



Wearing My Lifejacket Saved My Life

Noel O'Sullivan hails from Castletownbere, Co. Cork. He has fished for whitefish for 22 years. Noel's vessel 'Discovery' sank 110 miles South of Mizen Head on Monday 29th January 2007... here's his story...

'It was a normal day's fishing. In fact, it was a great day as catching was good and weather conditions were perfect. It was relatively calm. We were busy hauling in the catch when I noticed she was listing slightly. I knew immediately there was something wrong. I told the crew to launch the life rafts. As the life rafts hit the water, she listed violently and we jumped into the water. We watched as she capsized onto one of the life rafts, puncturing it and narrowly missing two crewmembers.

Five of the crew sought refuge on the life raft that was still intact. They made it to the raft as they had put on their lifejackets properly; they had fastened the crotch strap which enabled them to swim to the raft. The remaining crew member and I had not done so and we had no choice but to cling to the other partially deflated raft. We decided that the safest thing to do was stay close to the vessel but the diesel fumes made it difficult to breathe.

We were an hour and a quarter in the water before we saw a plane overhead. That's it, we thought we were saved, but the plane flew away and we were left treading the freezing water. The ships EPIRB had been activated and it was flashing in the water. I prayed the call would be answered, I prayed that I would see my family again. With no survival suit for protection, and knowing we were 110 miles South of Mizen Head, I began to despair.

"Before the accident, I didn't take safety seriously. Now I know why it's so important."

After more than two hours in the water, we saw a large tanker approaching. The relief was immense. They hoisted us onboard. I cannot thank the crew of the 'Front Commander', the Air Corps and the Coastguard enough for saving us that day.

I was terrified going back fishing, but I went back as it's my livelihood, it's what I know. Despite the accident, I still love to fish.

The difference is that I am more aware of the dangers now. To be honest, before the accident, I didn't take safety seriously. Now I know why it's so important. Trust me when an accident happens at sea you don't have time to think...

I would appeal to all fishermen to wear their lifejackets, it may save your life and the lives of your crew someday'.

Hear Noel's full story on www.bim.ie



Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board



Support the campaign on BIM's Facebook page