

SAFETRX APP AIDS SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATION

The vessel tracking application – SafeTrx – which was recently involved in the co-ordination of events offshore during Ireland's largest underwater search and recovery operation in Cork, is to roll out its latest version later this summer to improve safety at sea for boat users.

A vessel smartphone tracking application was deployed to assist with the co-ordinated search and recovery operation in Baltimore, Co. Cork, which concluded on 10 July with the recovery of the body of a 20-year-old male off the coast of Baltimore, Co. Cork.

The use of the SafeTrx application enabled Coast Guard, in association with the local SAR organisation, West Cork Underwater Search and Rescue (WCUSAR), to track all vessels involved and provided added security to the overall operation.

The operation, which lasted two days, involved 94 volunteer divers and 14 boats. The SafeTrx software was able to track the position of the volunteer dive boats allowing the WCUSAR teams to sequence the overall dive recovery plan while at the same time logging automatic traffic reports (TRs) with the Irish Coast Guard Valentia Marine Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC).

The ability of WCUSAR co-ordinators and the Irish Coast Guard to be able to view the logged positions in real time contributed to the safe recovery operation. The recovery operation involved the Gardaí, Navy, Army, Civil Defense, RNLI and the Coast Guard.

TRACK-ONLY MODE

SafeTrx provides boat users, who do not have or use an Automatic Identification System (AIS), with a cheap, easy,



Simon Coveney, Minister for the Marine and Defence, pictured with DCI general manager John Murphy, and product manager Nessa Malone, at the presentation of the 'Innovation in Maritime Safety Award'.

automated and reliable means to keep the Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities informed of their voyage plans and dynamic location.

The vessel smartphone tracking application, which was launched in 2013, has been designed in close co-operation with Coast Guard and sea rescue organisations.

"The application is a fully automated, proven, cost-effective and easy-to-use

solution. It's now the standard solution in mobile application vessel tracking in Ireland, the UK, Australia, Spain, South Africa and the Netherlands. SafeTrx takes the search out of search and rescue," noted John Murphy, General Manager of DeCare Systems Ireland (DSI), the company behind SafeTrx.

"We have collaborated with SAR organisations to shape the technical and operational aspects of SafeTrx 2015,



Branded KNRM Helpt (Dutch for Helps), the new SafeTrx 2015 app is available in Dutch and English.

which we believe offers significant functional enhancements to the existing proven platform,” he added.

Key to SafeTrx 2015 is the inclusion of a new track-only mode, which broadens the use of SafeTrx to the boating community that prefers a ‘quick start’ mode to the traditional Sail Plan mode. The new ‘Distress and Assistance Call’ feature allows boaters to quickly make a distress call from within the application.

A major focus in SafeTrx 2015 is to improve boater trip planning. With this in mind, the SafeTrx app now has the ability to display ENC data and can include location-based live weather data. Both are powerful new features to facilitate trip preparation.

SAFETY AWARENESS

The addition of personalised checklists promotes further awareness of safety by encouraging the boater to create and review a list of checklist items prior to departure.

Boat users ending a Sail Plan with SafeTrx 2015 will now be prompted to notify their emergency contacts that they have successfully arrived at their destination. SafeTrx 2015 has a mobile logbook feature that allows the user to store up to 20 trips, which can subsequently be replayed within the app in video playback mode. And finally, SMS Donate adds fundraising capabilities within the application.

The Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Institution (KNRM) is the launch customer for the 2015 version of SafeTrx and it has been a great success. A very successful social media campaign has led to thousands of Dutch boat owners and water sport enthusiasts downloading and registering within days of the launch.

With both the Sail Plan and Track Only modes, the application has proven popular with the non-GMDSS community – kayakers, canoeists, dinghies, single fishermen in boats, hire boats and jet skis.

NETHERLANDS RESCUE

Within two weeks of the launch, the app was used in its first rescue in the Netherlands. A boat owner, adrift without engine power, used the new emergency button in the app to trigger an alert. The Coast Guard was able to locate the vessel using the SafeTrx monitoring console and dispatch a KNRM Lifeboat to render immediate assistance!

Branded KNRM Helpt (Dutch for Helps), the app is available in Dutch and English, and is a key element to KNRM’s new prevention programme ‘Veilig uit, veilig thuis’ (Safe at Sea, Safe at Home), which is targeted at boaters to provide a tool aimed at improving safety.

Roemer Boogaard, Managing Director of KNRM, commented, “We think we can make an important contribution to the safety of Netherlands watersport end-users by offering them the KNRM Helpt application, which is free to all watersporters.”

PRODUCT RECOGNITION

Recognition of the value of the product is hitting the mainstream. In the past few months the application picked up a number of awards in the US and in Ireland.

In the US, the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts (AIVA) awarded SafeTrx the Silver Award of Distinction in the ‘Best Navigation/Maps on a Mobile App’ category, on behalf of the 2015 Communicator Awards. The SafeTrx website also won the Gold Award of Excellence for ‘Best Activist Website’.

And with nominations in two categories at the inaugural Irish Maritime Industry awards in June, SafeTrx was the winner in the ‘Innovation in Maritime Safety Award’ category.

WIDENING THE NET

Partnership talks are also ongoing between DeCare Systems Ireland (DSI), the company behind the SafeTrx vessel tracking application, and the German Maritime Search and Rescue Service (Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Rettung Schiffbrüchiger) to implement the vessel tracking application in Germany.

Udo Helge Fox, Executive Director of the DGzRS, said that SafeTrx gives rescue services access to data the skippers provide themselves, as long as they are in range of a mobile network.

“In case of an emergency, the MRCC can use the stored data to support search missions. Sometimes the information we get on missing leisure boats is very poor. We are sure that SafeTrx can help to close this gap and will be of great support to locate people who need assistance, and it will minimise false alerts from family members that we often get if crews are overdue.”

With responsibility for 70 per cent of



John Murphy, General Manager of DSI, and Udo Helge Fox, Executive Director of the DGzRS, pictured at the World Maritime Rescue Congress in Bremerhaven.

all sea rescues in Sweden, the Swedish Sea Rescue Society ((Svenska Sällskapet för Räddning af Skeppsbrutne) is also due to implement SafeTrx in Sweden later this year, in a bid to help promote safe and responsible recreational boating on the Swedish coast and on the major inland lakes.

Mikael Hinnerson, SSRS Head of Research and Development said: “We hope that SafeTrx will help to enhance safety for water users along Sweden’s long coastline, with its many archipelagos, as well as on many inland lakes”.

MASS RESCUE OPERATION

SafeTrx was one of the technologies to feature in SAREX MONALISA 2.0 Mass Rescue Operation (MRO – the European-wide maritime project, including 39 partners from 10 countries – recently in Valencia.

Led by Salvamento Marítimo (the Spanish Maritime Safety Agency), the large-scale SAR exercise simulated a fire caused by a mechanical failure on a large passenger vessel in transit from Palma De Mallorca to Valencia.

SafeTrx was used to identify nearby vessels of opportunity that could assist in the MRO. A Red Cross vessel running the SafeTrx software simulated a passing vessel in the exercise offering assistance to the SAR response. The Spanish Maritime Agency also performed a land-based exercise for this mass evacuation.

The aim of this mass rescue operation exercise was to reveal any shortcomings that may exist in the present SAR procedures. It also tested the current applicable contingency plans of the different safety management agencies involved in such an event. The results will be used as a basis for improvements.