

MOB Lifesaver

PBO
TESTED

PBO checks out a Dyneema lifting strop that can help to retrieve a man overboard

PRICE: £21.90 inc p&p

CONTACT: www.moblifesavers.com

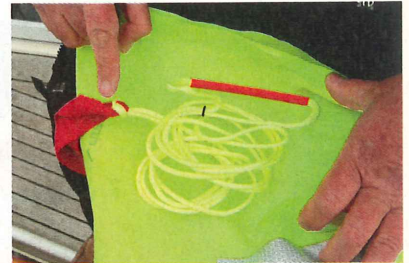
One of the shortcomings of lifejackets is that the lifting strop is normally a short webbing strap sewed onto the waistbelt. This keeps it neat, but to attach any sort of lifting tackle you need to fumble around at waterline level – which, with the increasing freeboard of modern boats, can make recovery of a man overboard tricky. The TeamO lifejacket (see previous page) addresses this with its backtow harness, which can also lift you out of the water, but how do you improve a current lifejacket?

RYA instructor Duncan Wells has devised a lifting strop that will help. 'On yachts we can't reach down to get a line onto a man overboard,' he says, 'and even on motorboats with bathing platforms it's hard to grab and keep hold of the casualty.'

His solution is the MOB Lifesaver, a high-strength, hi-vis Dyneema line that attaches to the lifting loop/bucket in a lifejacket. When the lifejacket inflates the Lifesaver floats out onto the water and is easy for the rescuer to grab with the boathook. They can then secure the MOB to the boat while they set up their retrieval rig. Duncan took us out to show us how the product works.



The Lifesaver is packed inside the lifejacket's cover, sitting in a folding pouch attached to the oral inflation tube

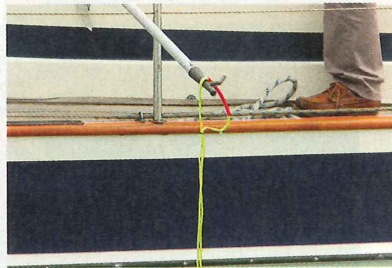


The hi-vis Dyneema line is flaked inside the pouch

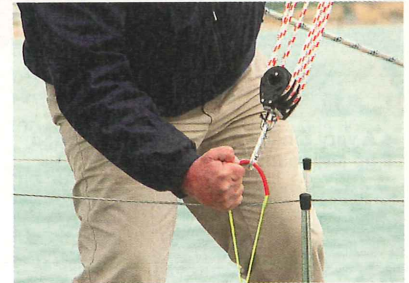
The MOB Lifesaver – in action!



1 Tony, our victim, falls in. As the lifejacket inflates, the floating Dyneema line is propelled free and floats nearby.



2 The line can then be retrieved easily with a boathook and made off to a cleat to secure the casualty while you ready the retrieval kit.



3 The lifesaver can then be clipped to a retrieval line (here, a 7:1 handy-billy using ball-bearing blocks).



4 You can lift the casualty like this – but he runs the risk of hydrostatic squeeze, whereby as he exits the water vertically, the squeeze of the water pressure on the legs reduces and the blood rushes to his feet, dropping blood pressure – which can strain the heart.



5 Duncan's solution is to use a piece of chain encapsulated in plastic pipe, with a rope strop. This he lowers into the water.



6 The weight of the chain and the stiffness of the pipe allows him to carefully pass it under Tony's legs until it's safely below his knees.



7 A pre-tied loop clips to the handy-billy's carabiner.



8 Gordon hauls away and Tony rises – in a fair degree of comfort – and in a horizontal position.



9 Tony's at guardwire height and can be safely brought back aboard.

PBO verdict

This is a simple device – and at first glance appear to be a length of line. However, Duncan has put some serious thought into the development. While Dyneema might float, the polyester core in which it usually resides sinks, and this hi-vis floating line is made specially to Duncan's specification. It allows you to carefully retrieve the line with a boathook without endangering the casualty, and makes retrieving a casualty from a boat with high topsides much easier.

You can buy the full kit, including handy-billy, Lifesaver and chain stop, in a bucket ready for deployment.

Sea-Tags **PBO** **TESTED**

A Bluetooth system which alerts you when a wearer falls overboard

PRICE: £79.95 PER TAG

CONTACT: www.sea-tags.com

There have been MOB monitoring systems available for some time – we tested offerings from Raymarine and others back in 2011 – but the prevalence of smartphones has led to some developments in this area.

One of the most recent, which we saw at METS last year, is the Sea-Tags system. At its most basic, this is a Bluetooth system which alerts you when the wearer of a wristband falls overboard. It uses updated Bluetooth technology that promises greater power.

The wristbands are small and unobtrusive, and are switched on with a button press and hold, whereupon the band will vibrate to let you know it is active. The battery is a CR2032 3V one, which will last a stated 600 hours of continuous use. The app can be downloaded to Apple and Android phones, and can monitor as many wristbands as you like: there is no stated limit. You can use as many phones as you like to monitor the crew: simply scan the QR code on the back of the band to register it with the phone.

There are two modes to the app – Crew and Solo. When the Crew mode is activated, no mobile network is necessary, and once a Bluetooth transmitter moves out of range, it displays an alert on the screen and

marks the position of the MOB. The app then displays range, bearing and



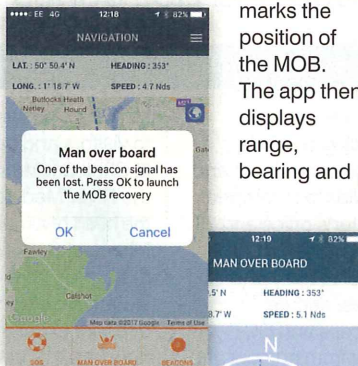
Sea-Tags wristbands are unobtrusive

heading information to help you locate the MOB. It's worth pointing out that this device marks the location that the MOB went over: it won't keep this updated.

There's another mode – Solo – which requires GSM coverage. If the wristband-wearer is to fall overboard, the phone (if left aboard!) will send an SMS text message to a contact ashore with position and time information about the MOB, leaving them to contact the phone to check if it's a false alarm and alert the coastguard if not.

The system is designed for boats under 15m, and isn't recommended for carbon or steel boats as this can affect the Bluetooth performance.

We tried it when Tony (see left) leapt overboard, and the alarm sounded almost immediately he entered the water – Bluetooth not transmitting through the wet stuff. The app instantly launched a notification and sounded an alarm, which said that contact had been lost, and asked if we wanted to launch the MOB recovery mode. On tapping 'OK', it showed a screen with position data to locate the MOB.



ABOVE A notification appears when the tag goes out of range

RIGHT A location screen pops up with range and bearing

PBO verdict

A useful system, as long as everyone aboard is aware that it is on, and the phone with the app is left with the volume up and in an obvious location. That said, it provided a useful audible warning that a band had gone out of range, and useful guidance to re-locate it. Devices like these do suffer from the 'boy that cried wolf' syndrome, so it's important to check the bands in and out each time you use them, and make sure you don't suffer from false alarms!