

Seal hunters trapped by ice

by UPI

ST. JOHNS, Newfoundland - Efforts were under way Sunday to rescue about 450 seal hunters whose boats were trapped by ice off the Newfoundland coast.

Capt. Brian Penny, a Canadian Coast Guard spokesman in St. Johns, said rescuers were counting on a change of wind direction, otherwise "it would be too severe even for the heavy icebreakers" to clear a path, The Washington Post reported.

Three icebreakers were at the scene with three larger ones on the way, Penny said.

"We are having extreme difficulty getting our icebreakers through this large ice field," he said.

The Coast Guard delivered food and fuel to the nearly 100 boats by helicopter. They also picked up about 55 non-essential crew members from the boats, Penny said.

At least one of the boats, which are 35-65 feet long, is so damaged it will probably sink when released by the shifting icepack, Penny said.

Several boats have been forced out of the water onto the ice. Crew members have walked across the ice to the icebreakers or other boats.

"We're still concerned over the amount of vessels that are damaged," Penny said.

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