

Link

Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

news

NZSAR Awards 2011



"I come here today with the greatest respect and admiration for the bravery and dedication shown by the Award recipients – your actions show remarkable perseverance, commitment and compassion, and in some cases, quick thinking in the face of danger."

Associate Minister for Transport, Hon Simon Bridges, acknowledged the important contribution made by everyone involved in New Zealand's Search and Rescue sector, in addition to the recipients' actions, during his speech at this year's NZSAR Awards held at Parliament in May.

"Your work makes a massive difference and is hugely valued and appreciated by all New Zealanders."

In addition to direct action, the Minister talked about the work that has been done on measures to improve the operational performance of the Search and Rescue sector and reduce the need for search and rescue operations in future, including the Safety Codes and the AdventureSmart website. "Beyond these achievements, it is also encouraging to see the sector embracing the goal of 'one SAR' – recognising that while the sector is diverse, it works best when it works together."

Gold Award recipients, Dean Herrick and Geoff Taylor from the Hawke's Bay Helicopter Rescue Trust and Stephen Smith from the Order of St John, received their Award for their outstanding efforts during the rescue of the yacht Kawa on 11 October 2011.

After the Awards, Geoff Taylor told Hawke's Bay Today that it was the most difficult job he had come across:

"It was a team effort... it's great that the organisation is being recognised."

Colleague Stephen Smith told the paper that he was "very honoured" by the recognition. "It was a once in a lifetime job – the most technical I've been involved with."

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement were awarded to:

Nelson Colyer

From Coastguard Canterbury

For his efforts during the rescue of the tug Rakanui, 23 April 2011

Brook Rapson and Murray Phipps-Black

From Worsley Bay Surf Life Saving Club

For their response to the stricken East by West Ferry, 2 March 2011

Wayne Keen

From LandSAR South Canterbury

For his persistent efforts in concluding two unresolved search operations

Shane Beech

From Coastguard Maketu

For his efforts in rescuing two surfers in the Kaituna Cut, 23 January 2011

The NZSAR Council and Secretariat congratulates all our 2011 winners. ●

SAR in action



- Alert and brief liaison officers from the Police, Air Force and any other authority that may be called upon to assist.
- For all beacon alerts over land and in the oceanic areas, contact the appropriate air traffic services and request aircraft maintain a listening watch for the homing element of an ELT/EPIRB/PLB.
- If beacon is registered in another country then a phone call to the RCC responsible for maintaining their beacon database is undertaken.
- For a beacon alert on land near to the coast or at sea, issue a Mayday Relay broadcast via Maritime Radio.

Behind the front line

The Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) is responsible for coordinating all 'Category II' incidents. Covering one of the largest search and rescue areas in the world, the RCCNZ responds to an average of over 930 search and rescue incidents annually.

Given Link readers are most likely to be on the ground – or in the sea – once they're tasked by RCCNZ, we thought it's time they step out from their control room and explain the vital role they have in searching and rescuing people in distress.

As SAR people know every incident is unique and there is no single, comprehensive, procedure appropriate to every type of major incident. A SAR response may start with a distress beacon alert, a telephone call, a radio message, an email, or a request from the Police, Air Traffic Services, or a member of the public.

As the information comes in, the team of Search and Rescue Officers (SAROs) at RCCNZ swing into action. In the case of a beacon alert they respond using these steps as a guideline:

- RCCNZ receives a satellite distress beacon alert.
- Create an incident log to record all information pertaining to the incident.
- Assign a SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) and declare a distress phase.
- Plot any positions from the beacon alert message.
- If the country code of the beacon is New Zealand, or one of the state Pacific Island territories for which New Zealand has responsibility, then the beacon database is checked for registration details and emergency contact details.
- Call made to emergency contacts to verify the owners whereabouts and intentions.
- If possible, establish direct communications with the vessel, aircraft or person.

