

Bristol VTS and SARA Collaborate in Successful Kayaker Rescue

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In a remarkable display of coordination and swift action, Bristol Port's Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) recently played a crucial role in aiding the coastguard and the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA)

The incident unfolded on Monday 14th August, when Mark Kelleher, a member of Bristol Port's VTS team, received an urgent phone call from the coastguard at approximately 11:45 AM. The coastguard was seeking assistance in locating a missing kayaker. Demonstrating remarkable expertise, Kelleher quickly identified the distressed kayaker's location northeast of Avonmouth.

Maintaining a steady visual on the upturned kayak, Kelleher's swift response allowed Justin Olver and Dave Duncan, his colleagues at VTS, to effectively manage communications with the Milford base and directly with the SARA lifeboat, known as 'Sara 3.' The aim was to guide the lifeboat to the exact position of the distressed kayaker.

At 12:05 PM, the SARA lifeboat managed to establish contact with the stranded kayaker, and both the kayaker and the kayak were successfully recovered back to the Portishead beach. Given the urgency of the situation, the Portishead RNLI station was immediately informed to assess the kayaker's condition.

The kayaker, who embarked on his journey from Lydney, was en route to Bristol. However he was lacking in adequate experience in sea kayaking and without essential safety equipment like a VHF radio, the kayaker found himself in a perilous situation when his kayak overturned. His phone, stored in a plastic carrier bag, was submerged and rendered ineffective for calling for help.

The collaborative efforts of Bristol Port's VTS, the coastguard, SARA 3, and the RNLI proved instrumental in ensuring the kayaker's safety. Despite being unharmed, the kayaker acknowledged his lack of training in sea kayaking and made the decision to relinquish his kayak to the Portishead RNLI. He expressed intentions to continue his journey on land and sell the kayak instead.

The successful rescue operation highlighted the importance of well-coordinated response efforts, efficient communication, and the expertise of maritime professionals. The incident underscored the potential dangers of venturing into open waters without adequate training, preparation, and safety equipment. The Port's Harbour Master, Stephen Birt, said "This was a life saved without a doubt, thanks to the teams skilful actions." Bristol Port's VTS, along with the coastguard, SARA, and RNLI, demonstrated their dedication to preserving life at sea and ensuring the safety of all individuals navigating these waters.

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