

Rescue Acknowledgment – Incident on November 11th, 2024

At approximately 10:00 p.m. on November 11th, 2024, a distress call was broadcast over VHF radio reporting a disabled vessel being pushed into the rocks near the Ventura Harbor entrance. Harbor Patrol Officers Bobby Crane (35 yrs) and Harbor Patrol Officer Erik Bear (23yrs) responded immediately, deploying in Boat 19 with a Code-3 response. Within four minutes, they arrived on scene to find a 25-foot vessel with five passengers dangerously positioned sideways against the rocks, tipping precariously as waves crashed against it.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Officers Crane and Bear skillfully maneuvered Boat 19 on the back of an incoming wave to position themselves for rescue. They successfully threw a line to the vessel, which was caught by one of the passengers. Under the officers' direction, the line was secured to the disabled boat, allowing them to pull it safely off the rocks and into open water. Once they were safely away from the hazard the vessel was towed back to the launch ramp.

Harbor Patrol Officer Tim Burrows (23yrs) was donning his equipment to deploy on our Rescue Water Craft (RWC), a specialized piece of equipment that would have been instrumental in recovering any passengers who entered the water. Fortunately, the quick actions of the officers prevented the need for an in-water rescue. Burrows changed back to his uniform and took a truck to the launch ramp to assist the other Officers.

Upon arrival at the launch ramp, Officers Crane and Bear assessed the occupants and discovered that among the five individuals on board were an 84-year-old woman, two young children, and their parents, whose swimming abilities were unknown. They also confirmed no medical aid was required and a safety talk was provided and all were released without further actions.

Without the swift and decisive actions of Officers Crane and Bear, this incident could have ended in tragedy. Had the boat capsized at that location, all five passengers would have been thrown into 50-degree water, with strong swells pushing them against the rocks. Even a strong swimmer would have faced extreme difficulty in those conditions—those with limited experience would have had little chance of survival.

The professionalism, skill, and training of our Harbor Patrol staff once again made the difference between life and death. Their ability to rapidly assess and execute a rescue under dangerous conditions is a testament to their dedication and to the strong support we receive from the Board and General Manager in equipping and preparing our personnel.

Rescue Acknowledgment – Incident on December 13, 2024

At approximately 09:59 on December 13, 2024, a distress call was broadcast over VHF Channel 16 reporting a capsized vessel near the Ventura Harbor detached breakwall.

Senior Harbor Patrol Officer (SHPO) Donohue, a three-year veteran, was at the helm of RB19 and arrived on scene in less than three minutes from the initial call. He encountered a 65-foot aluminum squid fishing vessel that had capsized. Nearby, a small aluminum boat tender was afloat with six individuals aboard—four survivors from the capsized vessel and two bystanders who had assisted in the rescue. As he approached the skiff, SHPO Donohue quickly scanned the area for any additional persons in the water, ensured all individuals were accounted for, and relayed critical information to the Fire Communications Center (FCC), requesting an additional ambulance.

Harbor Patrol Officer Winter, also with three years of service, and Marine Safety Officer Warne, a California State Licensed Paramedic with six months on duty, arrived within four minutes of the initial call. Officer Warne provided immediate medical aid to the four patients while they were transported to the Harbor Patrol dock, where Ventura Fire and EMS paramedics awaited their arrival. Two of the patients, who had been trapped inside the overturned vessel and had to self-extricate, sustained severe and moderate injuries and were transported to a local hospital. The remaining two declined medical aid and were released.

SHPO Donohue coordinated with the Harbormaster and Tow Boat U.S. to secure the capsized vessel and prevent it from obstructing the harbor entrance. The team made the critical decision to tow the vessel into deeper water, ensuring the safety of both the harbor and its residents. Upon the arrival of the Harbormaster and General Manager, the vessel was successfully relocated approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile offshore. As a precaution, further decisions were made to tow it farther north while the U.S. Coast Guard and vessel owners developed a salvage plan. Ultimately, the vessel was anchored offshore and later salvaged by a commercial dive team.

This incident occurred outside the technical boundaries of the Port District. In many cases, other agencies might have deferred aspects of the response to external entities. However, our Harbor Patrol team acted decisively taking full control of the scene, administering aid, ensuring the victims' safe return to shore, securing the vessel, and implementing a proactive strategy to protect the harbor. Our staff also seamlessly coordinated with larger agencies as the salvage operation progressed.

This response was a testament to the efficiency and effectiveness made possible by the Board's and General Manager's continued support in staffing, recruiting, and training exceptional personnel. Our Harbor Patrol staff are selected for their unique skills and dedication, and their extensive training ensures they perform at the highest level. Additionally, our close working relationship with Tow Boat/Vessel Assist Ventura, with whom we train regularly, enhances our ability to respond safely and effectively to emergencies of this nature.