- Checks with Mission Control Centre at Canberra may be made to verify satellite information.
- Using the information available, formulate a SAR action plan.
- Requests for a surface picture can be made – this will show what additional vessels may be available to assist within a defined radius of the distress position.
- Obtain past, current and forecast weather conditions for location.
- Task appropriate SAR resources.
- If multiple SAR units are involved, the SMC may consider an On Scene Coordinator beneficial to locally manage and coordinate the SAR units tasked.
- If necessary, calculate a search area determination and coverage plan, which defines the area(s) for the SAR units to cover.
- Advise the following: RCCNZ Duty Manager and Maritime NZ Media. If appropriate, advise Police Comms to alert local Police SAR coordinator.
- If international SAR authorities and resources are involved, then compile and issue SAR Situation Reports on a regular basis to keep everyone up to date.
- Regular satellite alerts are continuously monitored and position updates plotted.
- As the SAR operation progresses, amend the SAR plan according to new information.
- Notify owners/operators or agents if possible and keep them updated.
- The SMC also keeps all staff involved in the incident at RCCNZ fully briefed at regular intervals.
- If possible, maintain communications with the casualty.
- Maintain contact with Next of Kin.

SAR in action

When the casualty has been located and all survivors accounted for, the SMC may terminate the operation, recall or release SAR units and SAR facilities and close the incident.

If it is considered that further search efforts would be non-productive, the SMC will recommend suspension of the operation. Information subsequently obtained will be evaluated and the SAR operation resumed if justified by the new circumstances. ●



Activated Beacon Alert

Here's a recent example of marine SAR operation following receipt of an alert from a distress beacon.

RCCNZ always operates in UTC (Coordinated Universal Time)

22:37utc RCCNZ received a Distress beacon alert for a Canadian registered EPIRB – Two positions given by the satellite:

- NW of Lake Marroopootanie, Sth Australia
- 159 nautical miles East of Nth Cape

22:40utc Incident log created – all information pertaining to the incident is recorded.

22:50utc Distress phase declared and a watch member is appointed – SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC).

22:59utc Call from RCC Australia confirms the first position is inland. They advise that a commercial fishing vessel is visible on Satellite AIS (Vessel Tracking system) and is close to the second beacon position.

23:04 utc Maritime Radio NZ (MOC) is asked to contact the fishing vessel SAN NANUMEA for position update.

23:05utc Mission Control Centre in Canada is contacted for beacon registration details.

23:08utc RCC asks MOC to broadcast a Mayday Relay to all vessels to attract additional assistance.

23:14utc Beacon details received from Canada – information, description of yacht and contact details for family or friends included.

23:16utc RCC asks MOC to try and establish communications with the casualty – details of vessel passed on.

23:31utc Philips SAR Trust in Hamilton is paged and asked for availability of search aircraft.

23:31utc Further details from JRCC Victoria (Canada) advising the yacht departed Whangarei on Wednesday the 16th May bound for Niue and Cook Islands.

23:35utc Check with MOC if any contact has been made – they reply there's been no response to any calls.

23:45utc RCCNZ call the fishing vessel who advised they were 37 nautical miles from the beacon position, possible point on radar near the position.

23:51utc Pilot of Philips SAR Trust rescue is briefed - aircraft tasked.

23:54utc The fishing vessel reports she is proceeding to the beacon position.

23:54utc Internal sitreps given to RCC management and Maritime NZ media personnel.

00:05utc Family confirm that there are two persons onboard the yacht.

00:49utc SAR aircraft departs base.

01:40utc Further satellite beacon detections received confirming position of casualty.

01:41utc Position update passed to all involved.

01:52utc SAR aircraft establishes communications with the casualty. The casualty reports contaminated fuel and electrical problems.

02:00utc Resolved position update received from the satellite.

02:31utc SAR aircraft on scene. The aircraft reports the two persons onboard are ok. They advise they have contaminated fuel and no navigation system due to electrical problems. With a GPS position given by the aircraft, the skipper is happy to navigate to Whangarei using charts. The fishing vessel is released and thanked for assisting.

