

RNLI Fact File

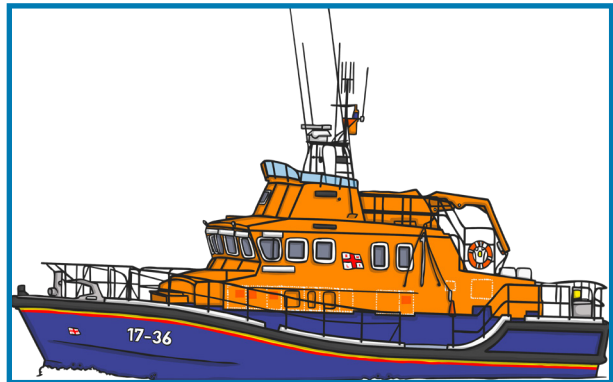
What Is the RNLI?

The RNLI is a charity that saves lives at sea. This search and rescue service has over 300 lifeboats, with additional hovercrafts, around the UK and Ireland. RNLI stands for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Lifeboats

Different lifeboats are needed depending on the location and type of rescue. There are two kinds of lifeboats: all-weather and inshore.

All-weather lifeboats are safe to use in varying weather conditions. They are self-righting after capsizing, can travel at high speeds and are fitted with navigation, communication and location equipment. They range from 11 to 17 metres in length and have a crew of six to seven people.



Inshore lifeboats are used nearer to the shore, where the water is shallow.

They are also used near to cliffs, rocks or inside caves. Inshore lifeboats range from 4 to 9 metres in length and have a crew of two to four people.

The RNLI also has hovercrafts, which are useful in areas which can't be reached by lifeboats, such as mud flats.

Lifeboat Crew

Most RNLI crew members are volunteers; their work is often dangerous and difficult. Volunteers give up their own time and don't get paid.

The coxswain is in command of the all-weather lifeboat. He/she is responsible for the launch and safety of all crew members. The coxswain must do everything possible to rescue those in danger and make sure all equipment is ready for the next rescue. Most individuals who do this job are volunteers but some are paid.

Each all-weather lifeboat station has a full-time mechanic, who maintains the engine of the lifeboat and all of the machinery at the station. Whilst out at sea, it's the mechanic's job to check that all machinery is working well. He/she also works as part of the crew.

The helm is a volunteer who is responsible for the inshore lifeboat during launch, and whilst out at sea. He/she is also in charge of making sure the lifeboat

is always ready for its next rescue. This role involves taking responsibility for the safety of all crew members, and for the rescue itself.

Volunteers make up the rest of the crew, helping the helm or coxswain during rescues. Volunteer crew members have to attend regular training so they can keep their boat handling, radio communication and casualty care skills up to date.



A hovercraft commander is in charge of the hovercraft during launch and rescue. After the rescue, the commander must make sure that the vessel is ready for the next emergency.

Kit

Kit varies, depending on which vessel you are working on. Important items include: gloves, boots, waterproofs, thermal undersuit and top, dry suit, life jacket and helmet.

Final Facts

- There are 237 lifeboat stations around the UK and Republic of Ireland.
- There are four lifeboat stations along the River Thames.
- RNLI lifeguards patrol over 200 beaches around the UK and Channel Islands.
- The RNLI has a flood rescue team.
- It costs about £460,000 to run the RNLI every day.
- There are around 4,600 RNLI volunteers in the UK.
- The RNLI rescues an average of 23 people every day.

RNLI Questions

1. What is the RNLI?

2. Compare the size of inshore lifeboats with all-weather lifeboats.

3. What do you think the phrase 'self-righting after capsizing' means?

4. Why are hovercrafts needed?

5. If someone needed to be rescued near to the cliffs, which boat would be launched?

6. Why is the work of the volunteer lifeboat crew described as 'dangerous and difficult'?
Explain your reasoning.

7. Why is the helm an important role?

8. Name two other services offered by the RNLI.

RNLI Answers

1. What is the RNLI?

The RNLI is a charity that saves lives at sea. This search and rescue service has over 300 lifeboats, with additional hovercraft, around the UK and Ireland. RNLI stands for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

2. Compare the size of inshore lifeboats with all-weather lifeboats.

All-weather lifeboats are larger than inshore lifeboats. All-weather lifeboats range from 11 to 17 metres in length, whereas inshore lifeboats range from 4 to 9 metres in length.

3. What do you think the phrase 'self-righting after capsizing' means?

Own answers. (The phrase 'self-righting after capsizing' means that once the vessel has capsized, it corrects itself by turning over to avoid sinking.)

4. Why are hovercrafts needed?

Hovercrafts are useful in areas that can't be reached by lifeboats, such as mud flats.

5. If someone needed to be rescued near to the cliffs, which boat would be launched?

If someone needed to be rescued near to the cliffs, an inshore lifeboat would be launched.

6. Why is the work of the volunteer lifeboat crew described as 'dangerous and difficult'? Explain your reasoning.

Own answers – could make reference to physical risks and challenges involved and the chance of drowning or being injured during a rescue.

7. Why is the helm an important role?

The helm is an important role because this person is responsible for the inshore lifeboat during launch and whilst out at sea. He/she is also in charge of making sure the lifeboat is always ready for its next rescue. Finally, the helm is responsible for the safety of all crew members, and for the rescue itself.

8. Name two other services offered by the RNLI.

Two other services offered by the RNLI include the RNLI lifeguards and flood rescue teams.