

APRIL 2013: TRUST WAIKATO SUNSET BEACH LGS



SURF LIFE SAVING  
NEW ZEALAND

NATIONAL WINNER



# RESCUE OF THE MONTH

## RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES

*In it for life*

**Date/time:** Monday 1 April 2013 at 11.30am  
**Location:** Sunset Beach  
**Lifeguards involved:** Sam Dwen, Shane Edwards, Mark Edwards, Bryce Nichol, Malcolm Beattie, Lewis Powell, Hogan Shrimpton, Grace Poole, Malvina McGuire, Taylor Shrimpton and Josh Higgle

Sunset Beach lifeguards have been praised for saving a group of 10 rock fishermen on the final day of the patrol season.

At 11.30am on Easter Monday, the mobile lifeguard patrol observed the group who were at the extreme southern end of the beach. They were stranded by the incoming tide on a rocky outcrop around 60 metres from the shore line.

The group were fully clothed and had fishing equipment with them. With the tide on its way in, the surf was building and waves were beginning to crash over the rocks and lifeguards knew they had to act quickly.

Accessing the group from the seaward side was ruled out by three metre surf and due to the rocks, it was also considered impractical to use an IRB. Instead, lifeguards made the decision to access the area from the coastline and they made their way approximately two kilometres around the coast armed with rescue tubes, life jackets, rescue boards and first aid equipment.

The lifeguards reached a small beach close to where the fisherman were stranded and a number of them swam 60 metres out to the rock and assisted them one by one back to shore. The Korean fishermen had limited English and were very reluctant to leave the

rock and enter the water to be taken to safety. It took around half an hour for this part of the mission and despite being in various stages of hyperthermia, all 10 were landed safely on the beach.

With the tide almost fully in, the lifeguards' position on the small beach was now perilous as they were left with only a small space on the sand facing steep cliffs.

Lifeguards in the rescue tower dispatched an IRB to establish if there was another way through the rocks to the beach. Once the IRB was on station it became clear that not only would it have been difficult to get in, but they would have risked the fishermen's lives.

Alternative routes were assessed including scaling the cliff face but they were all deemed too risky. Lifeguards decided to stay on the beach until the tide dropped but after two hours, the patients were all wet and suffering visible signs of hyperthermia. It was decided a winch mission was the best option and so the rescue helicopter was called. They took around 50 minutes to respond during which time lifeguards continued to monitor the patients.

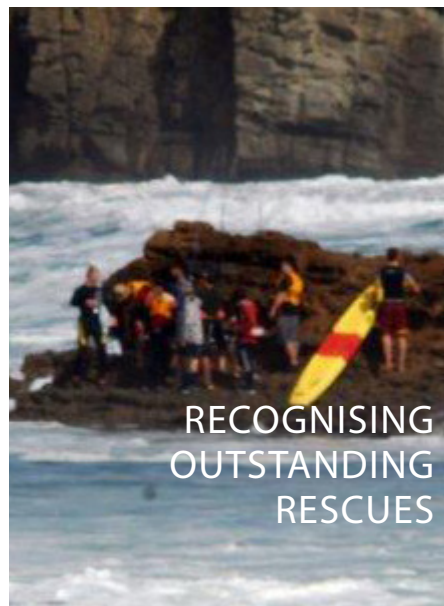
Lifeguards cleared the car park for a landing pad and the helicopter crew began winching out the group. This process took around 45 minutes to complete.

Once all the patients were back on land, they were assessed in the rescue tower, kept warm and allowed to go home around one hour later.

The helicopter was unable to return for the group of lifeguards still on the beach at the rescue site so they swam back around the rocks to the main beach.

The rescue took around four hours from the first observation of the fisherman in trouble to completion of the mission. All the lifeguards involved displayed great skill in a rescue which involved extremely dangerous conditions.

Had it not been a patrol day, the outcome could have been very different with potentially 10 people drowning.



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