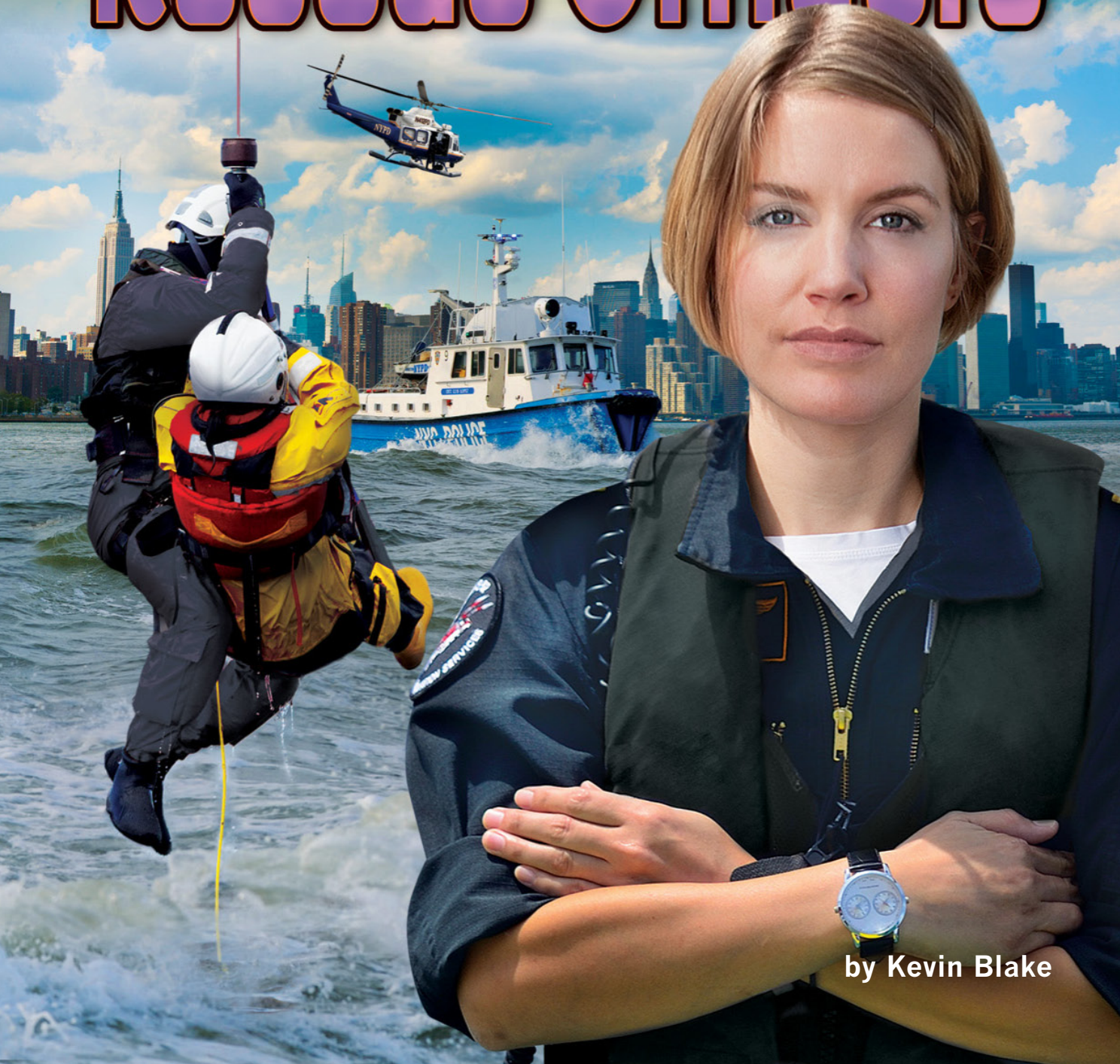




Air-Sea Rescue Officers



by Kevin Blake

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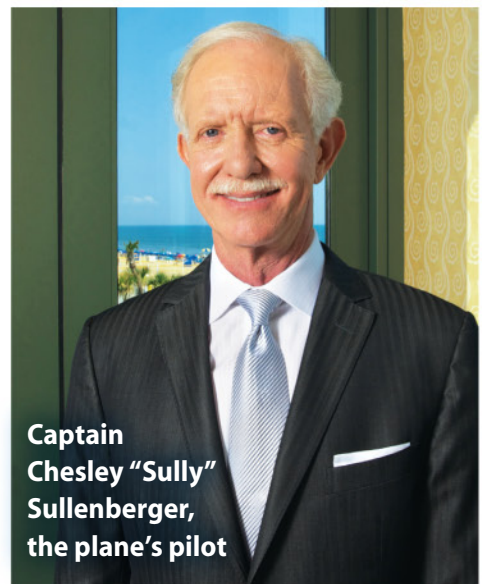
Emergency Landing

On January 15, 2009, an airplane carrying 155 people left New York City's LaGuardia Airport. Minutes after takeoff, the passengers heard loud thuds. The plane had struck a flock of geese, which caused both engines to stop working. Without engines, the plane would soon **plummet** to the ground. The pilot had to make a quick and daring decision—an emergency landing in the nearby Hudson River.

The plane that struck the geese
was US Airways Flight 1549.



The pilot carefully steered the plane toward the river and then glided it down. When the plane landed, freezing water poured into the **cabin**. The crew and passengers **evacuated** to the plane's wings, where they waited in the frigid river. With every passing second, the victims were in danger of drowning or freezing to death. The people needed help—and fast. Within minutes, 750 New York Police Department (NYPD) officers were on the scene—including members of the **elite** Air-Sea Rescue Aviation Unit.



Captain
Chesley "Sully"
Sullenberger,
the plane's pilot



When the plane crashed into the Hudson River, the water was 36°F (2°C). At that temperature, a person can become **hypothermic** within five minutes.

River Rescue

A crew that included Detectives Michael Delaney and Robert Rodriguez from the NYPD Air-Sea Rescue Aviation Unit flew over the plane **wreckage** in a helicopter. They scanned the river for people in need of immediate help. The detectives quickly spotted a woman who had fallen into the icy water. Wearing special suits designed to protect them in very cold water, they dove from the helicopter into the river and swam to the panicked woman. “She was frightened . . . and very **lethargic**,” remembers Detective Rodriguez.



The air-sea police crew and other rescuers wasted no time in helping the passengers and crew of Flight 1549.

Detective Delaney grabbed the woman and began to swim. With powerful strokes, he swam to a nearby rescue boat. When they reached the boat, rescue workers pulled the cold, frightened woman safely aboard. After the rescue, the detectives said they weren't heroes. "It's just another jump out of the helicopter for us!"

Detective Robert Rodriguez (left) with his partner, Detective Michael Delaney (right)



Because of the brave work of the air-sea unit and the other rescuers, all 155 people aboard Flight 1549 survived the crash landing.