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Diver Missing Off Digby Recovered Thanks to Fire Dept's AquaEye

Vancouver B.C – November 21, 2024 – Deployment of an AquaEye handheld intelligent sonar, purchased by the Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Dept. has resulted in the recovery of a diver missing in the Bay of Fundy off Digby, Nova Scotia.

Halifax's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) initiated the search after being contacted when a recreational diver failed to surface. RCMP, Coast Guard and multiple local Volunteer Fire departments were on scene within hours. One of those was the Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department, (led on-scene by First Deputy Chief, Bill Hazel).

A team of Brooklyn Volunteer Firefighters, led by DC Hazel, took to the water around midnight the day the diver went missing. While many resources were searching for the missing diver that first night, only Brooklyn VFD were equipped with an AquaEye which proved to be the technology that located the missing diver.

Brooklyn Volunteer Firefighter Andrew Belliveau described the conditions: "When we first went out, a 'last seen location' buoy had been dropped about a mile offshore, but the conditions were absolutely horrendous. There was a 3 to 4-foot chop, and it was pitch black. It was the first time that we had ever deployed AquaEye in a search, and though there were lots of things going on with half a dozen other departments out there, lots of sidescan sonar that didn't really represent, or derive, a credible image, our team did get an 'X' from the AquaEye [indicating an object highly likely to be a human] after a few hours." Given the poor conditions on scene, no divers were deployed that night.

Three days later, at the request of the chief of Brighton Barton FD, the Brooklyn team returned to do a secondary search. Said Belliveau, "It was daylight hours, it was a perfectly clear day and very, very calm; conditions were perfect. In advance of that search, I had also reached out to an AquaEye product specialist about the best way to deploy in our situation. We were on the water from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM in the afternoon, along with 5 or 6 other agencies with their boats."

The Brooklyn team set up a sonar grid search in the strong tidal flow, methodically scanning across the area previously identified by AquaEye. The location was validated by consistently picking up an 'X' in the same location, from multiple scan sites. The Brighton Barton team returned the next day and local recreational divers dove on the target site, executing a seafloor radius search. On the 2nd pass, they found and recovered the missing diver in 30 to 40 feet of water, right where AquaEye had indicated.

Of the recovery, Belliveau said, "There's obviously a terrible side to the story in that there was a loss of life, but there is good news in that the family was reunited with their loved one, for which they're appreciative and thankful. AquaEye made the recovery faster, and I don't have any question that, if asked "Do I think AquaEye delivered?", absolutely, it did, in challenging offshore conditions that it's probably seldom used in."

Hundreds of rescue teams rely on AquaEye to pinpoint drowning victims faster than any existing sonar system. Water-based search and rescue work is often complex; AquaEye is designed to bring structure, systems and safety to rescuers, which decreases rescue times.

About VodaSafe:

VodaSafe has revolutionized water rescue and recovery globally with the development and delivery of its flagship product, AquaEye, the world's first hand-held intelligent sonar device. Combining sonar and



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artificial intelligence technologies specifically designed to identify humans, AquaEye can search nearly an acre of water in one minute. Born at the intersection of engineering and lifesaving on the West Coast of Canada, VodaSafe is committed to enabling search and rescue, emergency responders, public safety divers, law enforcement and lifeguards to execute faster, safer and more effective water rescue and victim recovery.

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