



Association for Rescue at Sea • Inc.

Association for Rescue at Sea C-PORT Lifesaving Award to Captain Robert Macko

For an act of lifesaving in the maritime domain as set forth in the following citation; on May 10, 2014, TowBoat U.S. Buffalo Captain Robert Macko responded to a call made to the Coast Guard on Channel 16 from a fishing vessel who witnessed a vessel capsize in 35 feet of water with three victims on board, all of whom ended up in the frigid Lake Erie waters without a personal flotation device (PFD). Finding himself in the vicinity of the mishap, Captain Macko immediately stopped his vessel and obtained a visual on the distressed craft and immediately responded to the scene. Working with one hand heavily bandaged from a previous injury, Captain Macko did his best to communicate with the Coast Guard and to maneuver his vessel to the persons in the water. Though it was early June, Lake Erie was only 55 degrees due to the delayed ice melt. Captain Macko quickly surmised that time was of the essence as the ill effects of hypothermia would set in as the people in the water were not aided by added buoyancy from a PFD. Once on scene, Captain Macko, using one hand, carefully unpinned and deployed the heavy boarding ladder attached to his towboat and lowered it into the water, greatly facilitating bringing each of the victims safely aboard. Due to the immediate response by Captain Macko, three lives were undoubtedly saved as a dedicated rescue response craft was still 20 minutes from the scene. The actions and coordination by Captain Macko to save three people in the water and adrift from a capsized vessel are heartily commended by the Association for Rescue at Sea, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the maritime community to render aid to those in distress.

Steve M. Sawyer

President, Association for Rescue at Sea