

Hoax call to coastguard endangers lives

✘ The Coastguard received a call this month from a mobile phone asking for assistance for four people trapped on Cramond Island, one of whom was said to have a broken leg.

The RNLi Queensferry Lifeboat was launched in 50 mph winds and heavy seas with a metre and a half swell. It ploughed through the waves to reach Cramond Island and in extremely dangerous conditions managed to land two crew members on the east side on rocks from where they scrambled ashore and began an extensive search of the island. Meanwhile a helicopter from 177 HMS Gannet in Prestwick was also scrambled to aid in the search. The RNLi Queensferry Lifeboatmen found no signs of any persons having searched the whole island and all the buildings. The helicopter made numerous sweeps of the area and also drew a blank.

The search now complete, it was too dangerous for the RNLi Queensferry Lifeboat to take the two lifeboatmen off the island in the gale force winds and the heavy seas pounding the island. The helicopter lifted them off and landed the ashore from where the Lifeboat picked them up and they returned to the RNLi Lifeboat Station at the Hawes Pier, South Queensferry.

This call is being treated as a malicious hoax call and is being investigated by the police.

Richard Smith, RNLi Media Relations Manager in Scotland, said "The making of a hoax call is an extremely serious offence and anyone responsible should be brought to justice and punished. There is no excuse, no justification for someone to make a false report about persons or vessels in distress.

The majority of malicious calls state that someone is in trouble at sea and this will trigger off a rapid response from the RNLi, Air Sea Rescue and the Coastguard service at a cost which runs into thousands of pounds.

Every time a malicious phone call is made to the emergency services it means that the RNLi has to alert the volunteers to form a crew. They can be taken away from their work, their social life, their families, often at times of great

inconvenience, and man a Lifeboat to spend what could be hours at sea in all weathers on a fruitless search.

The crime is made even worse by the fact that a Lifeboat is engaged on hoax call and effectively out of action when a real life drama could be unfolding somewhere else in its' area where another person could be in danger of losing their life.

If that were to happen the hoaxer would have to live with that on his conscience for the rest of his life.

The RNLI receives generous support from committed fundraisers throughout Scotland and would be upset to think that their hard work is being wasted by sending out the Lifeboat on a false rescue mission.

The RNLI has 53 lifeboats and 45 stations in Scotland which are there to save lives at sea.