



## Catalina Direct Lifeline Kits - The Long Story:

Our lifeline kits are only available again due to the collaboration between two industry stalwarts, Johnson Marine Hardware in Connecticut, and Catalina Direct in California, we are excited we are able to supply lifeline kits to our customers once again.

As you know, all Catalinas are hand built using components that are also hand built. As a result, your lifelines may be a different length from port to starboard as well as from one boat to the next. We have always solved this challenge by supplying our lifeline kits with one end of each wire swaged and the second end loose. You install the loose end in the field.

You use a custom made hand-crimping tool we supply in each kit. The tool was made by a small Southern California company, S&F Tool. They were already well established when I started sailing in the early '70's.

During the early days of the pandemic, we ran into a problem... S&F Tool permanently closed due to the COVID pandemic. We quickly realized that in order to continue to supply these kits to our customers, we would need to have this tool manufactured ourselves.

Historically, S&F made these tools for Johnson Marine Hardware, who manufacture the custom stainless steel hardware that make our lifeline kits possible. Given labor shortages and rising costs, no tool fabricator on the east coast could machine the tools for a price that would be affordable to our customers.

Using our connections in the fabrication industry in Southern California, Catalina Direct was able to have a batch of tools custom machined using S&F Tool's original drawings. However, the cost was still prohibitive. In order to reduce the cost, a very large quantity would need to be ordered, too many for either of us to order on our own. We partnered with our friends at Johnson Marine Hardware and were able to double the size of the order. With our combined purchasing power, we were able to reduce the cost and maintain affordability for the end user.

The next step proved to be a little bit more of a challenge. In order for this tool to be hard enough to perform its intended function, it needed to be heat-treated. However, after numerous test samples failed at shops in California, we realized none of our suppliers there were able to get the heat treating just right. Either the tool was slightly too soft and was damaged when crimping the stainless fittings, or the processed tool would be too hard and brittle, and would break.

So we called Johnson Marine Hardware again. They essentially told us "We know a guy". So we shipped the whole batch of tools across the country to Johnson's in Connecticut where they arranged for the tools to be perfectly heat-treated to the correct specifications for use in our lifeline kit.

Although we don't often find it necessary to bother our customers with the inner-workings of the Catalina Direct's complex supply chain, we thought this story might give you a little insight as to the lengths we go to to keep the boats we all love safe and seaworthy.

We can't wait to hear about your experiences with the kit! Call Tech Support at the number found in the signature line below if you need any help. We are always looking to improve your experience by improving our products. Please let us know how the process goes.

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