.

The 16 fishermen from across the UK and Ireland took part in the event at the RNLI College, where a series of exercises were run in the lifesaving charity's sea survival pool to improve survival techniques and recovery procedures.

Using the charity's unique pool

ensured the RNLI's Fishing Safety team were able to create real-life sea conditions to ensure the fishermen were fully aware of the dangers and challenges of man overboard situations. The pool – which is used to train the charity's volunteer lifeboat crew members – features realistic seawater temperatures and can replicate artificial waves, as well as simulating rain and wind conditions.

The two-day event put the fishermen through a variety of different scenarios, allowing them to experience a taste of cold water shock in a safe and

controlled environment. The participants were able to compare the differences of being in the water with and without floatation devices and wearing their normal fishing clothing. They also practiced recovering a man overboard during the event.

In addition, representatives from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch and Portsmouth University gave presentations about the effects of cold water shock.

Frankie Horne, RNLI Fishing Safety Manager, said: "We ran this event to show fishermen

exactly what it would be like to fall overboard. Using our sea survival pool meant the fishermen experienced the same cold water temperatures that they could face if they really fell overboard at sea.

"In giving these fishermen a taste of the potentially deadly impact that cold water shock can have in debilitating the body, we hope that they'll be more likely to wear their personal floatation devices at sea to increase their chance of survival if they do fall overboard."

"The fishermen were able to see just how vital personal floatation devices are, enabling them to stay afloat and alive in the sea long enough for a rescue to take place."

According to Derek Cardno, Safety Officer for the Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF), previous training undertaken in the UK tended to take place in warm swimming pools. But by using the RNLI's special pool and training facility in Dorset, which features more realistic summer seawater temperatures and replicates artificial waves and other real-life environmental conditions, fishermen will gain a much better appreciation of the true challenges involved.

"For many years survival training has taken place in Scotland in warm indoor swimming pools, which doesn't reflect the kind of conditions encountered in real life," said Mr Cardno. "We are

hopeful that this pilot course developed by the RNLI and the industry will help the fishermen taking part to fully comprehend the very serious challenges involved in immersion in cold water during man overboard incidents, including large pounding waves.

"We are determined to do all we can to dramatically reduce the number of man overboard incidents each year – and we believe that effective and realistic training is the key for achieving this aim.

"Reducing deaths from man overboard incidents is all about prevention. The industry is fully committed to the promotion of the wearing of a personal floatation device on the open deck, but the biggest lifesaver is to stay on the boat and not fall overboard in the first place.

The RNLI fishing safety team will be on hand at Skipper Expo Int, Galway, Stand 51 to help fishermen with any queries about onboard personal safety and vessel stability.



"It was a life changing experience. Since then I have never left the pier without my PFD on. It opened my eyes to the danger"



Robert McKinley - MFV Maggie Anne - Greencastle

"I hope that I can pass on some of the knowledge gained to my own crew and I believe that fishermen's training should change to be more in line with the environment we work in"



Peter Bruce - MFV Budding Rose - Peterhead

"I never realised the frightening effect cold water has on the body when you go overboard. This experience has left me better prepared if I do encounter a situation on my boat"



Johnny Kearney - MFV Crowded Hour - Kilkeel

"It was a wake-up call to all the fishermen that participated. Being better prepared means meeting the rescue services half-way in the event of an accident at sea"



Charlie Cavanagh - Coast Guard - Greencastle

"It was a real reality check. I never knew how much control you lose when you hit cold water."



Leslie Coffey - MFV Guillemot - Ballycastle