

For Immediate Release
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BC FERRIES RESPONDS TO MULTIPLE MARINE EMERGENCIES OVER THE WEEKEND

VICTORIA – A routine ferry crossing on the Queen of Nanaimo Friday afternoon turned into a marine rescue when the ferry responded to a Mayday call from a boat that had run aground on rocks with seven passengers aboard.

“When one of our vessels gets a call to respond to a marine emergency, the crew quickly jump into action,” says Darren Johnston, BC Ferries’ Director of Fleet Operations. Not only are BC Ferries’ crews trained to respond to an emergency onboard one of their own vessels, as professional mariners, they are also trained in emergency response to assist other vessels on the open water.”

In the situation on Friday, two crew members climbed into a rescue boat, which was then lowered into the water and travelled at speeds of up to 40 kilometres per hour to the location of the vessel in distress.

When the BC Ferries’ crew arrived, the seven passengers transferred off their own boat and into the Queen of Nanaimo’s rescue boat. From there, Canada Customs took over from BC Ferries to assist the pleasure boaters.

“We can respond to an incident in as little as five minutes,” says Johnston. “We pride ourselves on a quick response time, because of the risk of hypothermia in the cold waters of British Columbia.”

In an average year, BC Ferries’ vessels respond to approximately 125 marine emergencies, from providing visual confirmation of a situation, to recovering people from the water and applying advanced first aid treatment.

On the recent July 14 to 16 weekend, BC Ferries’ crew once again demonstrated their emergency response training when responding to five additional marine incidents. The Coastal Renaissance spotted an unoccupied zodiac near Snake Island off the Nanaimo Harbour area and investigated to ensure there was nothing wrong. Crews from the MV Kuper and Howe Sound Queen responded to a Mayday call from a boat in distress near Tent Island, and towed the boat to a safe position. The MV Kahloke launched its rescue boat to assist a pleasure craft unable to move, and remained in the area until Canadian Coast Guard arrived. The Queen of Nanaimo also did double duty, launching its rescue boat for a second time while alongside Tsawwassen terminal to retrieve two canoeists from the water to take them ashore for further care.

“We appreciate the patience of our customers when there’s an incident, because our response generally results in a delay for them,” says Johnston. “We find it is one occasion when our customers can appreciate why we’re late.”

Given the more than 170,000 sailings BC Ferries makes each year, BC Ferries’ presence on the water means that their vessels are often the first to respond, with the crew demonstrating over and over again, just how valuable their emergency response skills are when needed.

With warmer weather, calmer sea conditions and an influx of marine traffic during the summer on B.C.’s coast, BC Ferries reminds all boaters of the importance of remaining safe and vigilant in the waters we share.

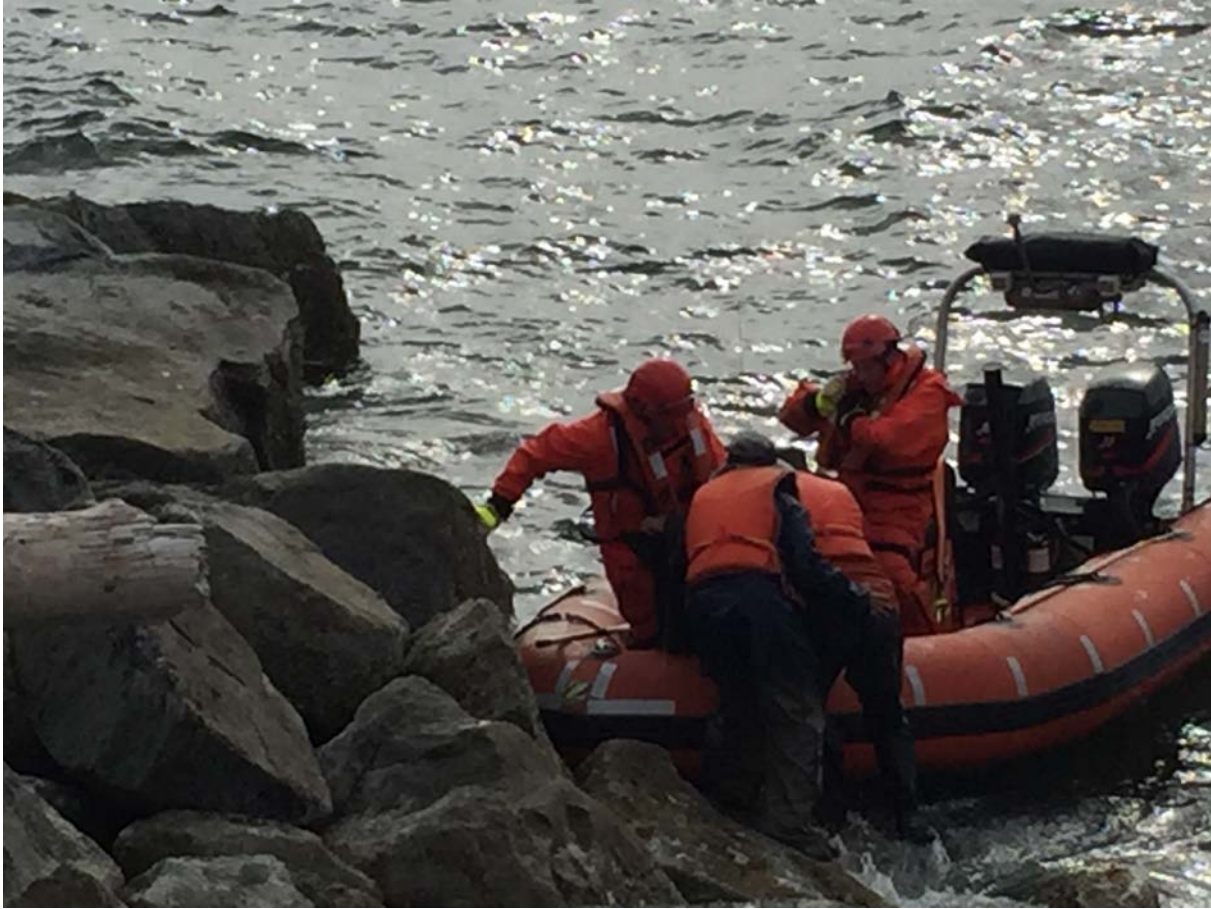
Under contract to the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries is the service provider responsible for the delivery of safe, efficient and dependable ferry service along coastal British Columbia.

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Photo attached.



July 16, 2017 – Crew members from the Queen of Nanaimo retrieve two canoeists from water near Tsawwassen terminal.