

In the spring of 1945 the need for long-range rescue aircraft to accompany raids on Japan led to experiments with B-29's fitted with a lifeboat. Although finally successful, the experiments were not completed in time for B-29's with lifeboats to see action in the war. B-29's were eventually used for rescue purposes in the bombing missions against the Japanese home islands, but their duties were confined to search, orbit, and dropping emergency equipment.³⁰

Besides saving lives on the sea, the emergency rescue air squadrons and boat crews were often called upon for land search and rescue. Even in the wide reaches of the Pacific some airmen did manage to hit the islands, dwarfed though they were by the water expanses surrounding them. Friendly natives often hid Allied pilots and managed to convey word of their presence to the nearest AAF forces. Evacuation by air or boat was then arranged.

Rescue facilities were also used for many purposes other than rescue. Prisoners were sped by rescue planes to intelligence officers for interrogation, critically wounded or ill persons were evacuated for treatment, and intelligence personnel were dropped behind the enemy lines. Carrying messages and supplies to guerrilla forces, particularly those in the Philippine Islands, was often a duty assigned to rescue personnel, and air rescue planes were also used for maintaining liaison between services, for photographic missions, and for reconnaissance. Boat units were commonly used for transportation and evacuation missions, and there were several instances of crews whose duties seemed to consist largely of providing recreational trips for other military personnel.³¹