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Stats release Tower and Chiswick

RNLI lifeboats at stations on the River Thames in Central London had a hugely busy year in 2010, with crews at Tower and Chiswick lifeboat stations collectively carrying out a staggering 720 rescue missions.

Tower RNLI lifeboat, situated beneath Waterloo Bridge, launched a total of 491 times, a 22 per cent increase on the 380 launches in 2009. Meanwhile Chiswick RNLI lifeboat launched 229 times, up 18 per cent on 2009.

Once again the two stations were the busiest lifeboat stations across the RNLI's 235 stations in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The figures - released to coincide with the RNLI's biggest national fundraising day, SOS Day – show that collectively the two lifeboats' crews were on service on the river for almost 400 hours.

The statistics highlight the need for the RNLI's lifesaving service both on the Thames and around the coastline of the UK and ROI. Indeed, the charity's lifeboats launched a total of 8,713 times in 2010. Overall, the RNLI rescued a total of 8,313 people in 2010, more than the 8,186 rescued in 2009.

Fundraisers for the charity hope the figures will encourage the public to spare a thought for its committed volunteers and get involved on its annual RNLI SOS Day. It takes place on Friday 28 January, when people all across London will be taking part in activities designed to raise the much needed funds to ensure the lifesaving service can continue.

Andrew Ashton, Divisional Inspector for the RNLI East Division, said: 'These figures show that once again RNLI lifeboats on the River Thames in the heart of London have had a busy year of saving and rescuing people in distress. When you consider that we remain to this day a charity, independent of the Government and the Coastguard, this is no mean feat.

The River Thames is the UK's busiest inland waterway which explains in part why Tower and Chiswick lifeboat stations were once again the busiest across the entire RNLI. When you consider the population of more than 7 million people, it is no wonder our lifeboats spent the equivalent of 400 hours on rescue missions.'

Andrew continued: 'No-one can deny we are living in difficult times – changes in our economy mean life is tough for many people. As a charity that relies on voluntary contributions we are so very grateful to all those who are still able to support us. It is only through donations and support from the public that we were able to launch our

lifeboats and spend the equivalent of eight days at sea. For that I say thank you to everyone for their generous support, even in these difficult times.'

RNLI Operations Director, Michael Vlasto, said: '2010 will be remembered for a series of harrowing disasters overseas but around our coastline our lifeboat volunteers and lifeguards have once again demonstrated their priceless commitment to saving lives at sea. But that is only part of the story, every one of the rescues carried out by the RNLI in 2010 was only made possible due to the incredible generosity of the public, even in these difficult times.

'We are absolutely determined to make the best possible use of the funds that the public entrust to us – and we regularly re-examine everything we do. This ensures that we give the best possible support to our volunteers at the sharp end and who ultimately may face the worst the sea can throw at them. These new figures show just how much time our crews sacrifice to help those in trouble at sea – but in addition, they spend even more time training, which is a further measure of their dedication and commitment.'

The figures have been released just days ahead of the RNLI's annual SOS Day, which this year takes place on Friday 28 January, when fundraising branches and supporters will be organising and taking part in fundraising activities to raise funds for the charity. And it's not too late to get involved – to find out what is happening in your area, to find out how you can support the RNLI, or to simply make a donation, visit www.rnli.org.uk/sos

Ends

Notes to editors

- The proposed changes to Her Majesty's Coastguard service may mean a reduction in the number of Coastguard maritime search and rescue coordination centres in the UK, however the **RNLI is not part of the Coastguard** and as an independent charity the RNLI's lifeboat and lifeguard services are not affected by these proposals – we do however depend on donations to go on funding our service
- Ninety-five per cent of the RNLI's crew members are volunteers. The RNLI has 4,660 volunteer crew members, 3,000 volunteer shore helpers and station management, and 35,000 voluntary fundraisers.
- Fully audited RNLI annual lifeboat statistics will be available upon publication of the RNLI's Annual Report and Accounts, which can be viewed online at www.rnli.org.uk from May 2011.
- **RNLI SOS Day** takes place on Friday 28 January 2011. www.rnli.org.uk/sos
- Photos and video footage of RNLI lifeboats and rescues are available. Please visit the RNLI press centre at www.rnli.org.uk/press

RNLI media contacts

For more information please contact Tim Ash, Divisional Media Relations Manager (South East and London) on 0207 6207426 or 07785 296252, email tim_ash@rnli.org.uk or contact RNLI Public Relations on 01202 336789

RNLI online: For more information on the RNLI please visit www.rnli.org.uk. News releases and other media resources, including [RSS feeds](#), downloadable photos and video, are available at the RNLI [Press Centre](#).

Key facts about the RNLI: The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 140 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 137,000 lives.

Visit the RNLI's official [YouTube channel](#) for more films and follow our rescue stories on [Twitter](#).

A charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736).
Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland.