



North Lincoln Fire & Rescue District #1

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Captain Todd Trimpert
Sector Commander
USCG Sector North Bend
2000 Connecticut Ave
North Bend, OR 97459

Ronald Austin Nissen, 51, of Depoe Bay drowned June 9, 2004, when he became entangled in fishing gear after his boat overturned offshore from Lincoln Beach.

This tragic event could have been much worse, however, if not for the USCG helicopter that assisted North Lincoln Fire & Rescue's Water Rescue Team that day. Our team was called to assist Depoe Bay Fire after Nissen's boat overturned about 150 yards offshore. We launched two of our jet skis from the beach in extremely rough seas with very large swells and were about to approach the vessel (fearing Nissen was trapped inside the overturned boat) when a large wave knocked me and my ski operator off into the water.

We recovered our ski and came back to shore to get ready for a second attempt when the Coast Guard Helicopter overhead radioed to warn our team of lines and nets to the west and north of the vessel, still attached to the small fishing boat. USCG did not deploy a rescue swimmer for fear of entanglement, but with this new information we elected to make a second attempt to lasso the exposed prop shaft from the southeast. This time we successfully captured the vessel and secured a line so we could pull the boat to shore. I discovered Mr. Nissen deceased in the hull of the boat, and am forever grateful that neither I nor a member of my team suffered the same fate, thanks to the crew on the HH-65 .

If not for the aerial view from the USCG to guide us with this information, we most certainly would have made our approach directly from the west to avoid colliding with the boat since it was being pushed northeast in the surf. Doing this would have most likely caused our rescue ski and us to be entangled or at the very least caused our ski to suck up debris which would leave it dead in the water.

Over the years, our team can recall countless stories of how the USCG Helicopter in Newport assisted us and in many cases was the only means to a successful rescue. Bob Schroeder, one of the rescuers with me in 2004, reminded me of another rescue that we had a few years back. A little girl was trapped on some rocks off Lincoln City. We tied a line to Bob, who made his way out onto the rocks. Climbing out of heavy surf, Bob scraped his hands terribly on the rocks. Reaching the frightened and shivering girl, Bob protected the small child from breaking surf with his body, and reassured her that help was on the way. Bob was exhausted and his hands bloodied; there was no way to get them safely off the rocks except for hoisting the child from the air. Bob told me he looked south and in the sky saw the familiar orange HH-65 approaching. He knew it would be on the way as it always had been for decades. The rescue swimmer lowered himself and took the girl from Bob as waves slammed the rocks.

I can look through the hundreds of newspaper accounts which prove the rapid response of the USCG air resource in Newport saved lives, not only those of residents and tourists but of our responders as well.

When we call the USCG for assistance, we do not look to the sea, we look to the sky. Having the Newport air facility remain open is critical to our operations and to our life-saving mission.

We need USCG air support to remain on the central Oregon coast!

Sincerely,

Jim Kusz / Captain

District Safety, Public Information & Education Officer