



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



January 2009 United North Piha Lifeguard Service

Lifeguards involved: Ari Peach , Rob Pidgeon , Anthony Corbett, Jo Piggins, James Higgs, Ross Jamieson, Gareth Neilson, Gail Abel, Yvonne Abel, Penny Beetham & Rose Curin-Brown

A clear, sunny day had attracted increasing crowds of visitors to North Piha beach on the first day of Auckland Anniversary weekend. In recent weeks, due to beach erosion, several large 'holes' had formed creating strong rips across the main section of North Piha that were unpredictable at best. A late afternoon low tide meant that surf conditions would deteriorate throughout the day as the effect of the inshore holes and rips increased.

3 lifeguards vigilantly patrolled the flagged area where more than 80 bathers were in the water whilst in the tower, another 3 lifeguards attentively scanned the flagged area and the rest of the beach. As the tide approached dead low, a group of swimmers were seen to be drifting to the south of the flagged area and lifeguards were tasked to perform a preventive action to shift the bathers back towards the flags, however at this point it became apparent that one person would require assistance as he was unable to make progress against the strong currents and began to panic. Lifeguard James Higgs swam to assist the patient and as the currents made locating the patient difficult an IRB crew was dispatched to back up Higgs. Meanwhile, Junior lifeguard Ross Jamieson entered the water to assist two members of the public who had managed to pull the unconscious patient to the sandbar at the same time that an IRB was being launched by Rob Pidgeon and Anthony Corbett. The IRB crew were updated on the situation via the Patrol Tower and Corbett was diverted to Jamieson and the unconscious patient who were in the shallows. Corbett then undertook a primary survey and identified that the patient was not breathing nor displaying any signs of life, so he commenced CPR.

At the same time, Pidgeon also left the IRB and proceeded to the patient on an ATV with Patrol Captain Ari Peach and a Pelican pack with oxygen equipment. Peach led the

resuscitation with Jo Piggins and two visiting specialist doctors who had offered assistance. Pidgeon informed Surfcom of the incident and then dispatched Higgs to the clubhouse to retrieve the AED. Surfcom advised that Westpac was unavailable and informed that an Ambulance was enroute. The patient received effective chest compressions and excellent airway care with the use of an oropharyngeal airway and BVM ventilation before beginning to spontaneously breathe on his own with supplemental oxygen. With resources stretched, Pidgeon identified that 80 people in the water risked another potential rescue so additional lifeguard assistance was requested from Piha SLSC and the patrolled area temporarily closed with Gareth Neilson and the remainder of the patrol clearing the bathers out of the water while the incident was in progress. Throughout the entire incident preventative actions were performed by Curin-Brown & Beetham in an ATV at the southern end of the beach whilst Y. Abel and G. Abel scanned the beach from the Patrol Tower.

Remarkably within 4-5 minutes of resuscitation, the patient regained an altered state of consciousness and his condition began to improve. Shortly afterwards, he was transported from the beach to the first aid room to await the ambulance. When the ambulance arrived the patient could communicate with the lifeguards and was aware of his surroundings. A patrolled area was quickly reestablished as a substantial crowd of bystanders had formed and general patrolling was resumed until the end of the day without further incident.

Strong leadership, excellent teamwork, effective communication combined with a higher level of training ensured that the patient was in the best care. The lifeguards involved contributed to an outstanding outcome to an immediately life threatening situation.