

Luck Over the Caribbean

Story by PAC Dana Warr, District Seven Public Affairs

Some people seem to have luck on their side. And there are those who seem to plan for almost everything they do. Put proper planning and a little luck together and you have a recipe for survival, at least for one man.

It was a Saturday afternoon, Feb. 16, when Maurice Kirk, a British citizen, left Puerto Plata International Airport, Dominican Republic in his single-engine plane heading for the Bahamas.

About 75 miles off the coast of the Dominican Republic, 1,300 feet above the Caribbean Sea, luck was on the side of one man that probably never thought he would need it that day.

Shortly after taking off for what was supposed to be a short flight, something happened to the aircraft's engine forcing the plane to crash into the Caribbean Sea. Too many times this is generally the end of a tragic story.

Fortunately before crashing into the ocean, the luckiest man in the world at that moment was able to make a mayday call to the Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA notified the Coast Guard and an H-60 helicopter was launched from Great Inagua, Bahamas.



A portion of Maurice Kirk's plane can be seen above the water's surface 75 miles off the Dominican Republic. Kirk survived the crash and was picked up by an H-60 Coast Guard crew. USCG Photo

While the Coast Guard helicopter crew was heading toward the crash site, and the last known location provided, the helicopter crew received a signal from an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. The rescue crew was able to track and follow the signal locating the man alive in the water.

Kirk was hoisted into the Air Station Clearwater, Fla. based helicopter and transferred to emergency medical services personnel at the Providenciales International Airport in the Turks and Caicos.

“For a man to survive a plane crash there has to be some luck,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Stephanie Strivens, search and rescue watch stander for the Seventh Coast Guard District Command Center in Miami who was on duty for the case. “The beacon gave us his exact position making searching 100 times easier.”

This wasn't the first time Kirk has crashed an aircraft. According to information on Kirk's

website, he has crashed while flying over other countries around the world.

“I think the biggest factor for his survival was his training,” said Strivens. “He did everything right.”

According to Kirk’s internet site he released the fuel in his aircraft before “crashing landing” into the ocean. Kirk was carrying good luck charms such as a flag and a hat which he has owned for years and was able to retrieve them from the wreckage.

“I have worked many search and rescue cases involving plane crashes and only one other had survivors,” Strivens said. “This is at the top of my all time cases,” she added.

So with a flag, a hat and an EPIRB, Kirk lives another day to push the limits of gravity. It seems with a little luck and some preparation almost anyone can survive a plane crash. Well, at least one man can!

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