



# Deadly Frontiers: Disaster and Rescue on Canada's Atlantic Seaboard

*Dean Beeby*

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Disaster can strike without notice. In a split-second the forces of nature, human intervention, or a simple twist of fate can place lives in jeopardy. A ship sinks, a plane crashes, a child wanders deep into the forest. Death is imminent, except for the bravery and persistence of small groups of men and women who enter these dark frontiers as rescuers. Of course they fail sometimes — but often they return with the near dead, plucking them from the hungry jaws of disaster. Written by veteran newsman Dean Beeby, *Deadly Frontiers: Disaster and Rescue on Canada's Atlantic Seaboard* tells the stories of real-life heroes, and of the bureaucracy and bungling that threaten their lives and those they have sworn to save.

In *Deadly Frontiers*, Dean Beeby deals with the chilling question of Canada's preparedness for disaster, as he investigates the most significant events in the contemporary history of search and rescue. Canada occupies a unique position in the rarified world of search and rescue. The second-largest country on the planet, Canada has three jagged coastlines, an immense internal wilderness, and a vast Arctic to swallow hapless travellers. Since the Second World War, Canada's East Coast has been the crucible for modern search-and-rescue techniques and equipment. This hard-won experience has been driven mostly by disaster, from the 1982 sinking of the Ocean Ranger oil rig off Newfoundland to numerous cargo-vessel disappearances in the 1990s, including the *Protektor*, *Gold Bond Conveyor*, *Marika*, and *Vanessa*. Ground search and rescue, a special branch of this culture, was reborn in 1986 during the protracted search for a lost child in the forests north of Halifax. Swissair Flight 111 plunged into waters off Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia in 1998, triggering a massive search-and-recovery effort, as well as a fundamental rethinking of emergency response. The worst disaster within the search-and-rescue community itself was the 1998 crash in Quebec of a Labrador helicopter from Greenwood, Nova Scotia, leaving six rescue specialists dead among the charred wreckage.

In *Deadly Frontiers*, author Dean Beeby examines official documents, forensic evidence, and the personal histories of those involved in these cases and more. His book is a frank examination of how Canada's tragedies and triumphs have helped forge a professional search-and-rescue culture that is second to none.

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