

Inflatable friend

The Dan Buoy guides you back to a man overboard

By Michael Crowley

Between 2000 and 2010, 545 commercial fishermen died at sea. Of those, 170 fishermen, or 31 percent, died after they fell overboard. Maybe the boat took a particularly bad heave, pitching the guy over the side. Maybe he slipped on a piece of bait, hit the bulwark and went over. Or maybe he fell off a stack of crab pots.

Whatever the reason, once the skipper got the boat slowed down and turned around, he was gone. Perhaps it was just too dark, or with the tops of waves being blown off by 50-mph winds, he was impossible to spot in the spume and froth.

Visibility is all-important in the race to be seen and hauled back aboard in as short a time as possible. That's one of the selling points of the Dan Buoy, a self-inflating rescue device from Australia distributed in this country by Just Marine in Newport Beach, Calif.

The Dan Buoy is enclosed in a 12" x 7" x 3" vinyl case. When a crew member goes overboard, grab the container and heave it overboard. Within 7 seconds of hitting the water, the Dan Buoy self-inflates.

From that small package emerges a 6-foot fluorescent yellow pole with an 8-foot-long fluorescent yellow streamer snapping out with the wind. Reflectors are built into the pole's sides that can be picked up by a boat's searchlight, but it would be hard to miss the SOLAS-approved strobe at the top of the pole.

The strobe is water activated and can be seen from about a



The Dan Buoy inflates within 7 seconds once it hits the water. Your arms go through the straps in the side for support.

mile away, says Just Marine's Philip Thompson

To keep the pole from lying over in the water, there's 8 pounds of lead shot in the bottom of the pole. To prevent the Dan Buoy from being blown downwind, it has its own drogue or sea anchor. "That will keep it moving at the same pace as someone in the water, Thompson says.

If that someone is you, when you get to the Dan Buoy there are two straps to put your arms through for support. It also has a whistle to get the attention of a nearby boat.

Oh, in case you are wondering about the Dan Buoy's durability, Thompson says if a rescue plane spotted you in the water, it could drop the Dan Buoy from 1,000 feet and it would inflate.

The Dan Buoy sells for \$400. Contact Just Marine, 1024 Bayside Drive, #417, Newport Beach, CA 92660; tel. (714) 329-1995; www.just-marine.net.

At a glance

SIMRAD YACHTING added the **NAIS-400** AIS class-B transponder and the **NSPL-400** antenna splitter to its product lineup in October. The transponder gives you information on an approaching boat, such as its course, distance and speed. Connected to a chart plotter it shows the position of all boats in the area with AIS. The **NSPL-400** antenna splitter lets you use a single antenna for AIS, VHF and FM radio. The AIS transponder is priced at \$929. The antenna splitter is \$249. Contact Simrad Yachting, 410 Amherst St., Suite 110, Nashua, NH 03063; tel. (603) 324-2042; www.simrad-yachting.com.



INTERLUX launched its newest antifouling paint, **MICRONCF**, in early October. The copper-free bottom paint uses Econeal, a copper-replacement to keep the hull clean.

MicronCF offers the longevity that boat owners expect from traditional copper-based antifoulant paints, and depending on the boat's operation may provide multiseasonal coverage. The paint's self-smoothing characteristics should improve fuel economy, and because it uses less solvent, MicronCF meets VOC regulations. Contact Interlux Yacht Finishes, 2270 Morris Ave., Union, NJ 07083; tel. (908) 686-1300; www.yachtpaint.com.

THERMACELL provides winter comfort with **HEATED INSOLES**. Place the Heated Insoles in your boots and set the heat level at medium or high with a wireless remote control. Or turn off the heat as the day warms up. A thermostat in the insoles controls the heat. Once the insoles reach the selected heat they automatically turn off. The Heated Insoles can be trimmed to fit your boots. They cost \$129.99. Contact Schawbel Corp., Thermacell Heated Insoles, 26 Crosby Drive, Bedford, MA 01730; tel. (866) 753-3837; www.thermacell.com.

