

# CONNECTING THE SEARCH AND RESCUE SECTOR

POLICE - LINK

RCCNZ - LINK

## NEWS

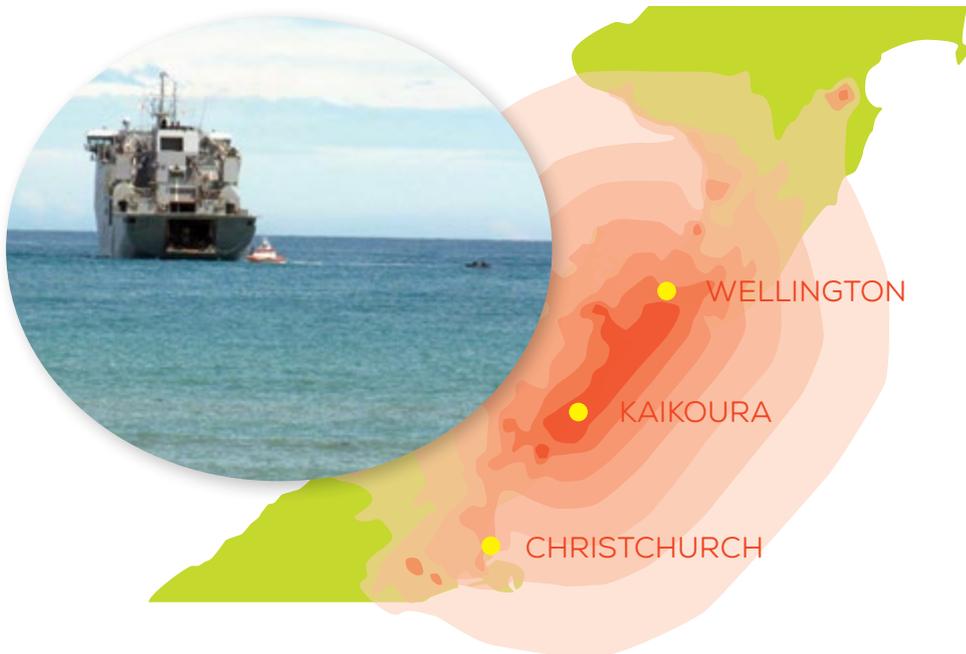
From ferrying people to naval vessels, to welfare checks, SAR people have again stepped up, this time in the aftermath of the November earthquakes that hit North Canterbury in November.

As we are all aware, SAR people often wear multiple hats and in times of need they are selfless, doing whatever is required.

LandSAR members from Canterbury and Marlborough volunteered. Don Geddes is the Emergency Management Officer with the Ashburton District Council and the Chair of Methven LandSAR. In Hurunui for his work, he was in a great position to understand the value that LandSAR personnel could offer and he organised them to take on a number of significant roles. These included: leading the operations section of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for the Hurunui District Council; staffing Civil Defence sector posts in Mt Lyford and Waiiau; carrying out door to door checks of hundreds of properties from the Hurunui River to Goose Bay and Ward to Seddon, and; running VHF radio communications caravans. The value of LandSAR and its personnel is growing as they demonstrate their capability to take on tasks from door knocking to management roles, adapting their skills and training to cope no matter the emergency.

Christchurch AREC contacted their Blenheim branch immediately following the earthquakes but it was not until later in the week they were asked to assist. Fortuitously AREC's Daniel Ayers (ZL1DFA) had booked a 'quiet weekend' in Waiiau and was still there so was able to help provide communications to pass on a detailed situation report for the NZ Fire Service. Richard Smart and Don MacDonald also completed a 12 hour shift helping out in the Hurunui's EOC.

## SAR PEOPLE STEP UP AFTER KAIKOURA EARTHQUAKES



The Coastguard Kaikoura Unit were also in the thick of it. They ferried those wanting to be evacuated to HMNZS Canterbury when it arrived to transport people to Lyttelton. Volunteers have also been helping out with welfare checks.

