

Data from NYHOPS assists rescue efforts in Flight 1549 emergency

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With its unique location along the western bank of the Hudson River, Stevens Institute of Technology provided a dramatic front row venue for the emergency landing and successful rescue of U.S. Airways Flight 1549.

While emergency workers and ferryboat operators worked quickly to pluck the 150 passengers from the water's surface, Dr. Alan Blumberg, director of the Center for Maritime Systems at Stevens, was monitoring the situation under the Hudson River.

Using Stevens' New York Harbor Observation and Prediction System (NYHOPS), which gives a real-time assessment of ocean, weather, environmental, and vessel traffic conditions for various New York Metropolitan area waterways, Blumberg was able to give the New York Office of Emergency Management (OEM) accurate information that helped rescue workers on the scene.

Within minutes of the crash Dr. Blumberg and his colleague Nickitas Georgas, prepared a detailed summary of the present water conditions in the Hudson River surrounding the crash site and a forecast of conditions for the next 48 hours. The summary was based on the extensive suite of ocean sensors and forecast models that have been operational in the waters of New York and New Jersey over the past 10 years.

Blumberg then reached out to the OEM Watch Commander, Michael Lee, with information such as water temperature, speed, surface

conditions and tide flow. Mr. Lee was able to forward the data to the scene.

"Nobody else had this extremely important information to aid in the rescue," said Lee. "As always, we are very appreciative of Dr. Blumberg's continued assistance and support."

Officials heeded Blumberg's suggestion to deploy rescue assets downstream, not upstream, along Manhattan and to guide the plane eastward to the Battery area for salvage operations. Since the Battery has the weakest currents in this very energetic current environment, it was the easiest area to try and salvage the plane.

In the days following the crash, Stevens provided around the clock on-call assistance to the various emergency agencies including the NTSB in order to assist with the salvage operations.

"As an educational institution, we strive to learn more from these types of incidences; with this crash, we learned that miracles occur when ordinary citizens are present and act with skill, courage, training, experience, and teamwork," said Blumberg. "A bit of luck helps too. Agencies that had the foresight to fund our observation and forecast modeling work made it possible for us to be 'present in the moment - being aware of what is going on right here and now.'"

Additional information and real-time data from NYHOPS may be found at: www.stevens.edu/maritimeforecast/

Source: Stevens Institute of Technology

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