02:54utc Full update given to all parties (family, Canada, Australia, RCC management and MNZ Media).

04:12utc SAR aircraft back at base.

04:31utc Debrief with pilot carried out.

SAR and CDEM agree to increase Cooperation

With a snap of the fingers most SAR people can recount an operation where they successfully worked with someone – not part of their organisation – because they had an existing relationship. Cooperation and collaboration are key elements to effective search and rescue. Taking this a step further, NZSAR has been working with Civil Defence & Emergency Management (CDEM) to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between the two sectors.

Although the SAR and CDEM sectors have separate and defined areas of responsibility, there are a number of scenarios that could see them working closely together. This is best achieved through effective and open engagement by both sectors at the local, regional and national levels.

Cooperation and collaboration between the two sectors will benefit the overall emergency management capability in New Zealand. The NZSAR Council recently endorsed a paper titled *'Enhancing Search and Rescue Sector Cooperation with the Civil Defence & Emergency Management Sector'*.

The paper outlines an engagement model that will enhance the existing relationships between the sectors. The Practical Engagement Guideline (in the next column) has been developed to help people make this model a reality. The readiness and performance of the SAR and CDEM sectors can be further improved by growing the mutual understanding and familiarity that already exists at the local, regional and national levels – in particular improving engagement – between SAR agencies and the CDEM sector.

Engagement Model

Greater understanding, cooperation, and familiarity between the SAR and CDEM sectors will assist Police, RCCNZ, and CDEM coordinators to perform their roles more effectively.

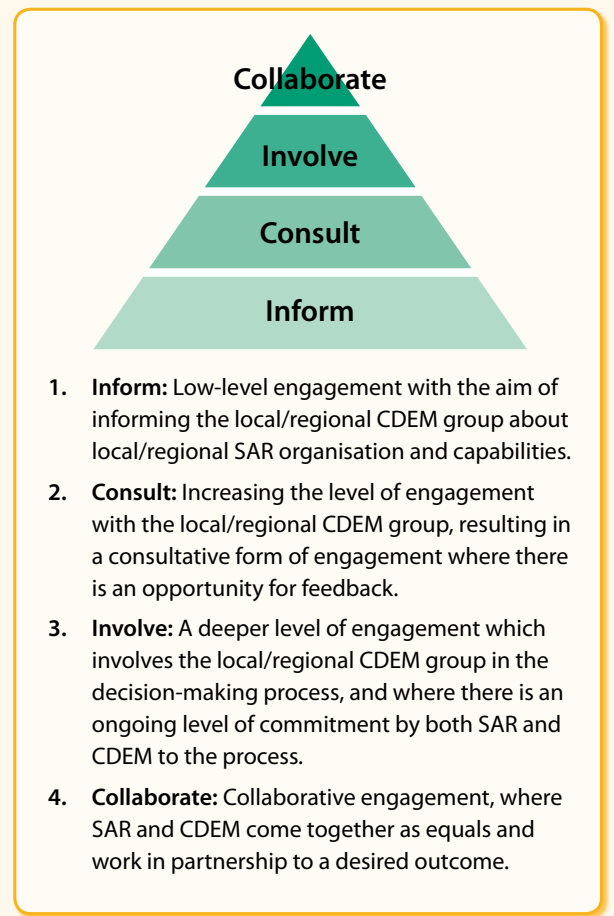
Improvements in sector to sector cooperation and understanding of how the SAR – providing agencies can assist CDEM can be achieved in a number of ways, including the development of pre-existing relationships, establishing relationships where they do not currently exist, and enhancing individual and collective training opportunities.

National level arrangements will support the engagement activities carried out at the local and regional levels.

Practical Engagement Guideline

The Practical Engagement Guideline [shown below] has been designed to assist members of the SAR sector in their engagement activities with the CDEM sector.

Effective engagement occurs when increasing levels of interaction, understanding and activities happen. This is illustrated by four steps of engagement. Greater engagement requires a greater investment of time and resources.