Neroli Gold is Coastguard Kaikoura's President and Treasurer and, along with other Coastguard members, she is assisting at the local Civil Defence headquarters. When the earthquake struck she was high above the shaking ground in a plane, returning from a trip to the United States. The passport control officer told her the news on landing. Neroli got in a helicopter, quickly checked her farm property, and has been heavily involved in the response and recovery ever since. She walked into Civil Defence headquarters, asked "can I help?" and landed a role on the information and help desk. Along with other volunteers they are the 'go to' people for locals and tourists requiring information to assist

in their immediate needs and recovery plans. It's been a family affair in some cases: Coastguard volunteer Alasdair Lean, whose home in South Bay was very badly damaged, has also worked a lot of days alongside Neroli, while his wife and son Callum have been volunteering as well.

Another Coastguard member from Christchurch, who is also part of a Civil Defence rescue team, spent three days in Waiiau carrying out welfare checks and finding specialist assistance as required.

Coastguard volunteers from around the South Island have also offered to put people up for a break once the inland road is open, and a group from the Southern Region office are planning to take food up and put on a barbeque for "our Kaikoura Coastguard family", noting the tables have turned as Coastguard Kaikoura volunteers played a valuable supportive role after the Christchurch earthquakes. ●



# HEALTH AND SAFETY SEMINAR

Although search and rescue often involves operating in at-risk situations we have a very good safety record. Health and safety is an integral component of all SAR activities – a theme we carried across our two-day SAR health and safety seminar in September.

As noted by one participant, health and safety always applies – from the first notification, to driving to the incident, to getting everyone home safe at the end.

Participants overwhelmingly valued the opportunity to meet and share ideas with so many sector groups in one place.

Nearly seventy people from around the country attended the seminar, with representatives from Police, RCCNZ, Coastguard, LandSAR, Surf Life Saving New Zealand, DOC, AREC, Antarctica New Zealand, Ambulance New Zealand, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Tai Poutini Polytechnic and NZSAR.

Jo Pugh from WorkSafe New Zealand and Helen Parkes from Cosman Parkes gave a summary of the new Health and Safety at Work Act and how it related to SAR activities. Their presentation, followed by Kip Mandeno, emphasised the value of a safety culture and the importance of this being an ingrained, inherent behavior within our organisations.

Presenters from SAR sector agencies ran a series of workshops over the two days, examining health and safety in operations and during training. Three case study presentations also highlighted the value of situational awareness, communication, and planning. ●

## RAUORA II EXERCISES

*“When anyone asks how I can best describe my experience in nearly 40 years at sea, I merely say, uneventful ...I have never been in any accident of any sort worth speaking about... I never saw a wreck and never have been wrecked, nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort.” Capt. Edward John Smith, RMS Titanic*

As Captain Smith discovered, a mass rescue incident can occur at any time – and they are always unexpected. In fact, when it comes to mass rescue operations it's not a question of “if” but “when”.

This is why the NZSAR Council has started the second series of Rauora mass rescue exercises, as part of the NZ Inc. approach to preparing for a mass rescue incident. This series builds on the first series of exercises, which were conducted from October 2014 to March 2016. The aim of Rauora is to be as well prepared and organised for mass rescue incidents as possible.

These latest exercises use a dynamic simulation (sometimes called a ‘game board’). The simulation is in a separate location from the exercise participants, and is used to provide the ‘truth’ of what is happening in the scenario. This gives a degree of realism, and is particularly useful in exercising communication links and information exchange.

To date, two successful exercises have been run in the Northland and Bay of Plenty Police Districts. The involvement of the local and regional CDEM groups, and other supporting agencies, has been very welcome and a key feature of Rauora’s success. After just two exercises, we have already identified a couple of areas for mass rescue response planning that can be improved, as well as improvements for how we run the remaining exercises. ●

### Workshop participants agreed that the sector will:

- **Develop a set of shared SAR sector health and safety principles**
- **Establish guidance for the health and safety assurance of non-standard SAR resources**
- **Continue to support and assure health and safety knowledge and experience across the sector.**

# INTERNATIONAL SAR

The next generation aircraft dedicated to search and rescue has taken off across Australia.

