



Northland - best seen from above

Helicopter crash – Northland

Statement #2

2 December 2011: 1000 NZT

Grant Harnish, CEO of Salt Air said:

“The small team at Salt Air is devastated at the loss on Wednesday evening of our pilot ‘Prickles’ de Ridder and DOC ranger William McRae in the accident off the Karikari Peninsula.

“Our priority at this stage is helping their families through this dreadful time.

“Prickles was a core member of our close-knit team. It is difficult to express just how much he will be missed and how valued he was, not only as a pilot but also as a friend, mentor and colleague.

“He was an extremely experienced helicopter pilot well known throughout Northland and the New Zealand aviation community. He was particularly known for his constant quest to find a better or safer way of doing things.

“Salt Air is frequently called out to help DOC and fire fighters – often in difficult conditions. As one of our most experienced and capable chopper pilots Prickles was a well-known, well-loved and deeply respected feature of the Northland fire emergency response landscape. It’s indicative of Prickles’ nature that his final act was a selfless attempt to rescue people whose lives were in danger under extraordinary circumstances.

“We will do everything in our power to support Prickles’ wife, Carol, and their family through all this and beyond.

“We thank all those involved in the rescue and recovery operation for their assistance and undertake to help and co-operate fully with the authorities in their investigation of the accident.

“Carol and my team of pilots and support staff would also like to thank the communities in the Bay of Islands and across Northland for the up-welling of solidarity and goodwill we’ve experienced since Wednesday’s accident. Their support has been amazing.”

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