

NZSAR updates its strategic plan

The role of the NZSAR Council is to ensure effective national level leadership for, and coordination between, the many organisations that play a critical part in the delivery of search and rescue in our region. The Council has been in existence now for ten years, so it is timely that it re-examines its role and goals as it shapes and leads the sector. The Council has worked hard to ensure this new strategic plan reflects the impressive progress the sector has made over the past ten years.

This plan will be in place for three years (as opposed to the previous five year plan) and the Council has consolidated the previous five goals into four to ensure its ability to influence and drive the SAR environment.

We believe that these goals are ambitious, but also realistic and attainable. We look forward to working with you all as we set about achieving them.



It is not only the NZSAR Council goals that have been updated; you will find a revised outcome and vision as well as amended risks. We encourage everyone involved in our SAR sector to not only read this, but to also assist in making this plan happen. ●

NZSAR Council Goals

As part of the NZSAR Council role to shape and lead the combined efforts of New Zealand's search and rescue sector, it seeks to attain these goals.

The new NZSAR strategic plan will be available in the new year on our website:
www.nzsar.org.nz

● A robust and integrated SAR system

The sector will continually work on improving its effectiveness and efficiency. We will continue to improve our understanding of ourselves, our relationship with other SAR agencies, our operations, external influences and the risks to the sector. We will use this information to improve common SAR practices and procedures to ensure the safe delivery of effective SAR services.

● Capable SAR people

We will maximise the potential of our SAR people. We will maintain a good understanding of ourselves and what we need to succeed. We will work to ensure our people have access to adequate training and ensure we conduct SAR activities safely. We will collectively coordinate our standards, training, exercises and documentation. We will share knowledge without restriction and learn from each other. We will also promote and support SAR innovations and showcasing good practices and, when appropriate, recognise and celebrate our people.

● Efficient and sustainable SAR organisations

We seek a collective, cross-sector culture of being 'one SAR body' within an integrated SAR sector. The sector will further enhance its internal and external organisation and communications. We will be as efficient as possible with secure funding adequate to meet the known SAR need. We will make key decisions based on good quality information. We will also adapt our organisations to meet the changing environment and ensure we are effective at delivering SAR services. We will also ensure we are located appropriately, with adequate equipment matched to the identified SAR requirements.

● Reduced demand for SAR services

We seek an informed and responsible public. We will collaborate, inform, contribute to and when required, coordinate or lead public focused preventative strategies and actions for individuals, groups and organisations. We want to ensure the New Zealand public and guests to our country are appropriately informed and assist them to take personal responsibility for their activities in order to reduce the need for search and rescue services.

Extracts from the NZSAR Strategic Plan 2014-16



● SAR IN ACTION

Using the best 'tools' for the job

A tug, a fishing boat and a Coastguard crew all working together to rescue two people from their stricken yacht in tumultuous seas. This rescue exemplifies the 'one SAR body' goal and the Coastguard spirit of cooperation within a community; using the appropriate available resources and keeping the crew safe while still making sure that those in distress are assisted.

Coastguard South Canterbury Master Tony Lister and his wife Erica, also a Coastguard volunteer, were called out at 8pm one night last February. The moment he and his crew of four arrived at the South Canterbury base they knew the conditions for a rescue were marginal.

The wind was gusting 40-45 knots, the sea had a three and a half metre breaking swell, and it wasn't long till dark. Tony says after a quick risk assessment the crew agreed it was very high risk in their 8.5m rescue vessel.

"I work on the tugs and thought that might be the safest option. We had only vague information as to where the distressed yacht was, progress would have been pretty slow on the Coastguard vessel, and we would be trying to find the yacht in the dark. The tug is four times the size of Timaru Rescue, so there would be no risk at all using it."

Tony rang his boss and asked for his help. "He agreed straight away, called in an engineer and deck hand as crew, and he came along to help as well, which was hugely valuable."

Tony says relationships like this within the community are vital, "especially in a small community like ours, covering the open sea conditions we have.