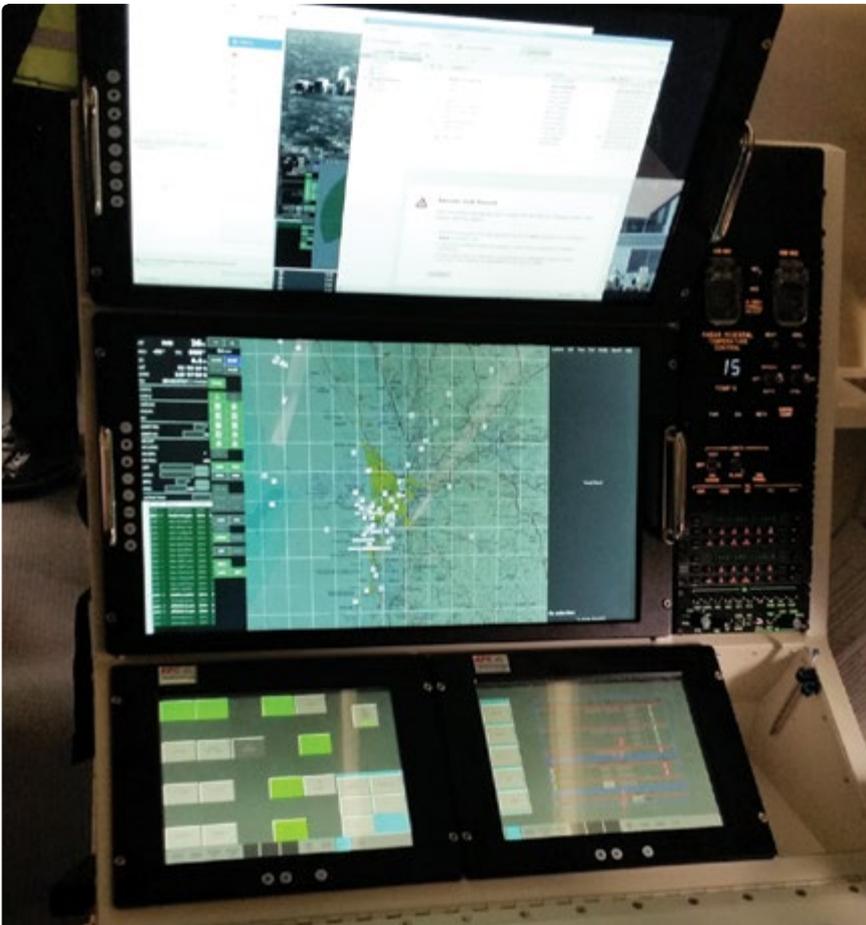
The Australian Maritime Safety Authority have signed a 12 year contract with Cobham SAR services to provide a dedicated fixed wing SAR service using four specifically modified Bombardier Challenger 604 aircraft. They've been fitted with new generation sensors, high vision windows and air operable doors for aerial delivery of life saving equipment, such as survival gear and satellite phones.



The jets have a range of new technology on board, including Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) technology to search at night, and anomaly detection sensors to complement work done by the trained Air Observers.

New technology will also allow search and rescue officers in Canberra to have the same view at a terminal in the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre as that of the Air Mission Coordinator on board the aircraft. Plus, there's the ability to live stream video of the situation in real time as they plan the rescue.

The technical specs are also impressive. With speeds equivalent to a commercial jet airliner and a flight range of 3,086 nautical miles (5,715 kilometres), the Challenger can reach over 96% of historic SAR events within 150 minutes' transit from the three bases scattered around Australia. Australia's Search and Rescue Region covers about one-tenth of the Earth's surface. ●



## 2017 AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE

Applications are now open to present a paper at the 2017 Australia/New Zealand Search and Rescue Conference to be held on 24 May in Queensland. The conference brings together the volunteer and professional search and rescue community to share new ideas, highlight best practice, and discuss recent events.

**The 2017 conference will address the following topics:**

- **Technology and Operations**
- **Multi-Agency Response**
- **Training**
- **Role of Police in Land and Maritime SAR**
- **Stakeholders**
- **International SAR including Humanitarian SAR**
- **Supporting the Mental Health of SAR Workers**
- **SAR Case Studies**
- **Open Topic**

The conference organisers are looking for presenters and New Zealand SAR people are expert in a number of these topics. This is a great opportunity to share our SAR knowledge with an international audience.

