



Heroic Act Saves Lives

AFRAS (Association For Rescue At Sea) Honors C-PORT Members with Lifesaving Award



C-PORT (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing) and AFRAS (Association For Rescue At Sea) celebrated and presented its prestigious lifesaving award at the 38th C-PORT Conference held January 27 – 29, 2025 at the Paris Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, NV. The award was announced on Tuesday during the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala. Presenting the award was AFRAS Vice President History and Heritage, CDR Gary M. Thomas, USCG (Ret.), to Captain Kevin Jones, Offshore Marine Towing, TowBoatU.S. Fort Lauderdale.

Tina Cardone, executive director of C-PORT commented, “Our association is thrilled to continue to have our members receive this high honor.” This award represents over a decade’s long relationship between C-PORT and AFRAS. In 2010, AFRAS had expressed a desire to establish a program, in cooperation with C-PORT, to annually recognize a deserving member of C-PORT that has shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment. The Award is to be conferred on an individual or group of individuals who perform exceptional acts in attempting to save life. Instances where the rescuer places their own life at risk are given highest consideration.

Phil LeBlanc, C-PORT chairman, remarked, “C-PORT congratulates Captain Kevin Jones for his heroic efforts in saving these lives. Assisting boaters is what we do and we, as an industry, are honored to have C-PORT members recognized with such a prestigious award.”

The remarkable story of heroism:



At approximately 17:26 on May 5, 2024, while on patrol in Port Everglades, Captain Kevin Jones of Offshore Marine Towing, received an alert of a possible water rescue. He recognized the location to be on Barracuda Reef, a location notorious for false alarms due to the close proximity to the beach and condos. However, Jones had a feeling this was real because the GPS coordinates pointed directly to a place he knew to be favored by local small boat fishermen. He immediately proceeded to the location.

There was a 3' chop when Jones got on scene. He reported to dispatch that there was a capsized vessel with 2 feet of bow sticking straight up, as well as a 15 foot Key Largo 50 yards away with two frantic individuals on board. One of the persons on board was yelling “Help! Help! Help, he’s gonna sink my boat!” As Jones maneuvered to port, he saw a very large gentleman hanging on the port quarter of the small vessel. The small boat was tied to a mooring ball. Due to his size, the man was causing a substantial amount of water to come into the boat. Their bilge pump was going off, and Jones agreed, the vessel was going to sink with all of them if he didn’t act quickly.

The vessels were about 1.5 miles offshore, in 25-30 feet of water. The waves made it difficult and tricky to get close enough to the small boat to provide aid without crushing the passengers, but Jones expertly steered his towing vessel close enough to affect the rescue.

As he approached, Jones could see the situation was critical and there was no time to anchor his towing vessel. He also knew that due to the close quarters and sea conditions, he wanted to have immediate control of his vessel should he need to move it quickly. The men in the small boat were desperate, stating that the larger gentleman couldn’t swim, and he was going to drown or sink their boat as well. Jones, remaining calm, advised them he was going to pull the man in the water to his towboat, where he would have access to safety lines to hang on to. Jones successfully moved the larger man next to the towboat, and for several minutes attempted

multiple ways to get him on board. The other men were of no substantive help, as they were small in stature and had their hands full trying to keep their vessel afloat. The larger man told Jones he weighed 450 pounds, and believed it wasn't possible to get him onboard and that he was going to drown. Jones assured him he wouldn't let him drown.

Within 7 minutes of receiving Jones' call, Captain Adrian Barker arrived on scene onboard TowBoatU.S.#5 and threw a portable boarding ladder onto Jones' towboat. Due to the sea conditions, Barker wasn't able to safely remain or to get closer to provide additional assistance. Jones started to rig the portable boarding ladder. While doing so, Jones saw the man begin to lose strength and let go of the safety lines. As he slipped under, Jones reached in and pulled him above the water. The man was too weak to hold on to the safety lines and using the ladder was not a viable option.

Jones knew he was going to need additional help to save this man, so he grabbed the man firmly and held his upper body out of the water so that he wouldn't inhale anymore water. Jones knew Barker was keeping the fireboat updated on his position and was confident they would be on scene in a few minutes. The man was in bad shape, coughing and throwing up water, still panicked and saying he was going to drown. He was still losing strength and was dead weight in Jones' arms. Remaining calm under pressure, Jones persevered, using all his strength and determination to keep the man's head above the waves. Jones held the distraught man tightly and high above the waves, until the fireboat arrived, approximately 15 minutes after the initial call. The crew of six firefighters were eventually able to pull the man onto their fireboat.

Cited: Displaying the characteristics and traits of a true lifesaver without regard for his own safety, Captain Kevin Jones has brought great credit upon himself, Offshore Marine Towing, and the entire marine assistance industry. Captain Jones is recognized for his leadership, acute situational awareness, keen judgement and expert seamanship skills under extreme circumstances resulting in the effective rescue of not only the gentleman in imminent peril of losing his life, but also the other two men who surely would have found themselves overboard in distress that day.



Featured in photos: CDR Gary M. Thomas, USCG (Ret.), Chloe Collins, President Offshore Marine Towing, Captain Kevin Jones, AFRAS Award Recipient, Offshore Marine Towing, Captain Russell Inman, Operations, Offshore Marine Towing.

C-PORT was founded in 1985 to act as a liaison between the marine assistance industry and public agencies and organizations involved with boating safety, marine assistance, marine salvage and other marine-related operations. Its mission is to represent, promote, protect, and defend its member companies through communication, relationship development, and education. Our members are dedicated to providing prompt, professional and timely assistance to all boaters and to actively partner and cooperate with local law enforcement and U.S. Coast Guard. They are professionals, dedicated to the growth and development of their respective businesses and committed to furthering the advancement of our waterways and the boating community. For more information, contact C-PORT at (954) 261-2012 or visit <https://cport.us>.

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