

Sea lion drags man posing for picture overboard in Mission Bay

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SAN DIEGO - A man posing for a picture on a boat while holding a fish was attacked by a sea lion, which hauled him over the side and into the water, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department officials said.

"A 300-pound sea lion grabbed the fish and pulled the man over the side into the water and dragged him 20 feet through the water," San Diego Fire-Rescue spokesman Lee Swanson said.

Carmel Valley resident Daniel Carlin was holding a fish and posing for a picture being taken by a friend when the marine mammal attacked just before 3 p.m. Sunday in the channel by the Hyatt hotel in Mission Bay.

The 62-year-old Carlin had bite wounds and lacerations to his hand and leg. He was taken to a hospital, but is expected to be OK.

"It's pretty amazing and scary," said Mike Perry, who owns the boat right next to Carlin's.

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He believes Carlin's experience helped him, adding, "He does a lot of diving, so he

didn't panic. He probably knew the sea lion would have to let him go or did something to force it to let him go."

Lt. John Sandmeyer, who responded to the scene, said this type of attack is unheard of.

"Obviously [he's] a little bit in shock and this was a tough incident, very unusual, where we don't have this kind of thing happen," Sandmeyer said.

Witnesses told 10News the man had been cleaning fish and throwing the fish guts overboard. Lifeguards could not confirm this.

"In my previous boat, they actually came onto the swim step looking for fish," said Perry.

Sandmeyer said people fishing should never throw fish parts, or bait, overboard because it will attract sea mammals. He said sea lions usually keep to themselves and are not known to attack people.

Doyle Hanan had been studying sea lions for nearly four decades. He said a few years ago, a sea lion grabbed a fish from a man walking on a dock in Point Loma.

"It does tend to happen in areas where sea lions are fed by humans or where people are cleaning their fish, so you're training those sea lions to come to those areas to feed," said Hanan.

Feeding the sea lions is actually against the law, and fish cleaning is banned in the Mission Bay marina.

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