Visit the website to find out how to apply to present: <http://sar.anzdmc.com.au/>

## WELCOME TO POLICE LINK – FOCUSING ON THE WORK OF POLICE SAR, ITS POLICIES AND PEOPLE.

### SAR IN ACTION

#### MIXING THE OLD WITH THE NEW

When you want a SAREX that will test skills and communications – both old and new – in remote and often difficult land and marine conditions, you can't look past Stewart Island.

Throw into the mix the possibility of resolving a cold case – searching for the remains of a hunter missing since 1991 – and you've captured the imagination of those you want to attend. The recently held Stewart Island SAREX gave many the opportunity to combine the tried and tested with new technology to become more effective.

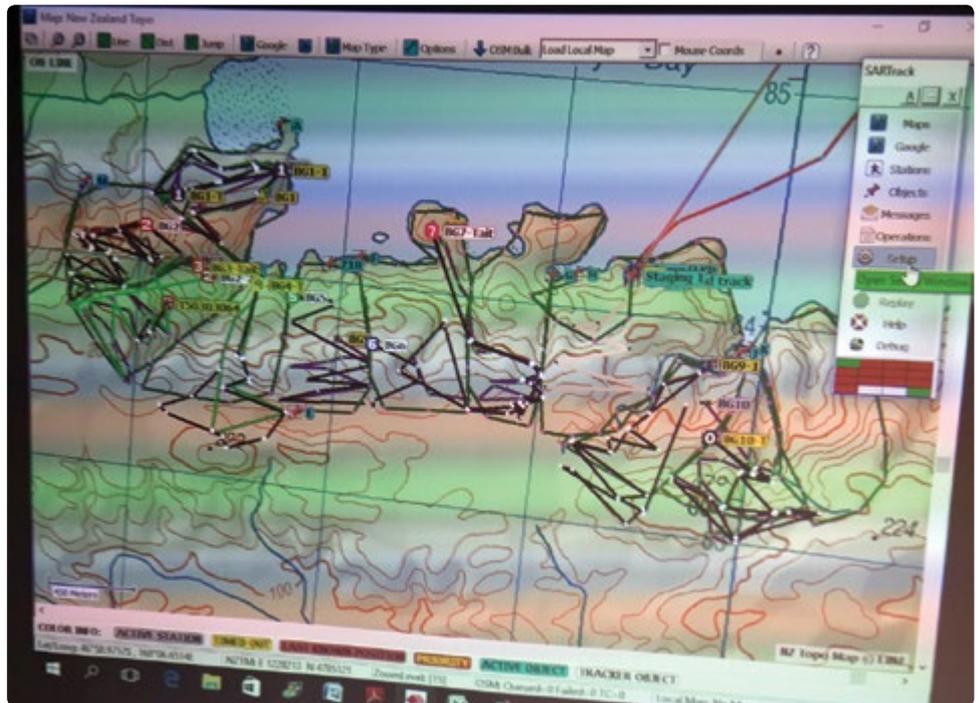
"The search area is probably one of the most remote parts of New Zealand. There were no helicopters, just good old fashioned foot searching in challenging country with this new radio technology. It was so remote, we needed to add our own communications systems and repeaters to make it work," says Constable Dale Jenkins who organised the SAREX.

These factors, alongside meticulous pre-planning using the NZSAR guidelines and identifying some lessons learned over the two days, led to Southern District Police SAR Coordinator Senior Sergeant Brian Benn labelling it, "a significant step in the direction that we want to go".

"Considering the difficult terrain in the area, where walking just five metres is a challenge as you can't see your boots, this exercise was a model of best practice.

"Unfortunately, we didn't find anything in relation to the disappearance of the hunter, Josef Freiman, but these cold cases are excellent material to base SAR exercises on as they highlight how little information we often have to go on during these operations. They also provide an opportunity to take another look at historic cases with fresh eyes and the benefit of modern technology and search methods."

The new technology being tested was tracking tool SARTrack. Live transmitters connected to the SAR teams provided



*"It was so remote, we needed to add our own communications systems and repeaters to make it work."*

detailed information on the whereabouts and search tracks of all teams, which could then be monitored.

Brian says one of the major advantages of SARTrack is the ability to provide remote access to real time information.

