



# MEDIA RELEASE

**St. Lucie County  
FIRE DISTRICT**

5160 NW Milner Dr.  
Port St. Lucie  
Florida  
34983

## **Media Contact**

Brenda Stokes  
Public Information  
Officer  
772.621.3333  
772.201.2490  
bstokes@slcfd.org

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **MARINE VESSEL EMERGENCY Firefighters Battle Hurricane Force Winds to Rescue Senior Citizens**

**ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FL** At 11:58 PM last night, the St. Lucie County Fire District responded to a marine emergency at the west end of the North Hutchinson Island Bridge.

On arrival, rescuers found a sailing vessel greater than 30 ft. with its mast broken off and entangled on the deck. It was wedged beneath the bridge in rising water with two occupants aboard. They had been adrift for several hours when their vessel became pinned against and ultimately under the bridge. Attempts were made to secure the vessel and bring the occupants onto the bridge; however, at the time hurricane force winds were battering the rescue operation.

Members of the St. Lucie County Fire District Special Operations team attempted to board the vessel to lift the occupants utilizing an aerial ladder truck and a hoist. The rapidly deteriorating weather conditions hampered their efforts and while the evolution was being developed the unsecured vessel broke free and proceeded under the bridge and into the open water of the Indian River lagoon.

The United States Coast Guard had no rescue vessels available and elected not to respond to the scene. Therefore, as a secondary rescue measure, the Fire District deployed its marine rescue vehicle. Two firefighters deployed from a ramp near South Bridge and reacquired the floating vessel, which by now had run aground midway between the North Bridge and Harbor Point Park in the lagoon and was taking on water. Indian County Fire Rescue also deployed a swift water rescue vessel to assist the Fire District and arrived just as rescuers were able to remove the occupants.

The two occupants were carried from their boat onto the rescue vessel and brought to dry ground. St. Lucie County Fire District transported the occupants to safety without incident.

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