

WINTER 2013: WHAKATANE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB



SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW ZEALAND

NATIONAL WINNER



RESCUE OF THE MONTH

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES

Date/time: Saturday 10 August 2013
Location: Kohi Point, Whakatane
Lifeguards involved: Matthew Craig, Peter Craig
and Katherine Craig

In it for life

Divers stranded on the rocks by the rising tide on August 10 may have perished if it wasn't for a daring rescue in rough seas on the coast between Whakatane and Ohope.

A 38 year-old man was exhausted and suffering from suspected hypothermia when he and his 42 year-old companion were plucked off a rock and pulled to the safety of a rescue boat by 18 year-old surf lifesaver Matthew Craig.

Earlier that day, the two Whakatane men had walked from Whakatane around the coast to Otarawairere to go diving. When they began making their way home in the evening, they became trapped by the rising tide.

They called for help on a mobile phone at around 6.45pm and Whakatane Coastguard was dispatched, sending four volunteers in a rescue boat.

They struggled to see the wetsuit-clad men in the dark before finding them on the side of a large rock, only after spotting the dim light from their mobile phone's screen. The volunteers could not manoeuvre the boat close enough to the rocks to reach the men.

Rescue helicopters were not available so shortly before 8pm they called Peter and Katherine Craig of the Whakatane Surf Lifesaving Club.

With Mrs Craig coordinating from the shore, Mr Craig and his son Matthew headed out in an IRB with a spotlight, hastily borrowed from a hunting friend. They found the men on the Ohope-side of the coast beneath Kohi Point.

Matthew swam 50 metres through white water in a one metre swell to the rock where the men were stranded. He said the 38 year-old, who was a reasonably big guy, was in bad shape and unwilling to re-enter the water.

Matthew coaxed him in and towed him to the IRB, along with the pair's gear. The man collapsed and had symptoms of advanced hypothermia. Matthew then swam back to the rock and returned with the 42 year-old.

Both men were transferred to the Coastguard boat and taken back to the Whakatane wharf where an ambulance was waiting shortly after 9pm.

The 38 year-old was treated at Whakatane Hospital and discharged.

If the rescuers had needed to wait for the tide to go out, the 38 year-old would have more than likely perished.

The rescue was an excellent example of emergency services working together for a great result.



RECOGNISING
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