

Citation for
THE ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA
Gold Medal

To: Robert D. Emley
Aviation Survival Technician Second Class
United States Coast Guard

Petty Officer EMLEY is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight on 25 May 2012 while serving as a Rescue Swimmer aboard Coast Guard helicopter CG6044. CG6044 launched in response to a night distress call from the 55 foot F/V ST JOSEPH, located six nautical miles east of Kayak Island in Prince William Sound, Alaska.

Seas above 30 feet and howling winds in excess of 30 knots had broken the vessel's rudder, leaving only bow thrusters to keep the vessel upright and into approaching waves. CG6044 launched from Aviation Support Facility Cordova and flew through gusty, turbulent conditions, and navigated below 300-foot ceilings with visibility less than one mile to reach the disabled vessel.

Petty Officer EMLEY assisted the pilots to locate and establish communications with the vessel, which had lost generator power and ability to maintain steerageway. With the F/V ST JOSEPH in danger of capsizing in the towering seas, the crew prepared to deliver Petty Officer EMLEY directly to the vessel to hoist all five crewmembers.

Thwarted by wildly swinging deck rigging, the aircrew reassessed the situation and directed the five crewmembers to don survival suits and enter the water one at a time for recovery to the helicopter. Petty Officer EMLEY deployed from the helicopter, quickly located the first two crewmembers, and hoisted them to safety; he then re-entered the water to hoist a third crewmember.

While preparing the third survivor for hoisting, a killer whale surfaced approximately 20 feet behind him. After being alerted to the presence of dangerous marine life and told emphatically by the survivors that a pod of killer whales had been trailing the vessel for some time, Petty Officer EMLEY re-entered the water without hesitation and meticulously executed the remaining two hoists in the face of significantly increased danger.

After recovering all five crewmembers aboard the helicopter, and while CG6044 proceeded directly to the nearest hospital, Petty Officer EMLEY stabilized a severely injured survivor who was having trouble breathing because of a punctured lung. His courage, judgement, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.