



Shane Austin

No matter how prepared you are, things can still go wrong. It's a sentiment that rings true in most areas of life, but when you're talking about being out on the water, things going wrong not only happen quickly; they can have a devastating effect. In some cases, a series of small, seemingly insignificant events can snowball into a life-or-death situation.

Just ask Shane Austin, a skipper from Caloundra who prides himself on being well organised and prepared when it comes to safety.

So when his ship started to sink off Bribie Island, south of Caloundra bar, it was just as well that he had the right safety gear and knew how to use it.

"On a short return trip from Tangalooma with friends, the transom broke, separating the motor from the stern. Within seconds water was pouring everywhere," Shane recalls of that afternoon last October.

"We started bailing with buckets and I flicked on the bilge pump, set the anchor, fired a distress flare, activated the EPIRB and phoned triple 0 to alert the Coast Guard," Shane said.

"Help arrived pretty much straight away. I guess it was because we were well prepared, it meant a bad situation didn't turn into something much worse."

While lifesavers took a woman and two children back to shore by jet skis, Shane stayed with his remaining crew and continued bailing water while the coast guard towed the boat back to base.

"I was so thankful that we had all the safety gear. Being prepared for the worst is a vital part of boating, particularly when you have other people on board."

While Shane's story is an example of a positive outcome for a well organised skipper, it goes to show just how quickly accidents happen.

"You can't control everything, but if you're well prepared, you can prevent a bad situation from becoming a potentially fatal one. As skipper, that's my responsibility."