

2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year

Sector Award

Presented to:

Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) Norfolk

Lieutenant Commander John Mast, Lieutenant Andrew Grady,
Lieutenant Victoria Moon, Chief Operations Specialist Brian Gainey,
Operations Specialist First Class Scott Dempsey,
Operations Specialist First Class Starr Franklin, and Mr. Thomas Botzenhart

The 2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year Award for Outstanding Professionalism in SAR Mission Planning and Coordination has been awarded to Joint Rescue Coordination Center(JRCC) Norfolk for the coordination and response to the German flagged Sailing Vessel (S/V) Faule Haut, 406 MHz distress beacon activation on 05 June 2022. Lieutenant Commander John Mast, Lieutenant Andrew Grady, Lieutenant Victoria Moon, Chief Operations Specialist Brian Gainey, Operations Specialist First Class Scott Dempsey, Operations Specialist First Class Starr Franklin, and Mr. Thomas Botzenhart demonstrated outstanding investigative work, coordination, and expert search planning in saving the lives of three people.

On 05 June 2022, the S/V Faule Haut was 235 nautical miles west of Bermuda enroute to the Azores when the vessel was overtaken by Tropical Storm Alex. Winds exceeding 50 knots and worsening seas battered the 40-foot vessel and a rogue wave eventually caused it to capsize. The vessel rolled a full 360 degrees, rendering it demasted, partially swamped, and adrift.

Unable to control the vessel, the crewmen on board activated their 406 distress beacon and took shelter in the vessel. In a case that showcased international and interagency cooperation, the JRCC Norfolk watch team worked quickly to coordinate a rescue that involved air assets from Air Station Elizabeth City, Air Station Clearwater, and through coordination with U.S. Fleet Forces Command, utilized the USS Bataan to refuel the Air Station Elizabeth City H-60T twice.

After a 20-hour effort, and because of their outstanding search planning, investigative efforts, and never-ending coordination, all three crew members of sailing vessel were safely rescued and returned to the U.S. where they were met by the American Red Cross for further assistance to return home.