

THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION OF BELIZE

20 Perish in Hurricane Iris Thursday, October 10, 2001

Hurricane Iris with winds up to 140 mph hit the two southern districts of Belize at 7:30 PM on Monday night, October 8, 2001.

The dive boat "Wave Dancer" was moored in Big Creek Harbour to weather the hurricane.

Police reporters indicate that Phillip Martin, boat captain of New Zealand and Frank Wouters boat captain and engineer of the USA, arrived at Big Creek Port at 2:30 PM and were aware of the approaching storm.

The National Emergency Management Organization issued a mandatory evacuation to all persons along coastal areas. The order was announced on national radio and relayed to the passengers and crew of the Wave Dancer by Mr. Tony Zabaneh of the Independence Disaster Preparedness Committee team. They were offered refuge at hurricane shelters available in the nearby town but declined.

During the Hurricane the Wave Dancer broke her moor, drifted across the small harbour and capsized.

At first light on Tuesday, October 9, after the passage of Hurricane Iris, the Belize Police Department dispatched a three-man team to investigate a report that the passengers' lives were lost. A rescue team searched the area and ten (10) bodies were recovered. Later that day, British Army and local divers recovered 8 more bodies. On Thursday, October 11, the remaining two bodies were found.

In all, 20 persons perished in the disaster. The bodies were transported to the Belize City morgue and handed over to the USA authorities.

See a complete list of the passengers of the Wave Dancer who were killed in Hurricane Iris in the left hand column.

Names of persons who died on board the Wave Dancer during Hurricane Iris:

Glen Prillman, 48
Cynthia Cindy Pike, 44
Charles Pike, 52
Shirley Johnston, 58
Lisa Powell, 31
Roberta Kristy McNeil, 40
Eloissa Johnston, 30
Aaron Stork
Kim Ann Garisson, 41
Sherrill Lightbound, 38
Herbert "Buddy" Web, 41
James Jim Garrison
William Bill Kelly, 58
Byron E. Johnston, 60
Ray Mars, 52
Brenda Wade, 28

James J. Topping, 44
Phyllis Cox, 56
William Cox, 57
Sheila Kelly, 48

This page was created for NEMO by Patrick E. Jones, Senior Information Officer
Telephone 014-7449