

Three passengers rescued from disabled sailboat caught in Hurricane Julio

HONOLULU — Three men are safely aboard a container ship enroute to Honolulu after spending 24 hours battling the effects of Hurricane Julio aboard a disabled sailboat 414 miles northeast of Oahu Monday.

Rescued are 61-year-old Ben Nealy, 22-year-old Lee Nealy, and 22-year-old Mike Vanway.

The 42-foot sailboat enroute from Stockton, Calif., to Honolulu, was dismasted and flooding with three passengers aboard.

The 661-foot Matson container ship Manukai safely embarked the three passengers at 7:52 a.m. Monday.

The container ship successfully shot a line to the sailboat's crew and pulled the sailboat and crew alongside the ship. The passengers disembarked the sailboat and climbed a 30-foot ladder draped over the side of Manukai's hull.

On-scene conditions Monday morning were reported winds of 20 mph with 13-foot seas.

The Walkabout remains adrift. The Coast Guard has issued a warning notifying mariners of the hazard to navigation.

Manukai rerouted 276 miles to assist with the rescue of Walkabout's crew. The Manukai is expected to arrive in Honolulu at 5 a.m. Tuesday.

At 7:15 a.m. Sunday, watchstanders at the Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Honolulu received notification from the International Emergency Response Coordination Center in Texas that an alert message was received from Walkabout requesting Coast Guard assistance.

JRCC diverted an airplane from the National Hurricane Center, Teal 76, from inside Hurricane Julio to locate the vessel and establish VHF radio communications.

At 10:49 a.m., Teal 76 reported Mayday calls being broadcast from Walkabout.

On-scene conditions Sunday were reported as 92 to 115 mph winds with 30-foot seas. One of the hatches had blown away and onboard bilge pumps were unable to keep up with the flooding. The vessel's life raft was also blown overboard.

An HC-130 Hercules airplane crew launched from Air Station Barbers Point at 11:10 a.m. to deliver a life raft and relieve Teal 76.

After a two-hour transit, the Hercules crew arrived on scene and dropped dewatering equipment and life rafts to the Walkabout. The Walkabout was unable to retrieve the equipment due to rough on-scene conditions.

The Hercules crew returned to Oahu due to fuel limitations.

A second Hercules airplane crew departed from Air Station Barbers Point at 5:15 p.m. enroute to the vessel's location and arrived on scene at 7 p.m. and established communications with the Walkabout crew. Severe conditions prevented attempts to retrieve equipment dropped by the Hercules crew.

The air crew remained on scene until the Matson container ship arrived at the sailboat's location at approximately 10 p.m. The Manukai attempted to send a life raft to the sailboat, but conditions were too rough and they were unsuccessful. The ship's crew determined it unsafe to proceed and suspended rescue efforts until first light Monday morning.