"Teams were called on the radio at 4 hour intervals and asked to report their position and progress with their task. The developer of the SARTrack software, Bart Kindt was monitoring our search from Germany. It shows we could run a search in the most remote part of New Zealand, and at the same time, allow secure real time access to our information from anywhere. We'll be able to monitor and make decisions from afar more effectively."

**One week before the SAREX, Stewart Island SAR members walked the search area and randomly dropped 100 envelopes. This was a control and measurement tactic.**

**"It helps us measure how effective the searchers are," says Brian. And they passed the test. "It's a testament to how thorough our search was when, throughout a 10 square kilometre search area, a small pocket-knife was found deep in the bush. Dale had lost it when he fell down a bank while dropping the envelopes."**

Throughout the weekend, a number of searchers spotted kiwi on the island. One group videoed a kiwi preening in the early hours of the morning – a small reward for the weekend's trying conditions. ●

## IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

The small settlement of Pipiriki on the Whanganui River saw multiple SAR partner agencies come together for a high angle rope rescue SAREX, based on a scenario that is likely to play out in reality sooner or later.

The Mangapuru Track (which includes the Bridge to Nowhere) is a popular tramping and mountain biking route with up to ten thousand visitors annually. About eight thousand use the river, and this figure is increasing.

Central District Police SAR Coordinator Sergeant Bill Nicholson says in places, the Mangapuru Track is narrow with adjacent bluffs, so there is potential for someone to fall off the track.

“Given its remoteness, distance from responding resources and communication black spots the area is challenging to say the least and has been identified as a high-risk area for SAR response.

“There’s been a few rescues in recent times, which have thankfully been dealt with by helicopter hoist extraction. But many areas aren’t conducive to that, and they are also weather dependant, so we thought it timely to test the high angle rope option along with the logistical and communications challenges that go with that.”

The SAREX adopted a ‘train hard, rescue easy’ approach. Supported by NZSAR it included personnel from DOC, LandSAR, Ruapehu Alpine Rescue Organisation (RARO), Wanganui Fire Rope Rescue Team, St John Ambulance, Police SAR, RCCNZ, Ruapehu District Council, local iwi, commercial jet boat operators and helicopter support – 42 people in total.

The exercise kicked off with a real beacon activation backed up by additional information, which enabled RCCNZ to test the new MEOSAR system.

The scenario involved two badly injured people over a bluff near the Bridge to Nowhere. Rope rescue teams from RARO and Wanganui Fire Rope Rescue Team were deployed in three DOC jetboats to locate and rescue them. A rescue helicopter was factored in later (restricted earlier by simulated bad weather), which required coordinating the transfer of patients from jetboat to helicopter part way down the river, replicating a rescue that had played out in real life several months earlier.

Central District Police have been working closely with DOC, RCCNZ and commercial jetboat operators to enable a better coordinated response to SAR events.

Bill says it was one of the best SAREXs he has been involved in recently. “People were buzzing afterwards. The networking was invaluable and will no doubt pay off for future operations. Plus, we gained valuable information with which to draft an effective response plan.” ●



*The SAREX adopted a ‘train hard, rescue easy’ approach.*

**Senior DOC Ranger Jim Campbell says it is critical that DOC staff understand what other agencies can do.**

**“We need to work together and speak the same language. This exercise was a giant step towards enhancing recreational safety in the Whanganui National Park.”**

**RARO team member and regional LandSAR Field Support Officer Pete Zimmer appreciated exercising with the Wanganui Fire Rope Rescue Team and St John – a sentiment backed by the emergency services personnel. St John’s Territory Manager Mark Fredericks agreed it was a great opportunity for St John staff to work with SAR and other emergency agencies, “particularly as this was outside their normal comfort zone.”**

**Wanganui Assistant Area Fire Commander Jemal Weston said the exercise was great for interagency relationships. “It gave us the chance to conduct a line rescue in a remote area with minimal communications options – a good test. We identified a few problems we weren’t aware of, so we will now fine tune our procedures.”**

**There was even time to test the new SARTrack system. Wanganui LandSAR Chairman Stewart Crawford (a computer guru) updated the database with personnel and capabilities from the emergency agencies and also installed SARTrack onto the Fire Command vehicle computers. “We’re now ready to stand up and operate in rapid time for future operations.”**

## WELCOME TO RCCNZ LINK – FOCUSING ON THE WORK OF RCCNZ, ITS POLICIES AND PEOPLE.

### THE PLATINO RESCUE



Courtesy of NZDF

Another complex rescue at sea in June this year illustrates the essential role played by vessels of opportunity – in particular those with trained crew. RCCNZ coordinated a 36-hour rescue in which the yacht *Platino* required urgent assistance. It was nearly 300nm north of New Zealand after it was battered by a storm, leaving one crewman dead and another overboard. RCCNZ received an EPIRB alert and Satellite phone text.

