A neat man overboard (MOB) rescue system for workboats, pilot vessels and tugs could assist in rescuing casualties from the water where there's not much in the way of onboard brawn, explains Geoff Van Wyk, technical sales engineer at Harken Industrial.

Developed initially to respond to rule changes in the US workboat market, the C-Hero MOB Rescue Davit stows away by clipping onto the wheelhouse or other superstructure. It is designed to be easy to unclip and fit onto the most convenient bollards when needed.

According to the manufacturer, the bollard closest to the water is the best: while the bollard at the bow might be the only choice, this can make the rescue more difficult. However, as Van Wyk demonstrated at Seawork 2018, the C-Hero takes just a minute or two to get ready – the timing of these MOB actions being critical to the survival of those in the water.

Once the C-Hero has been set up for the first time it can be stowed away, ready for use. To deploy it, the user fixes the base to the bollard using the two adjustable straps and unclips the davit arm before lowering. The tension line runs from the winch plate to the top of the davit and is held by a pin. Then, it’s a matter of wrapping the rescue line around the winch and slotting in the handle.

Despite its 17kg weight, the marine-grade aluminium and stainless steel product has a maximum working load (MWL) of 158kg; the hand-cranked Harken Radial 20:1 self-tailing winch and clutch ensure that the line runs out smoothly but won’t drop back on release. Most importantly, the design means that it’s also easy enough to operate: just one, modestly sized crew member can successfully bring a 158kg person back onboard.

However, where the C-Hero really stands out is the worm gear that gives the operator a very controlled swing of the boom back inboard, a process that means “those still on the deck aren’t fighting the motion of the boat” to bring their fellow crew member back to safety, Van Wyk says.

**Rescue pole**

This lifting solution is fine if someone is able to clip the hook onto their lifejacket. However, it is also being offered alongside a device that allows the rescue of injured or unconscious MOB casualties.

Therefore, the reach of the C-Hero Rescue Pole allows a crew member on deck to reach down to the person in the water: the 3.7m-long fibreglass pole terminates in an alloy frame which holds a lifting strap open. This is manoeuvred so it comes up under the casualty’s arms, where the tension on the one-way slider buckle frees the pole, leaving the strap in place.

A nice idea, and one that should prove useful in the UK’s tug, dredger and windfarm support markets – or, in fact, on any workboat where there’s a shortage of space…and possibly muscle.

**Bits and BOBs**

Meanwhile, UK life-saving appliance manufacturer CQC chose Seawork to show off the latest iteration of a £120 (US$153) dummy. The updated Body Overboard (BOB) training figure was originally conceived to meet a Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) request for a simple, budget-friendly item to enhance MOB recovery training.

However, an earlier version of BOB, priced around £80, while meeting the criteria of being cost-effective, “wasn’t intended to be very watertight at all”, recalls CQC business development director Tim Craig-Harvey.

Somewhat unfairly (considering the minimal price), there were complaints about leaking, so CQC invested resources to raise BOB’s ability to hold his drink. Craig-Harvey explains that, once BOB has been filled with water at the neck and closed up, “he’ will remain useable for up to an hour.

Craig-Harvey goes on to say the benefit of BOB is clearly the price, with competitors’ offerings generally priced £1,000 (US$1,286) and above. Moreover, BOB, when empty, weighs only 1kg and can be put away in a cupboard while waiting for inspection or training.

Considering everything, can we expect BOB to perform just as well as the higher-end models? Possibly not – but BOB represents an affordable means to practice pulling an unconscious body back to the surface. “BOB really is a good bit of kit once you understand the limitations – which are now hardly limitations at all, given that he is largely waterproof,” Craig-Harvey says.