McMurdo EPIRB distress beacon leads to rescue of injured couple in the Pacific Ocean

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McMurdo has helped save the lives of an injured couple in the Pacific Ocean after activating their Smartfind G5 EPIRB, when their boat capsized in a storm.

British yachtsman, 52 year old Stephen Jones and Tania Davies, 43 from New Zealand were making their way from Tonga to New Zealand when the storm struck on 7th November and their 38ft yacht, Windigo, capsized whilst battling 50mph winds and 30ft-high waves.

An international search and rescue operation was launched when the couple’s McMurdo Smartfind G5 EPIRB was activated 385 nautical miles south west of Tonga. On activation, the Smartfind G5 provided a direct method of alerting the search and rescue authorities using the 406 MHz search and rescue satellite communication system, COSPAS SARSAT – a global government-controlled system comprising of more than 30 nations, which defines a common standard for search and rescue by satellites (www.cospas-sarsat.org).

Whilst the New Zealand Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) tasked a Royal New Zealand Airforce Orion to their location, weather delayed any prospect of rescue. Windigo did manage to right itself but the couple were forced to cling to the damaged yacht for two days before weather conditions finally calmed and the Hong Kong flagged cargo vessel MV CHENTU, which had diverted to the yacht’s position, was able to recover them.

Mr Jones and Ms Davies, who had suffered head and back injuries during the ordeal, then turned south onboard MV CHENTU to rendezvous with HMNZS
OTAGO, which took them to Aukland where they arrived safely on Sunday 11th November.

McMurdo offers a range of emergency location beacon products including EPIRBs, PLBs (Personal Location Beacons), SARTs, AIS Beacons, NAVTEX and VHF Radios – must-have devices for all safety-conscious sailors.

McMurdo’s range of EPIRBs are designed to alert search and rescue services in the event of an emergency by transmitting a coded message on the 406 MHz distress frequency. The G5 Smartfind EPIRB also includes a GPS receiver ensuring that the exact position of a casualty is relayed to the rescue services.

For further information on McMurdo’s range of safety and emergency location beacon products, visit www.mcmurdomarine.com.