

Windsurfer Rescued After 18 Hours in Water

Story by SNPA James Judge, D7 Public Affairs

MIAMI - The Coast Guard rescued a windsurfer Oct. 25, 2006, in waters one mile from Big Pine Key, Fla after he was reported overdue.

Greg Lepock, 55, was reported overdue to the Coast Guard by his wife Cindy Gavin shortly after 7 p.m.

The Coast Guard immediately launched an HH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Miami and a 25-foot rescue boat from Station Marathon, Fla.

Coast Guard rescue crews searched until 4 a.m., when the case was stopped until daylight.

At first light, the search resumed with another HH-65 Dolphin helicopter and a 33-foot rescue boat from Station Marathon. The Dolphin helicopter located Lepock at approximately 8:24 a.m. and directed the rescue boat to Lepock's location.

“Once the helicopter spotted him, we were there within five minutes,” said Coast Guard Petty Officer Mark Reilly, the coxswain of the 33-foot rescue boat.

Lepock was found holding onto a crab pot. Lepock said he had grabbed and held onto the crab pot throughout the night so he would stop drifting.

“I didn’t expect to see him alive,” said Reilly. “He was sitting on his board trying to wave at us. You could see his arms were tired. The first thing he said was ‘I am glad to see you guys,’” Reilly added.

“One of our guys gave him a float coat, and we wrapped him up in a blanket. Our EMT said he had a slight case of hypothermia. I called the station and told them to have EMS meet us at Big Pine Fishing Lodge,” said Reilly.

Within minutes the Coast Guard took the cold and tired Lepock to shore and transferred him to local EMS.

The Monroe County Sheriff’s Office marine unit also assisted with the search.

USCG