



Top female kite racer Gina Hewson with her Ocean Signal rescueME PLB1

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Ocean Signal: Ocean Signal Teams Up with Kite Racer Gina Hewson to Highlight Importance of Wearing a PLB

Safety equipment supplier Ocean Signal has teamed up with leading kite racer Gina Hewson to raise awareness about the benefits of wearing a personal locator beacon (PLB).

One of the world's top female competitors on the international kite foil circuit and a former professional sailor, Gina is urging participants in her discipline to wear a PLB due to the inherent dangers and unpredictable

conditions encountered by kite surfers in exposed offshore areas.

UK communication and safety at sea specialist Ocean Signal is backing the Australian athlete, who competes on the Hydrofoil Pro Tour and Kitefoil Gold Cup, by providing her with its Ocean Signal rescueME PLB1s for use during training and racing.

Gina first became aware of the importance of wearing a personal 406MHz beacon during her time as an offshore sailor and is keen to highlight how a beacon can save lives by accurately communicating the location of a survivor to search and rescue services.

“Kite foilers often train in open water which can be very exposed, like Cowes on the Isle of Wight,” said Gina. “But still a lot of them do not think about the dangers unless they have had a problem. The ram air kites used for hydrofoil racing do not have an inflatable bladder like the conventional kite used for recreation use. Additionally, the higher wind angles and faster speeds means the foil boarders can travel longer distances in a very short time. The wind can change and the tide can turn and it can all go wrong very quickly.”

Ocean Signal’s rescueME PLB1 is the world’s smallest personal locator beacon at 30% smaller than other PLBs and is specifically designed to be small and light enough to carry or attach to clothing for instant access to emergency services at the press of a button.

Gina added: “With my experience in kite racing and also having done the Sydney-Hobart and Fastnet, I know how important it is to wear a PLB whenever you are heading offshore. I did have an incident when I was kiting with my sister in Perth when the wind turned as sunset approached. We were in the water for 3 or 4 hours. The helicopter was above me and I found out later they were using thermal imagery, but were unable to locate us. They eventually found us by boat, by which time we were within 80m of the shore.

“I, and my boyfriend and coach Fraser [Brown], will have extra reassurance due to the additional level of safety provided by using the Ocean Signal rescueME PLB1s. They are very compact and handy to wear, which is important for anyone competing or participating in a very physical sport.”

In some areas, such as Perth, PLBs are compulsory for anyone venturing more

than 400m offshore, while separate governing bodies, such as [British Kitesports](#), also offer safety guidelines including the use of helmets, informing someone where you are going and being aware of the conditions.

Andy Gratwick, British Kitesports Director of Training and Operations, said: “As the national governing body for the sport, we set the safety standards and have structured guidelines on safety equipment for all activities and levels of participation. PLBs are good, valuable and essential in some longer distance and out of sight events. They would be used and required if covering distance in open coastal water, but they are not required on a standard race course for any discipline.”

Gina finished fifth overall and second in female master in this month's Formula Kite World Championships in Weifang Binhai, China. She also finished third female in this year's European Kite Foil Championships and was fourth female in last month's third leg of the Hydrofoil pro tour in Mauritius, following another fourth-place finish in the Mexico round.

Ocean Signal sales and marketing manager James Hewitt said the PLBs are suitable for a range of water sports in addition to kite surfing, including kayaking or canoeing, wind surfing, paddle boarding and diving among others.

“We are delighted to supply Gina with our PLBs and wish her the best of luck in her upcoming competitions,” said James. “We hope to continue to raise awareness about the benefits of using personal beacons for a wide range of activities, both on land and at sea, for professional athletes and leisure or amateur users. Our rescueME PLB1 is an exceptionally compact product which you can wear and then forget about. It is a relatively small investment which can provide peace of mind for many years and save your life in an emergency.”

Weighing just 116g (4.1oz) and with dimensions of 77mm (3in) (height), 51mm (2in) (width) and 32.5mm (1.3in) (depth), the Ocean Signal rescueME PLB1 has been designed to withstand the harsh marine environment and is waterproof up to a market-leading depth of 15m, with an exceptional operating life of 30 hours (typical) even at -20C.

Once activated, the PLB1 provides three methods of communicating the location of a survivor to search and rescue services – the designated 406MHz

Cospas-Sarsat satellite system with position provided by a 66 channel GPS, a 121.5MHz homing beacon, plus high intensity (1 candela) strobe light.

For more information on the Ocean Signal rescueME PLB1 and the Ocean Signal range of products, please visit www.oceansignal.com or see the products at this year's Southampton Boat Show at key retailers including Ocean Safety, Marine Super Store and Cactus.

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About Ocean Signal

Communication and safety at sea specialist Ocean Signal™ is dedicated to providing the technology and quality of product that will set industry standards.

Ocean Signal's rescueME range of products, which includes the rescueME PLB1, the rescueME MOB1, the rescueME EPIRB1, the rescueME EDF1 electronic distress flare and AIS Alarm Box, and SafeSea range of GMDSS products, including the E100 and E100G EPIRB, S100 SART and V100 handheld VHF radio, as well as the M100 and M100X professional MSLD, provide both recreational and commercial mariners with simple to use, compact and affordable life-saving solutions. All products are engineered by a highly experienced team of marine electronics professionals.

Ocean Signal products are trusted by high-profile sailors, rowers and powerboat racing teams. By providing vital safety and communication devices, the company has sponsored the 16-man crew of Triton with rescueME MOB1s in the 2015 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, record-breaking sailor Andrea Mura in the single-handed OSTAR race, Mini Transat

2015 solo sailor Lizzy Foreman, Atlantic rowing duo Ocean Valour, Venture Cup offshore powerboat race team Cinzano and kite racer Gina Hewson.

Safety and communication products from Ocean Signal offer exceptional value, meeting or exceeding international technical and safety standards. Careful design and innovation provides commercial shipping, fishing and recreational users the confidence that their Ocean Signal equipment will work to, and beyond, their expectations when it is needed most.

For further information on the full range of products available from Ocean Signal, please go to www.oceansignal.com.