



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE AIR MEDAL  
(GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF A SECOND)**

**TO**

**MICHAEL R. VICCHIARELLO  
AVIATION SURVIVAL TECHNICIAN SECOND CLASS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer VICCHIARELLO is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on September 2, 2021 while serving as a rescue swimmer aboard Coast Guard helicopter CG-6575. His helicopter was launched at 0100 and flew through the remnants of Hurricane Ida to assist a disabled woman and her elderly father trapped by flash flooding near Somerset, NJ. Despite 50-knot winds and driving rain, he deployed from the aircraft at a height of 125 feet while avoiding 80-foot trees for a precision hoist to the roof of the flooded home. Overcoming strong currents and debris, he courageously scaled down an adjacent tree into the violent floodwaters where he pried open a door to find the distraught survivors clinging to kitchen cabinets that were just above the rapidly rising waterline. Recognizing that both survivors were amputees, he carried the first survivor through neck deep water to dry ground where he directed a hoist recovery of the victim. The aircraft then experienced an emergency requiring Petty Officer VICCHIARELLO to remain on scene alone. Undaunted, he reentered the home and was briefly electrocuted by a floating refrigerator while attempting to utilize it for buoyancy. Displaying exceptional situational awareness, he signaled nearby police and coordinated a swift-water rescue boat to retrieve the final survivor and her two dogs, Petty Officer VICCHIARELLO'S actions and skill were instrumental in the rescue of two lives. His courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.