



Night of high drama at sea and in the air



The scene at the Airport as the fishermen are transferred from the helicopter to ambulances Picture: IAN LE SUEUR/SWNS.com

Alive!

Double storm miracle as missing fishermen are found and search plane crew survive crash

TWO Jersey fishermen were air-lifted from a reef off the north-east coast last night following a dramatic operation during which a search and rescue plane crashed into a field.

The pair were plucked off the Ecréhous by a French helicopter in extreme weather conditions more than five hours after being reported missing.

Earlier in the evening the Channel Islands Air Search aircraft crash-landed into a field in St Mary just 50 yards from a house. All five crew members escaped with minor injuries.

One of the fishermen spent last night in hospital being treated for hypothermia. His girlfriend told the JEP this morning that he was still in hospital but was in a comfortable condition. The condition of the other fisherman was not known, but it is understood that he was discharged in the early hours of today.

By Philip Jordan

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The search operation was launched just after 6 o'clock last night after the two men went missing in an eight-foot dinghy at the Ecréhous. The pair, who were reportedly members of a group staying on the reef, are believed to have got into difficulty while checking the moorings of their boat.

Lifeboat teams from Jersey, Alderney and France as well as search and rescue helicopters from France and the south coast of the UK were all scrambled to search for the men.

They were later found by their party at the reef shortly after 11 pm. One of the men was believed to have been found clinging to a rock.

After the party contacted the Coastguard to say that the men had been found, the two were airlifted back to the Airport by the French helicopter.

Earlier in the evening the CI Air Search plane the Lions' Pride was forced into an emergency landing close to the Priory pub at Devil's Hole after suffering technical problems.



The Channel Islands Air Search after crash-landing in a St Mary field Picture: TONY PIKE (02017805)

The plane skidded across a field behind the pub before hitting a tree.

Air Search chief officer Colin Ferbrache - who was

not on board the aircraft - said that it was amazing that the crew escaped unharmed.

'They all ran away from the aircraft on impact in case it

burst into flames,' he added.

Speaking to the JEP from the Priory an hour after the crash, search director and crew member Jason Hobbs

said: 'We were called out in response to two casualties off the Ecréhous but unfortunately we had technical problems.'

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