



RESCUE OF THE MONTH

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES

Date/time: Friday 13 September 2013
Location: Piha Beach
Lifeguards involved: Duncan Clarke, Aramis Goodwin and Geoff Calvert

In it for life

While working various jobs at Piha in the late afternoon of Friday September 13, the after-hours team at Piha was alerted to four surfers caught in a rip off Lion Rock.

Duncan Clarke and Aramis Goodwin responded to find five surfers had been swept around the front of Lion Rock in the most atrocious conditions. A four-to-five metre Northwest storm swell was making any attempt at a rescue extremely dangerous.

Having unlocked the clubhouse and retrieved the IRB and Rhino, they were confronted with a locked chain across the access way to the beach. Duncan grabbed his key to the other council (fishing club) ramp and they made their way to the southern end of the beach.

After a rapid launch, they were quickly blasting along the beach and into the surf trying to locate the surfers in distress around the front of Lion Rock. Two-to-three metre white water was making the search even harder.

With a quick sweep of the area, the help of the Police helicopter Eagle, three of the surfers were spotted in the "Glut" in the front of Lion rock, stranded up on the rocks and getting pounded by huge white water. The other two had made it all the way around the rocks and back to the beach by themselves.

Duncan then radioed Surfcom to get further help with attempting the rescue but it was not available. So after a talk with Aramis, they decided to drive the IRB into the "Glut" and try to coax the surfers back into the water so they could be picked up.

At this time, a local surf coach swam fully-clothed across the "Glut" to the stranded surfers and helped to get them into the boat, one by one, which involved Aramis watching out for surf while Duncan manoeuvred the IRB up to the rock face. The surfers jumped straight into the boat. They were then returned to the beach and the whole process repeated until all three were safely back on the beach.

The five foreign students were new to surfing with only two of them having tried it before. All five were taken to the clubhouse for assessment of their cuts and scrapes where it was noted that one had mild hypothermia and another was suffering from shock.

Senior lifeguard Geoff Calvert and the First Response team from St John had turned up and they helped treat the patients and monitor them for an hour until the body temperature on the male patient had returned to normal and the female patient had recovered from her shock.

They were released under strict instructions to seek medical help

if their condition changed. They all agreed that surfing in these conditions, especially since there were no other surfers in the water, was not wise.

The surf coach was duly thanked and left the beach with his hire boards back in his car.

There could have been at least one fatality if not more that day if it wasn't for the quick response and skills of the lifeguards involved.



RECOGNISING
OUTSTANDING
RESCUES