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GME PLB saves 21 sailors in Fastnet race capsizing

Since its inception in 1925, The Royal Ocean Club's Fastnet yacht Race is an event with a fearsome reputation. Back in 1979 the race contestants were hit with a huge storm resulting in the tragic loss of 15 lives and literally dozens of yachts.

Sailing from Cowes on the Isle of Wight the biennial race takes the fleet 608 miles along the south coast of the UK, across the Celtic Sea to the Fastnet Rock off south west Ireland, before returning around the Scilly Isles to the finish in Plymouth.

Tragedy, was however prevented in the 2011 race by an Australian made GME PLB; The US-registered maxi, Rambler 100, skippered by George David, with a crew of 21, had just passed the Fastnet Rock at around 6.30pm on August 15th when disaster struck. In relatively calm but foggy conditions, around 16 miles from Baltimore, County Cork, Rambler's keel snapped, causing it to capsize within 15 seconds, throwing the entire crew overboard. With all its communications equipment underwater and inoperative, the crew activated a GME MT410G Personal Locator



The capsized maxi Rambler, with the Baltimore lifeboat in the background.

Being a GPS equipped PLB; the MT410G's signal was quickly received by a Geo-stationary COSPAS SARSAT satellite, with its encoded ID and position coordinates relayed to the UK maritime Communications Authority in Falmouth, who in turn tasked the Irish Cost Guard with coordination of the rescue; which involved the Baltimore RNLi lifeboat, the Shannon and Waterford-based rescue helicopters, and Irish Naval vessel the LE Ciara

Rambler's activated MT410G GPS beacon provided location data to within 100 metres of the stricken vessel allowing the search and rescue team to respond rapidly to the reported position, Radio Direction Finding receivers aboard the deployed SAR resources then guided the rescuers to the upturned maxi within 3 hours.

GME PLBs are designed and manufactured in Australia; they are available through a global network of dealers and distributors, for further information contact: export@gme.net.au