"Having the tug as a back-up to assist gives us good security. Knowing that we can call on these people with bigger boats if we need mitigates our risks. We have a good boat, but it is still a rigid hull inflatable."



Fishermen, Family and rescuers: Gordie, Reuben and Ray Mitchell.

With the Coastguard volunteers acting as observers they set off into the face of the southerly, to search for the yacht.

Within two hours they had located it drifting north, a mile off the coast.

Tony says the volunteers' observation skills were stellar. "The yacht had no running lights on, it was only the cabin light that our crew spotted."

Tony says relationships like this within the community are vital, "especially in a small community like ours, covering the open sea conditions we have."



Rescue Crew on board Te Maru: Ethan Cowan, Martin Prillwitz, Erica Lister, Dave Hetherington and Tony Lister.

After making contact and keeping an eye on them for a quarter of an hour the crew decided that, because of the very rough conditions, it was too much of a risk to tow with the much larger tug. The people weren't in immediate danger, "so the plan was to drift closer to the harbour, then get our smaller Coastguard vessel and take them under tow. I positioned the tug to try and give them as much shelter as possible without danger of collision."

Ray, a local fisherman and Coastguard volunteer, rang to offer help and it was decided his 15 metre fishing boat could handle the conditions and safely tow the yacht.

By this stage the wind had dropped to 35-40 knots, but still a three metre swell.

"Ray and his crew skilfully brought his vessel alongside, passing a towline to the yacht." In the difficult conditions they all sailed slowly back to Timaru harbour, arriving at 1am.

Tony says the relationship with the local fisherman is strong (three are Coastguard volunteers). "We know we can get 10 boats on the water if needed. The fishermen will ring us to offer their help when they hear of an incident. It's a big plus because if we didn't have that it would limit what we could do."

He says although this was a high risk rescue, they are well trained and have learnt through their experience to evaluate the risks and make difficult decisions.

"We could have taken out Timaru Rescue, but it would have been pretty nasty for the crew. In this instance two people in dangerous circumstances were rescued as part of a team effort. I'm very proud of the job my team did."

It also earned them Coastguard New Zealand's National Rescue of the Year Award. ●

NZSAR awards revamped



The very successful NZSAR Awards have had a small facelift, splitting SAR activity into two categories – Operational and Support.

The Awards have proved a popular way to recognise not only acts of heroism but also conspicuous service and important contributions to SAR in New Zealand.

The people who work or volunteer their time and skills, and those that support them, often receive little public recognition for the feats they achieve, and the sustained effort they put in to accomplish these tasks. Therefore, this annual national award programme recognises and celebrates these achievements.

The Awards also raise community awareness about the efforts of volunteers and paid personnel in our sector. All awards are judged and presented by the NZSAR Council.

The updated awards structure acknowledges the diversity of skills and commitment involved in various operational and support activities, while the two levels of recognition remain.

Categories of Activity

There are two categories of SAR related activity covered by the NZSAR Awards:

- Operational Activity.** This category is for nominations relating to a specific SAR operation(s) that has occurred during the year.
- Support Activity.** This category is for nominations that do not relate to specific SAR operation(s) but to the wider range of SAR related activities (for example training, prevention, and long-service).

Levels of Recognition

There are two levels of recognition for each category in the NZSAR Awards programme:

- New Zealand Search and Rescue Gold Award.** This award honours the person, group or organisation that has made a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during that year or over a sustained period.
- New Zealand Search and Rescue Certificates of Achievement.** This certificate is awarded to people, groups or organisations that have made an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during that year or over a sustained period.

The NZSAR Awards criteria, eligibility, process and a series of frequently asked questions can be found in the Awards section of our website: <http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/NZSAR-Awards/The-NZSAR-Awards>.

Send in your nomination for an organisation, group or individual who should be acknowledged nationally by their search and rescue peers. Nominations for the 2013 Awards close on 31 January 2014. ●

NZSAR forms

NZSAR, working with key SAR organisations, has produced a suite of consistent forms that support SAR agencies.

