

# AMERICA'S PROTECTORS

## Mayday! New System Helps Distressed Boaters

(NAPSA)—When a disaster strikes at sea, time is of the essence. Mere minutes could mean the difference between life and death. The U.S. Coast Guard has a new maritime communications system that reduces the time it takes to locate a distressed boater—even when the “mayday” emergency call is short and the boater is unsure of his exact location.

Called “Rescue 21” for its ability to save lives in the 21st century, the system already is proving its worth along the eastern U.S. coastline, where it was first installed.

This fall, in the chilly waters off the coast of Ocean City, Maryland, three people were fishing when their boat began to take on water. Before communications were lost, the boaters sent a mayday call saying they were near a “green can buoy.” Two Coast Guard rescue boats immediately were sent but the boat was nowhere to be seen.

Within minutes, the Coast Guard tapped into the new Rescue 21 system and identified the exact latitude and longitude coordinates of the distressed boat. A Coast Guard vessel went to that specific location and found two men and one woman on the keel of a capsized 20-foot, gray boat—not an easy find in the vast, gray-blue ocean! Despite initial concerns about hypothermia, all three were in good condition after emerging from the 60-degree water.

“If it weren’t for Rescue 21, this case could have taken much longer and had a terrible outcome,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Jeremy Moore, a U.S. Coast Guard watchstander at the Eastern Shore sector. “The direction-



**New technology called Rescue 21 lets the U.S. Coast Guard find the location of boats in distress by honing in on their Mayday calls.**

finding equipment was accurate and we got them out of the water quickly.”

Using digital technology to monitor, track and find boaters, Rescue 21 replaces a decades-old emergency radio system. Rescue 21 is first being installed in Atlantic City, New Jersey and Chincoteague, Virginia, then expanded to 44 additional regions in the future.

Components of the system also can be dispatched for disaster recovery. After Hurricane Katrina, when communications lines were destroyed in Louisiana, the Rescue 21 Disaster Recovery System was deployed to restore vital Coast Guard maritime radio communications. Using Rescue 21, the Coast Guard was able to assist the “Douglas,” a boat that struck an object in the southern part of the Mississippi River.

In addition to helping the Coast Guard rescue boaters, Rescue 21 provides a new way to stand watch over the nation’s coastal waters. This will help the Coast Guard fulfill key missions well into the future, such as protecting the nation’s homeland.