

New York's Finest, Bravest Turn Tragedy To Triumph

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Reporting

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NEW YORK (CBS) — As soon as Flight 1549 went down in the Hudson, rescuers jumped into action.

Among those who pulled the passengers and crew to safety were ferry boat operators.

"We actually saw it go down," Waterway Ferry Capt. Juan Rosario says.

Rosario and his crew had not even checked in for work Thursday when US Airways Flight 1549 glided into the Hudson River. The water temperature was in the thirties.

If a jet liner has to come down anywhere in the river, Flight 1549's splashdown was it. Within a matter of minutes, several NY Waterway ferries scurried into action and surrounded it. They were in place, ready to take on passengers and bring them to land.

"It was amazing how quick everything happened – when the plane went down I was surprised it didn't break into pieces," Rosario said. "And then to see the people hanging out on the wings, and getting everybody out on the rafts and everything, they did a good job. **It was done in about 40 minutes.**"

"We had two boats actually exiting this pier, 79, right here," deckhand Terent Maxwell said. "They didn't see it until they backed out, and then 'wow, there's a plane!' So they were able to go right to it."

Most of the responding crews used a rescue tool called Jason's Cradle, which the stranded passengers used to climb off the plane and onto the ferries.

Coming to the passengers' rescue was the only option, according to the ferry's crew.

"It's a rule in the Coast Guard book," Rosario says. "If there's anybody in distress in the water [and] you're around, you have to go help – no matter what."

What became clear to CBS 2 during our short ride with the crew is that, given another chance and even without a Coast Guard rule in place, they would have sprung into action just as quickly.

In all, New York Waterway sent 14 boats to help in the rescue.



Passengers in an inflatable raft move away from US Airway Flight 1549 Airbus A320 jet after it crashed in Hudson River.