The forms, which include missing persons, incident action plan, team tasking and search urgency, will mean SAR personnel anywhere in the country will have a clear understanding of the logistics of an operation. They also ensure improved standards and more effective data collection.

Representatives from LandSAR, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving, Police and RCCNZ audited existing forms and developed new versions and templates to cater for operational needs.

In an example of great collaborative practice, LandSAR NZ allowed their existing templates to be rebranded and tweaked for all the SAR sector to use.

The Land Forms were put through their paces at the Southern District SAREX Incident Management training forum in November. They were well received, and some important feedback from the Subject Matter Experts was used to fine-tune them.

These forms, alongside the Marine Forms, can be found at <http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/Resources/NZSAR-Forms>. Others will be added as required and requested. ●

Operation name:	Time:
Prepared by:	Date:

Operational Period	
From:	To:

SAR INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

The items checked below are included in this Incident Action Plan	
Situation Report	Plan/Intel
Missing Person Summary	Plan/Intel
Incident Objectives	IMT
Incident Management Team	IC
Sector Assignment/s	Ops
Safety Plan	IC
Medical Plan	Logs
Communications Plan	Logs
Weather Forecast (<i>print and attach</i>)	Plan/Intel

Approved:	Date/Time:
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Example of the SAR Incident Action Plan

INSIGHT

Weighing it up

In every SAR incident – particularly during a search phase – assumptions about experience, knowledge, the gear, behaviour, conditions and scenarios have to be made.

An operation in Southern Alps, near Zit Saddle, in August highlighted that a good decision-making process should always stand behind any assumptions.

Siblings Rose and Nelson Pearson both fell while descending from Zit Saddle, inland of Hokitika, on day two of a four day tramp. Both suffered significant injuries and were unable to move for the first 24 hours.

Rose had purchased a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) two weeks before the tramp, but had left it in their car. They worked out it would probably be at least four days before their friends and family would alert authorities that they were missing.

Senior Constable Mike Tinnelly was in charge of the search. He says all the information they had pointed to responsible, well prepared, experienced trampers.

“Not only did Rose now own a PLB, she had always hired them on previous tramps. We weighed this up with the fact that they were only a day overdue. Also the area had a large snow dump the previous week, so that could have slowed them down, or they could have taken longer as the landscape is exceptionally beautiful. We made the decision to leave a note on their vehicle and wait until the following day to begin the search.

Having not turned up the following day a SAROP was initiated. Rose and Nelson had left their intentions, making it a simple search process. Their car was located, LandSAR volunteers began to trace their progress through the huts and they were located by the helicopter as they walked towards Kokatahi Hut. Both required hospitalisation.

Mike says the PLB scenario provided interesting debrief debate.

“In this situation we had reasonably experienced trampers whose history indicated they would use a beacon if they were in trouble. We went through a good decision-making process, covering off possible scenarios, and came to the conclusion they were just late getting back because of snow in the area. It was very hard to establish why they wouldn't use their beacon if they were in trouble. We would probably act the same way again, but this operation highlights the fact you can never account for all human behaviour.”

Mike adds that although it already happens, this incident also highlights the importance of LandSAR and DOC people pro-actively seeking out opportunities to inform trampers of conditions and skill levels required. In this case he says Rose and Nelson were not as well prepared as they could have been – their equipment in particular was inadequate.

RIGHT: Zit Saddle

BELOW: The Southern Alps – north from this incident.



“The Southern Alps is pretty unforgiving territory. I don't think they realised just how unforgiving. We shouldn't underestimate how hugely beneficial it is to have LandSAR and DOC personnel – who are trampers themselves – letting people know what they are in for.”

He says using tools like traditional websites and social media, as well as talking to people when they meet on a track, could be the difference between a SAROP or not. ●

Insight

Cover off as many scenarios as possible when deciding when to respond to an incident.

Use several experienced SAR personnel when considering possible scenarios to make sure nothing is missed.

