



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



CLUB: United North Piha Lifeguard Service & Piha Surf Life Saving Club
SURF LIFEGUARDS: Louis Curham, Kyran Gillespie, Rhys Lloyd, Blake Porteous, Zachary Swift, Liana Sykes

Sometimes the difference between life and death can be as thin as a line in the sand.

At 3:30pm on February 17th, 2021, Surf Lifeguards at United North Piha LS took a call from a member of the public who was walking along the Mercer Bay Loop Track. The tramper, looking down at the beach below, spotted a man carving the word "HELP" into the sand before collapsing.

It was later discovered that the man was surfing alone at Karekare Beach before losing his surfboard and being sucked around to isolated Mercer Bay and thrown against rocks.

United North Piha LS' Patrol Captain tasked lifeguards to respond on an RWC and contacted nearby Piha SLSC to request an extra crew person. This would allow both patrols to operate unaffected while the rescue was being carried out.

The RWC launched from United North Piha LS and picked up a crew person from Piha SLSC, arriving at Mercer Bay shortly after. The lifeguards spotted the man lying on the beach,

waving for attention. Due to the large surf and steep beach, the RWC wasn't able to reach the shore. Instead, they decided to drop the crew person off as close to the beach as possible so that he could swim to the patient.

The surfer had a severe laceration to his leg and countless cuts and bruises across his body. He was exhausted and showing signs of hypothermia after being exposed to the elements for 2-3 hours.

Once bandaged, the patient was able to walk with assistance and board the RWC.

An ATV and lifeguard were ready at Piha's shoreline to transport the patient to the club's first aid room. Lifeguards looked after the patient while they waited for the ambulance to arrive.

The surfer was reported missing by his wife at 5pm, meaning that if the tramper hadn't spotted him, it would have taken another two hours before lifeguards went looking for him. This delay could have resulted in a very different outcome. Thankfully, this story has a happy ending and the surfer was able to be reunited with his 4-day old baby.

In it for life