Information was scant; the actual condition of the vessel and the crew's abilities were unknown, although they were distressed and fatigued. Weather conditions were very poor with wind at 25-30 knots, 2.5-3 metre swells and the situation was deteriorating. Once the vessel location was confirmed, on duty SAROs (Search and Rescue Officers) were able to begin to identify any vessels of opportunity nearby and contact NZDF Joint Force Headquarters to seek assistance from a P3 Orion. Luckily the RNZAF P3 was close (well, Pacific Ocean close!) on another tasking and was able to be overhead the *Platino* within around 70 minutes.

RCCNZ's SAROs, using information from the RNZAF, were able to understand that the yacht had suffered a serious mast and boom accident and had very little steering. The crew were unable to get onto the deck, and of course one man was still missing in the water. The SAROs considered a number of options using nearby vessels who might be able to assist, as well as the advantages and disadvantages in determining the best course of action. The container ship *Southern Lily* had answered RCCNZ's vessel of opportunity call and was on route, but was still 18 and a half hours away.

The SAROs determined it was safer for crew to stay on board the *Platino* and to board the *Southern Lily* when it arrived, rather than immediately abandon ship and get into their life rafts. The deteriorating situation got worse overnight when the *Platino* lost its main rigging, damaging the steering. There was also some structural damage which meant it was taking on water. However, the crew were still able to access their life raft if necessary.

When the *Southern Lily* arrived, the SAROs discussed various approaches with crew: the direction, the position, the lines and how to best get the crew on the vessel.

An attempt was only made once everyone was on the same page. The first approach was to drop rescue craft from the *Southern Lily*, but the Captain decided that was too dangerous.

The first attempt to get a line to the stricken crew caused damage to the *Platino* as the vessels collided, and the second attempt was not much better.

Large vessels do not manoeuvre very well without tugs – to put this in perspective, the side of *Southern Lily* would have looked like a cliff to the crew sitting on the *Platino*.

The third attempt was going to be the *Southern Lily* Captain's last, as he felt that he would be putting the *Platino* at more risk, but it worked perfectly. Using bow thrusters, they used a rescue line to help get the trio safely on board.

The *Platino* crew were taken to Auckland by the *Southern Lily*. The vessel stayed afloat and was retrieved a few days later by salvage crews. Unfortunately, despite extensive searching, the body of the crew member lost overboard has not been found. ●

**This rescue highlighted several points for RCCNZ. When out in the ocean things can sometimes go catastrophically wrong in an instant. The *Platino* activated their EPIRB and used the satellite phone. The P3 was nearby and gave great situational awareness and deeper understanding of the problem. Three vessels were 'close by' but only the *Southern Lily* had the size to get through the rough weather. And although vessels are bound to provide assistance, crews aren't always trained in this. However, the Captain of the *Southern Lily* kept the RCCNZ fully informed of his plan and his safety considerations – which gave the organisation greater assurance.**

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

**As we are often the voice at the end of the phone, coordinating an operation, we thought a run-down of how that plays out in real time might be of interest.**

Recently, at 2.09pm, RCCNZ received a MEOSAR beacon alert with a beacon HEX ID but no location. One minute later, a further beacon detection was received, this time with latitude/longitude position in a remote location in the middle of the North Island.

Over the next several minutes further MEOSAR detections confirmed the activation and location while Search and Rescue Officers (SAROs) checked the beacon ID on the database.

They established that the beacon was hired and spoke with the hire company, and the company said they would call back shortly with the hirers' details.

SAROs then contacted a rescue helicopter and asked the crew to prepare for a deployment, adding that details would be sent within five minutes. SAROs also determined that the alert position was near a hut and notified Police Communications.

The rescue helicopter crew were given full details and more detailed tasking, and this information was followed up via e-text.

