



NORTHLAND

Boat home after accident

By DENISE PIPER - Whangarei Leader Last updated 05:00 18/08/2009

Tutukaka Coastguard's rescue boat is back on the water, five months after it was damaged in an accident in which the volunteer crew were seriously injured.

Dive! Tutukaka Rescue was severely damaged after hitting rocks near Taiharuru on March 4 during a rescue attempt in atrocious weather and darkness.

All five crew members were injured and had to be winched to safety by the Northland Electricity Rescue Helicopter.

The vessel has been repaired and a Coastguard team brought it to Tutukaka from Whangarei this month.

The repairs were covered by insurance, says Tutukaka Coastguard chairman John Glaze.

The \$500,000 vessel, which was new in September last year, was equipped with GPS, radar and charts.

Now it also has a thermal imaging camera for night vision thanks to a grant from the Dunedin-based Caversham Foundation, Mr Glaze says.

Safety and maintenance officer Robert Nimmo, one of the "famous five" on board when the accident occurred, says the boat has also had several minor improvements including more padding in the cockpit.

Mr Nimmo, who is still recovering, admitted to a few nerves before transporting the boat from Whangarei but says he has complete confidence in the vessel and its equipment.

"I'm perfectly confident we are able to handle any situation," he says.

The injured crew have to go through a stand-down period because of their injuries but they are keen to get back to helping others, Mr Nimmo says.

"They're anxious to get back on duty. Their mental state hasn't altered, they still get the call."

Mr Glaze says during the five months the boat was out of action the Tutukaka area was covered by Coastguard units at Whangaruru and Whangarei.

The weather has been bad enough to put most boaties off going out so it has not been busy, he says.

The Tutukaka crew have been training on a privately owned ex-naval vessel, as well as spending time in the classroom.

The crews are also familiarising themselves with the new equipment on Dive! Tutukaka Rescue.

The accident is being investigated by the Transport Accident Investigation Commission but Mr Glaze does not expect the results before the end of the year.