

# About VISAR

VISAR was founded in 1988 modelled on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in the UK, the world's oldest lifeboat service. It is an independent, volunteer-based organisation funded almost entirely by charitable donations.

Since it was formed VISAR has carried out well over 1,000 search and rescue missions, helped more than 1,200 people in distress and saved over 40 lives.

## Crew Training

Search and Rescue can be a difficult and dangerous job, and it requires regular training and sincere dedication. Many of our volunteers do not come from a marine background, and so we have to provide first class training to make sure our crews have the skills they need to save lives.

Medical related emergencies account for almost 70% of all launches, and all active crew members have an up to date Emergency First Responder first aid qualification. In addition, we run training sessions on a weekly basis to enhance medical knowledge, and to give all crew members experience driving and operating the rescue boat in simulated distress situations. We have a close working relationship with the US Coast Guard, and run joint helicopter training sessions on a regular basis.

We welcome training exercises with willing boat owners and crews. Combined training offers our crew members the opportunity to get aboard different types of vessels and play out various scenarios. It also gives boat crews a first hand look at what an emergency could look like and what victims can expect from VISAR. Communication and familiarity are vital components of our training regiment.

VISAR has two rescue boats, one based on Tortola and the other on Virgin Gorda. Together, these boats provide SAR cover for all of the islands and surrounding waters which make up the British Virgin Islands.

## Equipment

Both boats are able to operate in very rough conditions and to provide emergency assistance to those in distress at sea. Each boat carries a full medical kit, an AED (automatic emergency defibrillator), a back-board and straps, oxygen cylinders, search lights, flares, and spare life jackets for use by casualties. The boats also carry spare parts and tools in the case of breakdown, and are designed to provide protection for the crew in the case

of an emergency, including capsized lights and a CO2 self-righting bag on the radar arch at the stern.

The BVI Charter Yacht Society has been a great partner with VISAR through the years and we are hoping to strengthen that with enhanced owner/crew communication. Being a volunteer based group we are always looking for fundraising opportunities, but the greater importance is making sure local boat crews and even guests are familiar with the service we provide and how to make contact.

Any BVI phone dial 767 (s.o.s.)

Non BVI phone 1-284.499.0911

We do not monitor VHF to listen for calls but many charter companies and other businesses actively listen and will contact us if asked. The US Coast Guard monitors Channel 16 and will call VISAR in the case of a BVI emergency. If you have a phone with emergency service, we can be contacted through BVI emergency services via 999 or 911.