Meanwhile, Police Communications had contacted the local Police SAR Coordinator who, at 2.19pm, made contact with RCCNZ and was advised that the beacon had been hired by two people who were rafting.

By 3.16pm the helicopter was heading to the distress location to investigate the situation with the two rafters. At 3.33pm a further MEOSAR detection was received from a different beacon, approximately 500m from the first location.

The Police SAR Coordinator was notified of this second beacon as the rescue helicopter arrived on scene at 3.42 pm. At 3.44 pm, RCCNZ were notified that the two rafters had been located on the river bank.

The rafters had been tipped out of the raft when it upturned and became stuck in the rapids, losing their car keys, wallets and clothes as they were washed downstream. After being extracted, the Police were able to help out the rafters while the rescue helicopter pilot completed the RCCNZ debriefing form.

Both rafters had activated their beacons and their trip intentions were clear. Although wet, cold and remote, the beacon detection led the rescue helicopter straight to them. Being prepared saved their lives. ●



## THE MOC - A PLACE WITH MORE THAN 30 NAMES

As a communications centre we often note the irony of the New Zealand Maritime Operations Centre (MOC) being known by a host of titles. Some will know us as the Maritime Operations Centre, MOC, or Maritime Radio – but wait there's more!

The MOC is run by Kordia New Zealand for Maritime New Zealand, and works closely with RCCNZ. It focuses on delivering the people and tools required to provide the National Maritime Distress and Safety Communications System (NMDSCS) for New Zealand's areas of responsibility, both domestically and throughout New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR) and across the South Pacific. Internationally we are best known as ZLM, Taupo Maritime Radio.

Domestically it gets a bit more interesting: Cape Reinga, Akaroa, Greymouth, and Chatham Islands Maritime Radio are just some of the names that people know us by, depending on the area and services they require.

This can be amusing at times: a vessel closing a transit report in Akaroa calls Akaroa Maritime Radio asking if they can let Wellington Maritime Radio know of their safe arrival, but quite often they are talking to the same radio operator!

The MOC team is comprised a range of skill sets and backgrounds ranging from military, ex-coast stations, broadcast networks, to mariners and 111 despatch operators, all of whom have been trained in the international Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) by the centre itself.

In 23 years, the MOC has responded to more than 400 calls for 'another nation's' Search and Rescue Region. Some of the calls we've answered have come extreme distances, e.g. Gulf of Aden, Somalian coast, South Atlantic Ocean and Europe.

However, we've never had to rely on another nation's distress notification in the NZSRR.

We are also very proud of the improvements we've made to response times. Having undertaken a process that established a pre-approved operating procedure, the MOC now responds to a distress call from anywhere in the NZSRR in under 10 seconds. On average, our first Mayday relay is within a minute of receipt of the distress call whereas internationally this could take 15 minutes to achieve. ●

### We provide a vast range of services:

- **For distress and safety monitoring on VHF and HF bands:**
  - VHF - 30 station nationwide network monitoring Ch16. All sites also have an associated working channel.
  - HF radio telephone: 2182, 4125, 6215, 8291, 12290 and 16420 - the international radio telephone distress and safety frequencies.
  - HF DSC (Digital Selective Calling) - the MOC monitors the GMDSS DSC bands in 4, 6, 8, 12 and 16 MHz for both our oceanic areas and polar regions as well as areas that are outside international maritime satellite coverage.
- **Medical advice - facilitating the provision of medical advice between the affected party and an onshore medical expert.**
- **Flight following for SAR helicopters - communication support for areas where normal aviation communications is difficult.**
- **Maritime safety information - every year 100,000s of transmissions are made relating to:**
  - Delivery of weather product
  - Coastal navigational warnings
  - Oceanic NAVAREA XIV warnings
  - MNZ messages (Mayday relays, Pan and other messages)
  - DSC distress relays
  - Enhanced group calls over satellite
  - Tsunami warnings (A tsunami warning was very rare from 1985-1995. These are now almost annual and there have been a number of genuine tsunamis following warnings.)

