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Rescue chopper has busy couple of days

Mike Dinsdale | 23rd April 2009

Northland's rescue helicopter has made its second successful long-distance mercy dash out to sea in two days.

The Northland Electricity rescue helicopter was called out about 1pm on Tuesday by the National Rescue Coordination Centre (NRCC) to pick up three people stranded on the stricken yacht Boundless about 160-180 nautical miles west of Kaitaia.

The Boundless got into trouble during heavy weather while on its way from Brisbane to Auckland on Monday.

Rescue helicopter pilot Dean Voelkerling said the chopper had to refuel at Kerikeri then again at North Cape before heading out to sea to rendezvous with the Boundless.

"On the way it was suggested by the NRCC that extra fuel would help the crew out, so we diverted to a nearby vessel to pick up fuel in jerry-cans to winch down to them," Mr Voelkerling said.

"But in the meantime the crew decided they wanted to get off the boat, so we headed back toward the Boundless.

"It was getting beyond what they were able to stand out at sea. I think they'd taken quite a battering and there was another big low coming towards them."

The chopper arrived above the Boundless about 3.15pm while an Air Force Orion circled overhead relaying information to the rescue helicopter crew of Mr Voelkerling, fellow pilot Pete Turnbull and advanced paramedic Mark Going.

Two men and a women were winched from the boat and arrived in Whangarei about 7pm, he said.

Mr Voelkerling said none of the yachties were injured and once they cleared customs they went on their way.

It was the second successful rescue in two days after the chopper was called out about 2pm on Monday when a seaman aboard the Cap Paisley cargo ship got appendicitis and needed evacuating.

The Cap Paisley had left Auckland earlier heading for Japan, but turned back once the seaman's condition became apparent.

The rescue helicopter met the vessel about 94 nautical miles north of Whangarei about 3pm on Monday and advanced paramedic Scott Meares winched down to pick up the sailor.

The sailor was then taken to Whangarei Hospital for treatment.

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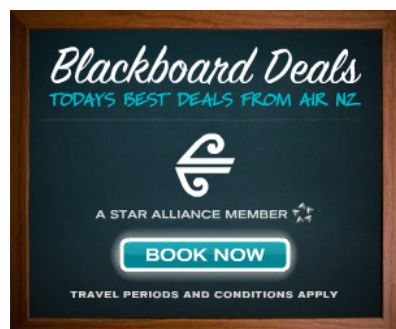
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