

15. Readiness and Recovery (2:54)

When you were talking about Les High in the planes he's flown and the rescue missions, it came to mind one rescue mission that we had on the OWASCO with that same damage control team we were talking about. We were on North Atlantic patrol on Charlie station; the weather was quite bad and we came across a fishing vessel that was floundering and in danger of sinking.

The OWASKO responded. We were able to get close to the fishing vessel but not close enough to do any scramble net type of operation because the seas were just too rough. The skipper decided to launch the surf boat.

The crew went across and they couldn't get close enough to the fishing vessel because it was too dangerous to get that close. So they had people. The weather was bad and cold. They had the people jump off the fishing vessel into the water and they plucked them out of the water.

Then the surf boat came over alongside the OWASKO with the scramble net down the side. The XO ordered me or told me to, you know, don the life...the wet jacket ...the wetsuits. Me and my team maned the scramble nets.

Now that was quite harrowing - let's put it that way. The waves were coming - when the ship rolled - the waves were coming up over our heads while we were hanging on to the scramble net. Well, oh by the way, at the bottom of the scramble net we had a rubber lifeboat kind of attached to the scramble net. The people who came in the surfboat jumped over into the rubber boat and they were able to assist them up the scramble net - not too many or too much problems. The last guy was turning blue with a dislocated shoulder. He could hardly move. He was almost out of it you know.

So we had to get him into the rubber boat and manhandle him up the net with the damage control team one on either side of the scramble net. That's as we were going up.

The ship ended up receiving a letter of commendation for that rescue. The team just never questioned how dangerous it was. They just went ahead and did it. I was really proud.

Related Primary Leadership Principles

Continual Learning

Expectations

Courage

Inspiration

Decision-Making

Military Core Values

Recognition