Sydney helicopter crash: four people including three-year-old emerge unscathed

Elle Hunt@mlle_elle   Saturday 17 December 2016 14.14 AEDT

Helicopter forced to make emergency landing in thick scrub near Bundeena after engine malfunctioned

Passengers inside a helicopter that crashed in Royal National Park near Bundeena south of Sydney on Saturday. Photograph: Fire and Rescue NSW

Four people, including a child, have been winched to safety in a dramatic rescue following a helicopter crash-landing in bushland near Sydney,

The helicopter was forced to make an emergency landing in the Royal National Park near Bundeena, 30km south of Sydney, on Saturday morning. Four people were onboard, including a three-year-old boy, all related to the pilot.

All were unharmed in the crash, and winched out by the Westpac life rescue helicopter and flown to Bundeena.

A passenger at the site of the helicopter crash. Photograph: Fire and Rescue NSW

Rescue helicopter spokesman Steve Leahy said the small helicopter had been flying off the coast of southern Sydney just after 10am when its engine malfunctioned.

The pilot was able to direct the aircraft back to land and it made an emergency landing in thick scrub, about 1km from Jibbon Beach.

The rescue helicopter was alerted to the crash by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Leahy said the helicopter was "pretty much covered by that thick scrub". A rescue crew officer "had to crawl on

hands and knees to the accident site".

All four people had only minor injuries including cuts and abrasions. They were flown to an assembly area at Bundeena where they received medical attention. The pilot was assisting police.

Leahy said they were "very lucky indeed".

"The pilot's just done an incredible job ... the worst-case scenario is there's potential, if the pilot had been inexperienced, that the helicopter could have crashed into the ocean. It could have been a fatal accident ... however, this pilot has shown amazing skill and been able to save the lives of everyone onboard."