

Cutter Alex Haley Rescues 28 From Ship Fire

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/100210.alex_haley.mp3{/audio}

Diana Gish/KMXT

When KMXT last reported on the Kodiak-based Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley, the crew members were receiving service medals for their duty in the Arctic Ocean. The crew has made news again, but this time for a rescue mission in the Pacific.

The Alex Haley was in Hawaii for training when the crew received an emergency call.

Coast Guard spokeswoman Sara Francis said that the Taiwanese fishing vessel "Hou Chun 11, caught on fire Monday morning.

-- (Alex Haley 1 They were about ...middle of nowhere.")

The ship-board fire forced the 28-member crew to abandon ship and board life rafts in 35 mile per hour winds and eight to ten foot seas. The first to arrive at the emergency scene was a Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft from Barbers Point which arrived at one in the afternoon.

-- (Alex Haley 2 "The air crew ... the cutter arrived.")

The Alex Haley arrived on the scene early Tuesday morning. Aircrews were able to communicate the exact position of the life rafts to the Alex Haley.

-- (Alex Haley 3 "The Alex Haley ...around 4 p.m.")

While enroute to Christmas Island, Coast Guard Corpsmen aboard the cutter are treating the two "HouChun 11" crew members who suffered severe burns. Once they arrive in Kiribati (keer-uh-bot-ee), the injured will be medavaced to Honolulu. The cause of the fishing vessel fire remains unknown.

The Alex Haley is expected to return to Kodiak toward the end of the month. Since December, t he Coast Guard cutter has been in Honolulu to complete a "Tailored Ship Training Availability" which measures the crew's skills and readiness.