There was close engagement and consultation between the NZSAR Secretariat and Ministry of CDEM during the development of this paper. The next step will involve an increasing level of engagement at the local and regional levels, which will need to be driven by members of the CDEM and SAR sector. The full copy of the paper can be downloaded from www.nzsar.org.nz.

NZSAR Awards

Do you know of an organisation, group or individual who should to be acknowledged by their search and rescue peers?

The NZSAR Awards celebrate the success and effort of people who work or volunteer their time and skills in the field of search and rescue in New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region.

There are two awards:

1. The NZSAR Gold Award
2. The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement

Go to www.nzsar.org.nz. You will find more information about the awards along with details on the simple nominations process.

Nominations for the 2012 awards close on 31 January 2013.



SAR training

“One SAR” at work

An On Scene Coordinator is probably great at jigsaw puzzles because their job is to fit all the pieces together during a SAROP. They bring various groups of people together – on the ground, or in the water; up in the air, or in the control room – and give them the confidence to do their part of the puzzle.

Two On Scene Coordinators' (OSC) courses have been run this year. They are the product of efficient collaboration, experience and knowledge from across the sector. The two coordinating authorities, the Police and RCCNZ, are partners in delivering this course; another example of collaboration that blends and complements the knowledge and skills of both organisations for the betterment of course participants.

The course trains and empowers the individual to become a confident and competent OSC, as over three days they undertake increasingly complex table top exercises, explore the OSC's roles and responsibilities and become proficient with the documentation requirements and processes.

The courses attract cross-sector attendance, with Police, LandSAR, Coastguard, Defence Force personnel and others all participating and bringing their vast collective knowledge and experience with them.

The enthusiasm, engagement, sharing of knowledge and professionalism of all participants makes for a wonderful learning experience inside and outside of the classroom. The networking and learning from each other, as much as the curriculum, truly reflect and embody the “One SAR” philosophy and improves the chances of that lost or injured person receiving the best SAR response possible. ●

Getting ready for winter – Avalanche pre-plans and guidelines

The NZSAR sponsored avalanche pre-plans and guidelines are proving to be of great use around New Zealand. Exercise PUKAKI held in South Canterbury in August 2011 tested an avalanche SAR scenario. The results of this exercise strongly endorsed the validity of the avalanche pre-plan for that area. SAREX planning documentation and the exercise debriefs for this activity and others can be found in the publications/training materials section of the NZSAR website, www.nzsar.org.nz

Canterbury, Wanaka and the Central Plateau all intend to exercise their avalanche pre-plans with NZSAR support in preparation for the busy winter season over the coming months. ●

NZSAR Council

What do you know about the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council? We've answered some frequently asked questions to update you about who we are and what we are working on.

Q. What is the NZSAR Council?

A. The NZSAR Council is a group of public service Chief Executives whose departments all have SAR responsibilities in some form.

Q. Who is on the Council?

A. The Council consists of the Chief Executives, or their delegated senior officials, from the Ministry of Transport, Maritime NZ, Civil Aviation Authority, NZ Police, the New Zealand Defence Force and the Department of Conservation.

Q. How often does it meet and how can you find out what it talks about?

A. The Council usually meets four times a year. Minutes from Council meetings can be found in the NZSAR Council section of its website at www.nzsar.org.nz.

Q. Who created it, when and why?

A. The Government created the NZSAR Council in 2003. It was formed as a result of a Cabinet decision (CBC Min (03) 2/14) to establish strategic governance arrangements for New Zealand's Search and Rescue sector, following a Maritime Patrol Review and a series of less than adequate SAR operations.

Q. What does the Council do?

A. The Council looks after the big picture: it holds the strategic overview of the SAR sector. It provides high-level strategic governance to all search and rescue agencies in New Zealand. It also provides strategic policy advice to government and strong strategic coordination for all search and rescue in New Zealand. It is responsible for establishing and maintaining an appropriate New Zealand-wide SAR vision, mission and goals. It is also responsible for developing and maintaining the New Zealand SAR framework.

