

EMERGENCY SERVICES RUSH TO SEAFRONT AS GROUP GETS INTO TROUBLE

Huge search launched for man missing out at sea

By **GEORGE KING**
george.king@newsquest.co.uk

A HUGE search and rescue mission was launched after six beachgoers found themselves stranded out at sea before a man was reported missing in the water.

Clacton lifeboat crews, coastguard teams, paramedics, fire-fighters and police officers were deployed to a packed Clacton seafront shortly after 11am yesterday.

Tendring Council's Beach Patrol, an Essex and Herts Air Ambulance and a search helicopter also descended on the coastline as shocked sunbathers looked on.

Upon arrival, it was established a group of people had got into difficulty in the sea after being swept towards the east side of Clacton Pier.

Five of the beachgoers were quickly pulled from the water and, after being assessed by paramedics, were sent to Colchester Hospital for further treatment.

After the nearby beaches were evacuated and the seafront was cordoned off, an extensive search for a man still considered to be missing continued into the evening.

Zina Serghiou, who was at the scene as the emergency unfolded, said: "I told some guys on the beach, but by the time they came the person had disappeared.

"I really hope he is found soon and my thoughts are with all the families - I am truly sorry I couldn't do anything more."

Another eyewitness, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "I was at the Pavilion Splash Park and I heard the commotion as we were leaving.

"Everyone was very worried and concerned and I saw a few girls who worked on the pier in tears - as soon as you see the helicopters, you think it is something bad.

"It is sad another incident like this has happened in Clacton and I cannot even begin to imagine what the parents must be going through - I just pray he is found safe."



■ Incident - ambulances spotted by an eyewitness near Clacton Pier, with a helicopter in the background

At the time of going to print, the missing man had still not been found and the *Gazette* had not been made aware of any further developments.

A spokesman said: "A large response, including four ambulances, our hazardous area response team and the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance, was sent to Clacton.

"It followed reports of a number of people in difficulty in the water.

"Crews assessed four males and a female patient at the scene before transporting them by road to Colchester Hospital for further assessment and care.

"One male remains unaccounted for."



■ Response - a coastguard helicopter on the scene



■ Mission - Coastguard crew members suiting up