

Beat: Local

Rescue launched for sailboat caught up in Hurricane Julio off Hawaii

-, 11.08.2014, 17:19 Time

USPA News - A rescue operation was launched off the Hawaiian islands on Sunday after a sailboat with three people on board was caught up in Hurricane Julio, damaging the vessel and causing it to start taking on water, the U.S. Coast Guard said Monday as the rescue continued. The 42-foot (12.8-meter) sailboat `Walkabout` was caught in the hurricane when it was about 414 miles (666 kilometers) northeast of the island of Oahu.

The crew sent an alert message to the International Emergency Response Coordination Center in Texas, which in turn alerted watchstanders at the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) in Honolulu at 7:15 a.m. local time on Sunday. The U.S. Coast Guard said the sailing vessel was disabled and taking on water. "On-scene conditions are reported as 92 to 115 miles (148 to 185 kilometers) per hour winds with 30-foot (9.1-meter) seas," a spokesperson said. "One of the hatches has blown away and onboard bilge pumps are unable to keep up with the rate of flooding. The vessel's life raft has also been blown overboard." A so-called hurricane hunter from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) was inside Hurricane Julio at the time the emergency was reported and was diverted to locate the vessel and establish VHF radio communications. The NHC aircraft, Teal 76, reported picking up Mayday calls from the `Walkabout` at 10:49 a.m. Upon the Mayday calls being received, an HC-130 Hercules aircraft was launched from Air Station Barbers Point on Oahu to drop a life raft to the Walkabout crew and to 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 U.S. Coast Guard said, adding that the crew was unable to retrieve the equipment due to the bad weather. The Hercules crew was then forced to return to Oahu due to fuel limitations, after which a second Hercules aircraft departed from Air Station Barbers Point at 5:15 p.m. local time. They arrived on scene at 7 p.m. and remained there until the 661-foot (201-meter) Matson container ship `Manukai` arrived in the area. As of early Monday, the crew of the `Walkabout` had not yet been rescued as the container ship was waiting for daylight. According to the Central Pacific Hurricane Center (CPHC), Hurricane Julio remained a Category 1 hurricane on early Monday morning with maximum sustained winds near 75 miles (120 kilometers) per hour, with higher gusts. Julio is expected to weaken slightly over the next two days, and become a tropical storm by Monday evening.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2574/rescue-launched-for-sailboat-caught-up-in-hurricane-julio-off-hawaii.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619