Q. Does the Council have any operational responsibilities?

A. The Council does not have a role in the coordination or execution of searches or rescues at the functional, operational or tactical levels.

Q. What are its goals?

A. The goals of the Council are: to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of NZ's SAR Sector; to achieve a culture of “one SAR body”; to promote continuous improvement; to maximise the potential of SAR people; and, to support SAR preventative strategies.

Q. Who works for and with the Council?

A. The three person NZSAR Secretariat (Duncan, Phil & Carl) work for the SAR Council and undertake initiatives to realise the Council's goals. The NZSAR Consultative Committee, a forum for all SAR stakeholders, also work with the Council providing advice and acting as a channel between the strategic and operational levels of search and rescue.

Q. What does the NZSAR Secretariat and Consultative Committee get up to?

A. Read more about what we are doing for the search and rescue sector in this Link Newsletter and at our website: www.nzsar.org.nz ●

SAR insight

The On Scene Coordinator

Learning from what we do can lead to the need to make changes. These can range from quick-fix solutions to an evolutionary change over time – in some circumstances even years.

The use of On Scene Coordinators (OSC) is a case in point. The 2005 search to locate the missing Eurocopter EC 120B helicopter ZK-HTF piloted by Michael Erceg, and his passenger Guus Klatte, highlighted the ad hoc nature of the On Scene Coordinator's role.

The value of using highly trained, skilled and experienced OSCs was one of the lessons to be learnt identified in the formal review of the search operation.

In July 2010 a sector-wide workshop was held in Wellington with the purpose of clearly defining the role, responsibilities, core competencies and training requirements for On Scene Coordinators. Following this, the syllabus of an OSC training course was developed and four OSC courses have since taken place.

Keith Allen, a Senior Search and Rescue Officer at the Rescue Coordination Centre, has been involved as an instructor in all four OSC training courses. He says the ZK-HTF search was a definitive point in New Zealand SAR.

“One of the lessons learnt from the development of the OSC course, which can be applied across the sector, is that people and agencies take time to learn the lessons collectively. By building relationships and taking incremental steps we can find solutions together that are robust enough to stand the test of time.

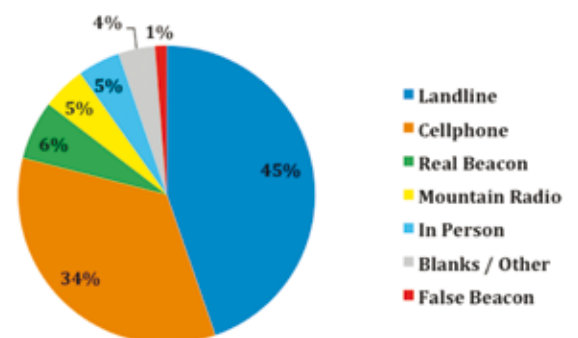
“RCCNZ was in its infancy in 2005 and the use of technology, such as mapping software, was growing in complexity. Information now comes from many sources and the numbers of personnel and resources that can be used means we are now required to approach a SAROP at a more sophisticated level. Finding the best way to coordinate effectively is the cornerstone lesson from the ZK-HTF search – and that is what we have done. Now our sector has approximately 80 people across SAR agencies – but mainly from the Police – who have completed the On Scene Coordinator course,” says Keith.

