

The people of the RNLI



The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is a registered charity that saves lives at sea. It provides the 24-hour on-call service to cover search and rescue requirements out to 100 nautical miles out from the coast of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland and a seasonal beach lifeguard service on appropriate beaches in the south west of England. The RNLI is independent from Government and continues to rely on voluntary contributions and legacies for its income. All sorts of people help the charity save lives at sea.

Train one, save many

These days, less than 10% of crew members come from professional maritime backgrounds. The skills they need range from navigation to search and rescue; from being able to repair a lifeboat engine at sea to resuscitating someone who has stopped breathing. Each of these skills can save the life of someone in trouble at sea.

The RNLI can't train a crew member to be willing to risk their life to save others. That comes from within them. But the RNLI can make sure they have the skills they need to save lives.

There is a significant cost attached to training crew members and lifeguards, and the charity has launched the Crew Training Campaign to help meet this cost.

Lifeboat crews

There are around 4,800 lifeboat crew members in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, of which 345 are women. Because they are mostly volunteers, the RNLI is able to spend funds on first-class equipment and lifeboats instead of wages. People from all walks of life selflessly give up their time and comfort to carry out rescues, and train for them, in difficult and often dangerous conditions.

Stations with an all weather lifeboat have a full time mechanic, who is a crew member and can also be the coxswain or second coxswain. Each station also has a lifeboat medical adviser who is a doctor. The medical adviser may go to sea if medical help is needed and helps with first aid training.

Lifeboat services in 2004

Launches
7,656

an average of more than 21 a day

Lives saved
433

an average of more than one a day

Total people rescued
7,507

an average of 21 a day

Since the RNLI was founded in 1824, its lifeboats have saved more than 137,000 lives.

More and more people are using the sea for leisure and RNLI crews are responding to an increased number of incidents relating to people engaged in recreational pursuits.

In 2004, 52% of launches were to leisure craft users, 27% to people not using any kind of craft, 13% to merchant or fishing vessels and 8% to other sea users.

Lifeguard services in 2004

RNLI lifeguards were called to

8,010 incidents

saving
53 lives

and assisting a total of
9,041 people





Beach Lifeguards

RNLI Beach Lifeguards receive specialist rescue training, but are also taught the importance of surveillance and preventing incidents before they happen. Delivering beach safety advice is a key part of the role.

The RNLI employs around 300 seasonal lifeguards and has about 50 volunteer lifeguards at 59 units in eight areas, all within the RNLI's southern division.

Shore helpers

Not all volunteers crew the lifeboat. Shore helpers assist with the launch and recovery of the lifeboat and are a vital part of the team. Sometimes they have specific jobs, such as head launcher or tractor driver, depending on the way the lifeboat is launched.



Committee members

Lifeboat stations have a voluntary management committee, with local people taking up important posts. A key role is the lifeboat operations manager (LOM) who has responsibility for authorising the launch of a lifeboat and the day-to-day management of the station.



Lifeboat press officers

Most lifeboat stations have a voluntary lifeboat press officer (LPO), who maintains a good relationship with the local press, television and radio. LPOs inform the media when there is a launch and act as a link during and immediately after a service. They are supported by divisional media relations managers and the HQ Press Office.



Branches

There are approximately 1,100 fundraising branches and guilds throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Centred around friendship and fun, they help raise RNLI funds to save lives at sea, and give members a rewarding sense of achievement. Branches and guilds have close links with lifeboat stations, which helps generate support and enthusiasm.

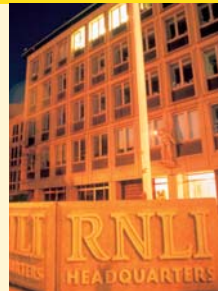


Divisional staff

The RNLI's lifeboat stations are managed by six operational divisions. Each division is supervised by a divisional inspector and has specialist engineers, surveyors and electronics experts who look after the requirements of stations in their division.

HQ staff

The RNLI could not run as efficiently as it does without its staff, who are based at divisional offices and the charity's headquarters in Poole. Staff members include lifeboat designers and engineers, crew trainers, shoreworks staff, fundraisers and administrators.



The Trustee Committee

The RNLI's work is directed by a Trustee Committee, made up of volunteers with skills and experience of particular relevance to the RNLI. The Committee is elected by the Council, which also brings guidance and advice to the Trustees.

Will makers

Some of the most generous supporters of the RNLI are those who leave bequests in their wills. More information on legacies is available from the RNLI Legacy Enquiries Officer on 01202 663032.

Fundraisers

Each year thousands of volunteers lend their time and talents to boost funds for the RNLI. They arrange and take part in all sorts of enjoyable fundraising activities, including raft races, coffee mornings, suppers, beach football competitions and sponsored runs.



Members

With almost a quarter of a million members, the RNLI is supported by all sorts of people. There are three grades of membership – Shoreline for people who want to support the efforts of the RNLI in saving lives at sea, Offshore for those most likely to be in need of the RNLI's rescue service, and Governor. Storm Force is the RNLI's membership club for children.

An annual or life Governor is demonstrating a very great commitment to the work of our volunteer crews. Governors may vote at the RNLI's annual general meeting and attend the annual award ceremony. Governors may also receive all the benefits of Offshore membership at no extra cost.





Sea Safety teams

It is the role of some RNLI volunteers to try and prevent people getting into trouble on the water in the first place. RNLI Sea Safety teams deliver safety messages and advice in various ways, including demonstrating safety equipment to clubs, taking roadshows to events, and offering advice at slipways and marinas.

Members of the public can also request that a volunteer pays a visit to talk through boat safety equipment with them – a free scheme known as SEA Check (Safety Equipment Advisory Check).



Education team

Regional education officers work with teams of volunteers to educate children and young people about the RNLI, how they can help, and how to stay safe on or near the sea. They give presentations at schools, youth groups, lifeboat stations and various events.

Shop and museum assistants

Members of the public usually show a great deal of interest in the work of the RNLI and its fascinating past. Thanks to the help of volunteers, the charity runs shops and museums around the coast, which boost funds and public support.



You!

The RNLI needs people like you so that it can continue to save lives at sea. Supporters and volunteers from all walks of life have helped make the charity what it is today. Can you help too? Contact your regional office or RNLI Headquarters for more information.



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This factsheet is one of a series.

Other titles available are:

The RNLI today - SAP code INF011

The RNLI to the rescue - SAP code INF013