When people are reported missing, but are believed to have a registered PLB with them, it can imply a number of things. However, it basically means:

1. They are stuck by a weather event such as heavy rain or snow and are okay – just in a situation where they believe beacon activation is not justified.
2. They are in a really bad situation where they are badly hurt, deceased or separated from the beacon.

SAR personnel have a role to play in educating/informing trampers who are in unfamiliar territory.

Use social media, websites and signage to ensure trampers have the right skill level and equipment – particularly when venturing into the back country.



SAR organisations – NASO

The National Ambulance Sector Office (NASO) is a jointly funded office, run and governed by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).

It was established in 2009 to bring Emergency Ambulance Services (EAS) into a more consistent and collaborative way of working. EAS include the Ambulance Communication Centre, road and air ambulance services.

NASO maintains a strong relationship with the SAR sector, because SAR involves locating and recovering lost or distressed people, and delivering them to a place of safety. That place of safety is often an emergency ambulance – some ambulance personnel are also involved in SAR activity.

NASO works collaboratively with the EAS sector to ensure a consistent approach across service providers to achieve the best caller/patient outcomes possible. It also manages funding and contracts on behalf of ACC and the MoH for the delivery of EAS.

NASO also works with key stakeholders on a range of initiatives aimed at:

- improving the quality and effectiveness of ambulance services
- integrating ambulance services into wider health and emergency services and reducing the number of admissions to Emergency Departments
- improving the alignment of ambulance service with other similar services.

NASO is a member of the NZSAR Consultative Committee and actively works with NZSAR, New Zealand Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) to improve the alignment of ambulance and SAR services.

This year NASO has worked with the New Zealand Police to update the SAR chapter in the Police Manual. The Police guidelines will now recommend that Police contact the Ambulance Communication Centre should they need an ambulance to ensure the most appropriate ambulance resource is dispatched (either road or air ambulance).

NASO will continue to work collaboratively with the SAR sector to identify opportunities for improving the quality and alignment of services. ●

YES

As the population ages, communities are turning their attention to finding ways to involve young people in volunteering. Search and rescue organisations are amongst those looking to inspire youth to become SAR volunteers.

YES – Youth in Emergency Services – is an initiative showing great potential. Having run a successful pilot in Rotorua earlier this year, it now has six communities participating around New Zealand.



It is designed to strengthen and encourage young people's connection to their community by engaging them in a range of emergency services. Starting with an orientation programme, which gives them a hands-on introduction to the services' work, it ends with the option of volunteering for one of them.

LandSAR and Coastguard are just two of the organisations participating in the programme, which is aimed at 16-19 year olds. Each community recruits suitable candidates from their local schools and/or local social services agency.

The YES pilot in Rotorua offered five different tasters:

- Land Search and Rescue
- St John and Rescue Helicopter
- NZ Fire Service, including Rural Fire, NZ Fire and Operational Support
- River Rescue
- Civil Defence / Emergency Response Unit

Fifteen young people from Rotorua's secondary schools and Family Works Northern spent four weeks attending two-hour Thursday evening orientations and four-hour Saturday morning trainings. Each week a different organisation hosted a session.

Participants then attended a scenario day where they put their learning into practice through emergency scenarios. Following that they nominated the service they would like to volunteer with.

All the services were keen to recruit new volunteers, due to existing volunteers ageing out and increasing extreme weather events placing greater burden on the services.

A full rundown of the Rotorua pilot and supporting information is available, but the YES project is keen for each community to determine how best to run their programme.

Programmes are presently being run in Kaikohe, Mangakino/Taupo, Rotorua (a second project), Gisborne, Alexandra and Kaikoura.

For more information contact Ministry of Youth Development's Blair Gilbert Blair.Gilbert005@myd.govt.nz or visit: www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-in-emergency-services.html ●



Duncan's desk



Spring is always a crazy-busy time for the Secretariat and this particular one is running true to form. In recent weeks I have been privileged to attend the Coastguard Conference, LandSAR Forum, two NZ Police SAR meetings and the Australian National SAR (NATSAR) Council meeting. While all very different, these gatherings of vastly experienced SAR people had common themes of a changing SAR environment as well as

high expectations, yet limited resources. There is no doubt that many of the SAR challenges we face here in New Zealand are very similar to those faced overseas. We have a lot to learn from their experiences and I believe we also have a lot to offer in return.

