



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



CLUB: Muriwai Volunteer Lifeguard Service Search and Rescue Squad
SURF LIFEGUARDS: Glenn Gowthorpe, Nick Thompson, Mark Goodhew, Carlin O'Neill, Craig Smith, Neil Reid, Nigel Sorenson, Darrell Watt, Wayne Sutton, Nick Fryer

On the 31st of August 2021 calls flooded into the Police 111 line when Kumeu, Huapai, and Waimauku received over 91mm of rain in one hour, flooding buildings, closing roads, bringing down trees, and trapping people in their homes.

Due to the scale of the flooding and multiple people requiring immediate assistance, the Police quickly enlisted the services of the Muriwai Volunteer Lifeguard Service SAR Squad.

The initial response required IRB's and crew to assist in the rescue and evacuation of several residents in Huapai, 17km away from Muriwai Beach. Five SAR Squad members responded with two IRB's, First Aid and Rescue equipment. The transit was made difficult with the debris-strewn, flooded roads, and farmers moving livestock to safety.

Lifeguards crossed a swiftly flowing 'road and paddock' to the first two patients. One man was rescued from a shed roof and another man had been stuck inside his garden shed since the previous night, with 1.5m water flowing around him. The lifeguards removed the shed windows and helped the elderly and fatigued gentleman through the window into the IRB.

The Police then informed the SAR Squad of people in distress across several different incident sites. The Squad Coordinator called for backup from a third IRB crew and additional support staff.

A total of 11 people were rescued and a further 47 people were assisted to safety, reunited with family and friends, or their welfare and immediate needs assessed.

The daring rescues captured the attention of the nation, with the news of the Muriwai SAR Squad's endeavours widely reported in the media and formal recognition received from Local Labour MP Maria Lubeck.

Surf Life Saving Northern Region CEO Matt Williams said the rescues and checks were a heart-warming demonstration of the valuable role played by lifeguards in such emergencies. "We're so proud of these volunteers. Even during a global pandemic, we have people putting their hand up to help others and look at the incredible difference they've made today."

In it for life