

NOAA Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking (SARSAT) System Saves Lives

COSPAS-SARSAT is an international search and rescue system that uses satellites to detect and locate emergency beacons carried by ships, aircraft and individuals. The system consists of a network of satellites, ground stations, mission control centers and rescue coordination centers. Here are some highlights of the 347 rescues from fiscal year 2007.

On January 11 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal north of the Bismark Archipelago, New Guinea. The distress beacon automatically activated when the Fishing Vessel Dolores 830 sank after being hit by a large wave. The crew of 25 people managed to board their life boats. The Coast Guard Marsec Rescue Coordination Center was able to communicate with a sister vessel the Dolores 834 via Immarsat. Dolores 834 diverted to the scene and took the crewmembers of the sunken vessel aboard. Twenty-five SARSAT Rescues.

On March 23 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal in Curry County, Oregon. A 54 year old man activated his 406 MHz PLB when he suffered a compound fracture in his right leg and was going into shock. The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center received the SARSAT alert and contacted the Coast Guard Station North Bend. Coast Guard launched a helicopter which arrived on the scene and transported the injured man to a waiting ambulance for transport to a local hospital. One SARSAT Rescue.

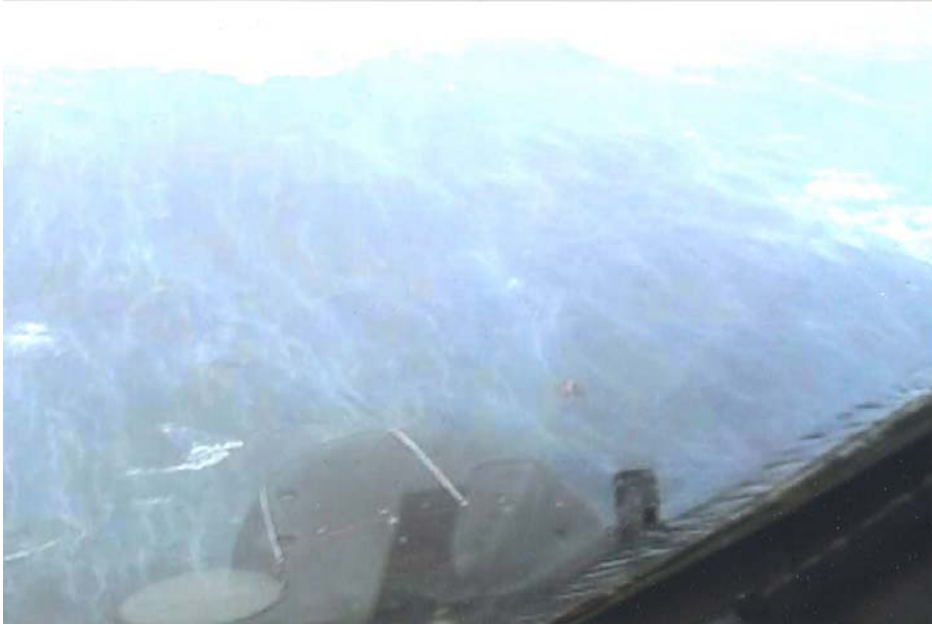
On April 9 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 121.5 MHz distress signal in the Lake Tahoe, California area. The El Dorado County Sheriff's Department was sent to look for an ELT when they discovered a plane crash with one deceased. However they also noted foot prints leading away from the wreckage. The Sheriff's department received help from a Naval Air Station helicopter to search for the missing person. The crew of the helicopter located her and transported her to the Renown Medical Center. One SARSAT Rescue.

On April 11 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal about 175 nm southwest of Tampa, Florida. A distress beacon automatically activated when the 35 foot catamaran S/V PARADOX hit a squall and capsized. Coast Guard District 7 launched a Clearwater Air Station fixed wing aircraft to the scene. The crew of the aircraft located the vessel with two persons clinging to the hull. Air Station Clearwater launched a helicopter to the scene. The crew of the helicopter hoisted the two people aboard the helicopter and transported them to a hospital in the lower Florida Keys. Two SARSAT Rescues.



View of the S/V PARADOX from the USCG C-130 Hercules rescue aircraft.

On May 7 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal 200 NM east southeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The Coast Guard Lantarea Rescue Coordination Center received the alert and launched a fixed wing aircraft to the SARSAT position. The crew of the aircraft located a make shift raft with three people aboard, who had abandoned the Sailing Vessel SEAN SEYMOUR II. Weather conditions in the area were poor with wind gusts of 80 miles/hour and waves over 50 feet. The Coast Guard dispatched a helicopter to the scene where they hoisted the three people aboard. The three survivors suffered from mild hypothermia and one had a possible rib fracture. The rescue swimmer suffered back spasms. All were transported to Cherry Point, North Carolina for medical attention. Three SARSAT Rescues.



The crew of the SEAN SEYMOUR II in the life raft as seen from the USCG H-60 Jayhawk on scene. Sea height was estimated to be between 50 – 70 feet.

On June 9 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal 1/2 mile southwest of Wrightwood, California. The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center contacted the wife of the PLB owner. She stated her husband was hiking along the Pacific Crest Trail toward Big Bear Lake. The Air Force contacted the California Civil Air Patrol, which found the hiker and requested a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department helicopter. The crew of the helicopter hoisted up the 71 year old hiker aboard the helicopter. The hiker was too exhausted to continue. The helicopter transported him to the Ontario Airport in San Bernardino CA. One SARSAT Rescue.

On September 17 the COSPAS-SARSAT system detected a 406 MHz distress signal 120 NM west of Ilwaco, Washington. The Fishing Vessel Ida W II with three persons on board was taking on water. The Coast Guard District 13 Rescue Coordination Center launched a aircraft, a helicopter, and a 210-foot Coast Guard cutter. The helicopter arrived on the scene and dropped a rescue man with a pump. The vessel was able to keep ahead of the flooding with the use of the pump. The crew secured the source of the flooding. The vessel was escorted back to port by the Coast Guard Cutter. Three SARSAT Rescues.