The Secretariat has been working on a number of long-term projects including the reworked NZSAR strategy (see front page), the NZSAR risk framework, performance management systems and the three-yearly review of NZSAR funding arrangements. Taken collectively, these are important components that describe what we aim to do, why we do it, and the resources we will have to do it with.

Carl has been occupied continuing the development of mass rescue policy, planning and exercising with an emphasis on how agencies will work together. He has also commenced looking at our SAR information work stream, identified in the NZSAR risk register. To support this he is enrolled in a Victoria University course on using official statistics. This all should assist the Council in its role of shaping and leading the sector.

Carl's work on the revised NZSAR Awards policy (discussed on page 3) will come into effect next year and will help the Council to formally recognise and applaud the wide range of activities that SAR people are involved in. The most visible aspect of Carl's recent work is our new, bright and shiny website. Carl worked with the great team at IT Rescue Solutions™ on this project. Take a look: www.nzsar.org.nz.

Phil has been toiling away on a wide array of projects. It has been great to see the sector reach collective agreement around SAR forms (see page 3). This piece of work owes an enormous debt to the team at LandSAR who kicked it off. We're confident that these common forms will help with standardised SAR training and also be of great operational use. Along with many SAREXs and training meetings Phil attended the EMQUAL Conference. Phil noted there was a very good cross-section of people from the emergency management sector and that this sort of engagement helps us to form better relationships with them. Phil is also very impressed by the 'YES' programme (see page 5) and the Unitec and Massey University EM research.

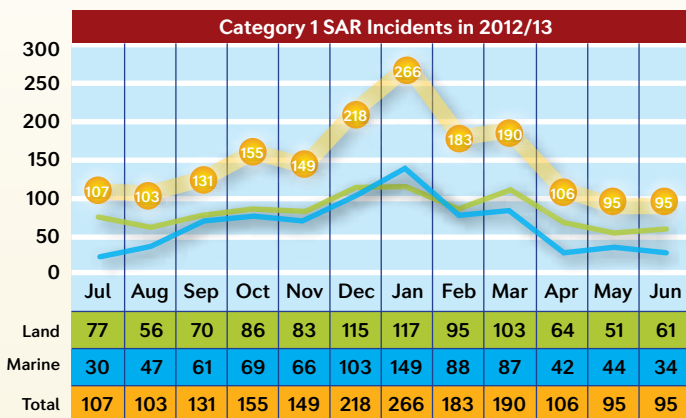
We still have a lot to get done before Christmas with one of the biggest jobs being the collation of the sectors SAR training need for the 2014 year. It is the first time we have attempted this task and we are certainly learning a lot. On behalf of the Council, Phil, Carl and I wish you all a safe and enjoyable summer. And if you see or hear of anyone in need of safety advice, please point them to www.adventuresmart.org.nz – before they need SAR assistance.

Duncan Ferner
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STATS ATTACK

This graph shows when category 1 SAR incidents occurred during the 2012-2013 year.



As usual, summer – especially December to March – is the busiest time for the sector. There are two items of note: firstly – January was the only month that marine incidents outnumbered land incidents. This is a timely reminder for all of us to promote the Boating Safety Code as we head into summer. Secondly – there was a small peak in March with a drop off in SAR incidents in April. This coincides with Easter falling in the last weekend of March last year. Next year Easter falls towards the end of April, so we can expect the busier period to extend into April as well.

CALENDAR

SAREXs and SAR training – see:

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

Christmas – 25 Dec

Nominations for NZSAR Awards close – 31 Jan 2014

NZSAR Consultative Committee Meeting – 13 Feb 2014

NZSAR Council Meeting – 27 Feb 2014

WEBSITES

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.

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.naso.govt.nz – National Ambulance Sector Office

www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-in-emergency-services.html – YES project