There's more information on MOC at:

<http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/safety-and-response/maritime-radio.asp>

# CALENDAR

SAREXs and SAR training see:  
[searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/nzsar-calendar](http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/nzsar-calendar)

**Consultative Committee Meeting:**  
tbc – 1st quarter 2017, Wellington

**NZSAR Council:**  
tbc – 1st quarter 2017, Wellington

**Rauora II: February 15 2017, Southern Police District**

**Pacific Regional SAR Workshop:**  
22 – 24 May 2017, Auckland

**Australia/New Zealand SAR Conference:**  
24 May 2017, Queensland

# WEBSITES

This newsletter is available as a PDF on this website. We've changed our web address:  
[www.nzsar.govt.nz](http://www.nzsar.govt.nz)

Safety information and tips for the public planning outdoor activities  
[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

Information about 406 Beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon  
[www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)

AMSA Challenger:  
[www.amsa.gov.au/search-and-rescue/amsas-role-in-search-and-rescue/challenger/index.html](http://www.amsa.gov.au/search-and-rescue/amsas-role-in-search-and-rescue/challenger/index.html)

Australia & NZ SAR Conference:  
<http://sar.anzdmc.com.au/>

Maritime Operations Centre:  
<http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/safety-and-response/maritime-radio.asp>

## NZSAR AWARDS

Do you know an organisation, a group, or an individual who you think should be acknowledged for their contribution to search and rescue? There are two categories – operational activity and support activity.

More information about these two categories, the NZSAR Awards and the simple nomination process can be found on our website at: [www.nzsar.org.nz/awards](http://www.nzsar.org.nz/awards).

The 2016 Awards nominations close 31 January 2017.

# DUNCAN'S 'PORTABLE' DESK



Another major earthquake and another amazing response to the devastation wrought by Mother Nature. It has been great to see a wide range of SAR people and agencies heavily involved in helping out. Most have been active in and around the Kaikoura, North Canterbury and Marlborough regions.

While they haven't necessarily brought their specialist SAR skills to bear, local LandSAR, Coastguard and AREC volunteers, and numerous rescue helicopters, have all been part of the response. SAR affiliated government agencies have also been key to the effective response. The NZDF presence has been massive, the Police effort was and remains significant, and a bunch of Wellington-based agencies with SAR links such as the Ministry of Transport, Maritime New Zealand and even the NZSAR Secretariat have played a significant part in coordinating the response or organising the recovery (see story page 1). Our thoughts are with those most affected.

Over the past few months we've been involved in the SAR sector conference season, more recently both Coastguard and Surf Life Saving New Zealand have held their combined conferences and AGMs. The Coastguard conference in Taupo was very impressive. The development of Coastguard over the past ten years has been remarkable. It was great to see the organisation in good heart and financially sound with a strong plan to take it forward.

Senior Sergeant Jo Holden and I also had the opportunity to represent our SAR sector at the National Australian SAR (NATSAR) Council.

This is an important forum, bringing together Australian SAR leadership from across the country. New Zealand has observer status at the NATSAR Council so we stay abreast of their developments and inform them of ours. We also had the opportunity to view the very impressive SAR Challenger aircraft (see story page 3). Safer Boating Week and the biannual Safer Boating Forum were held recently. Progress is being made to better educate and prepare recreational boaties. The fruits of this work can now be clearly seen in our SAR statistics, where we've noticed a 21% drop in marine SAR incidents over the last six years.

Our preparedness for mass rescue operations has stepped up another gear, and we ran two Rauora II exercises. These desktop exercises bring an array of emergency management partner agencies together within a dynamic simulation. They are being well received and I commend the large number exercise participants for their enthusiasm and commitment (see story page 2).

Quite a lot of the work the Secretariat does to enhance our SAR system happens behind the scenes. An example of this is the Ambulance Letter of Agreement.

This sort of agreement is a vital component to a network of agreements we have between agencies, and goes some way to ensuring the safe and efficient coordination of incidents of all types.

Just to add to the recent challenge, the building the Secretariat normally works in (Statistics House) was seriously damaged by the earthquake and can no longer be occupied. At the time of writing this, we are operating from the RCCNZ (thanks Mike), but we have lost access to all our documents and materials, so please bear with us as we sort ourselves out.

Have a safe (and tremor free) summer!  
Duncan Ferner  
[d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz)



Link is produced by New Zealand Search and Rescue Council



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