INSIGHTS

- Major changes to how we operate can take a long time to become fully effective. We need to be deliberate when making significant changes to our system or operating procedures.
- The On Scene Coordinator is an experienced person who coordinates a component(s) of the operation. They are appointed by and responsible to the coordinating authority and are used on a case by case basis.
- Consider appointing an OSC for longer duration or larger and more complex operations, especially where multiple search assets are operating in the sea, air and land environment.
- The On Scene Coordinator operates within a level of delegated authority. ●



stats attack



SAR Alerts (land)

The use of telephones – both landline and mobile – is the preferred option of the public to alert SAR authorities of a potential need for a land based SAR operation. During 2010/11 this option was used in over 80% of all reported incidents. The use of land based distress beacons was the next method of alert, used in 7% of incidents (6% real and 1% false alerts). ●

NZSAR awards



Gold Award recipients – photograph: Hawke's Bay Today

Dean Herrick and Geoff Taylor from the Hawke's Bay Helicopter Rescue Trust and Stephen Smith from the Order of St John



Nelson Colyer on board the Rakanui



Duncan's desk



It has been a busy but satisfying autumn here at the NZSAR Secretariat with a number of projects getting some real traction. Carl, together with our organisational maestro Viv Bracefield from Small Project Solution Ltd, put together a fantastic NZSAR Awards function which was held in

Parliament on 9 May. Congratulations to all the Award recipients. Being able to "show off" the skill and dedication of our SAR people certainly is one of the highlights of our year (read awards story on page one).

The NZSAR Awards ceremony followed a very rewarding and interesting combined meeting of the NZSAR Council and Consultative Committee. We were fortunate to receive a great presentation from Amanda MacKinnell from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority about search and rescue in Australia. They have some unique SAR challenges over there – some due to the sheer size of the place and others due to the appetite of their wildlife. The meeting also discussed the evolution of social media and its implications for search and rescue. It's clear that we will have to give this a bit more thought.

As I mentioned in our March Link, Carl has been spending a lot of time working on Mass Rescue Operations policy. I expect this work to ramp up over the coming months involving a lot of people from across a wide range of organisations. Please get in contact with him if you have information that may be of value for this project.

The Secretariat is heavily reliant on other people and organisations to get things done. Over the past few months, Bruce, Gerry and others from the NZ Police, plus Rodney, Paul and the team at the Rescue Coordination Centre have been particularly busy running refresher training and Air Observer and On Scene Coordinator courses on behalf of the sector (read more about the OSC role on pages five and six).

Phil (Budgie) has been out and about around New Zealand over the past few months looking at SAREXs and SAR training activities. Along with representatives from across the sector, Phil has put together the national SAREX and training plan for the 2012/13 year. It is great to have this plan in place in advance of the training year as it allows agencies to plan and commit across a range of activities. All this activity is crucial for us as we seek to continually improve the delivery of search and rescue services throughout our region of responsibility.

We have also initiated a few new projects in recent weeks, including one looking at SAR Health and Safety, one focusing on wander search and rescue issues and another on SAR risk management. Some of these may appear a bit 'dry' to those of you at the sharp end of SAR, but they are important for the overall wellbeing of the sector.

I hope you have a safe and enjoyable winter and take the opportunity to enjoy all that snow which has started to arrive (fingers, skis and snowboards crossed). ●

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calendar

SAREXs and SAR training – see

<http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/nzsar-calendar>

- 23 Jun 2012 Central Avalanche IMTEX, Whakapapa
- 27 Jun 2012 Canterbury Avalanche SAREX, Methven
- 2 Aug 2012 NZSAR Consultative Committee
- 2 Aug 2012 NZSAR Council
- 24 – 26 Aug 2012 Central Avalanche SAREX, Ruapehu/Tongariro Crossing
- 21–23 Sept 2012 Coastguard NZ Conference, Rotorua

useful website links

www.nzsar.org.nz – New Zealand Search and Rescue Council. This newsletter is available as a PDF on this website.

www.adventuresmart.org.nz – Safety information and tips for the public planning outdoor activities as well as links to organisations with specific safety information about their chosen pursuit.

www.beacons.org.nz – Information about 406 Beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon.

www.metservice.com – Comprehensive weather reports.

www.avalanche.net.nz – Providing 'backcountry avalanche advisory forecasts.

www.maritimenz.govt.nz/About-us/RCCNZ-profile.asp – about RCCNZ.