Weather Conditions Don't Hamper Bering Sea Medevac

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Jay Barrett/KMXT and Annie Ropeik/KUCB

A Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew medevac’d an ailing mariner from a vessel in the Bering Sea near Cold Bay Monday evening.

The Coast Guard received the medevac request from the 158-foot fishing vessel Arica after a crewman came down with severe abdominal pain, said Coast Guard petty officer Grant DeVuyst.

"The hoist is what happens when we don't have a surface asset, or if there's not time for a fishing vessel or whatever kind of vessel to make it into port. So it's the only practical way to get someone who needs to be evacuated into the helicopter.”

The helicopter and crew were stationed in Cold Bay for the fishing season. They've been there for the past couple of months. DeVuyst says the Coast Guard deploys groups from Air Station Kodiak to be on hand for rescues during the peak fishing times.

"The Bering Sea, the Gulf of Alaska -- very huge bodies of water, but that's why the helicopter's already there, because there's such an increase in the number of fishing vessels out there, you're more likely to see accidents happening with more vessels, of course, so we're able to get on-scene quickly and get them back to care.”

He said Monday night’s medevac was done by about 7:30 p.m. The Jayhawk crew returned the mariner to Cold Bay for a commercial flight to Anchorage. His current condition is unknown. The Coast Guard did not release his name.

Eight-to-10-foot seas with winds to 35 mph were reported at the scene of the rescue, with visibility down to a half-mile. DeVuyst says it was typical rough weather that didn’t hamper the operation.