

Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

Kia ora and welcome to New Zealand Search and Rescue's (NZSAR) first newsletter, Link

We hope you will find the articles and information of interest to you and trust you will learn more about the work your colleagues in the SAR sector do, both paid and voluntary. As the editions unfold we will bring you stories from groups and individuals involved in land, sea and air SAR. We welcome any feedback you may have about Link, or any stories or information you think may be useful to the wider SAR sector. Email: d.ferner@transport.govt.nz or call NZSAR 04 439 9045

news



Revamped NZSAR Awards *Nominations now open*

The NZSAR Council has announced changes to its awards scheme. Two annual national awards are now on offer to recognise worthy achievements in the field of search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR).

The **NZSAR Gold Award** can be awarded to a person, group or organisation that has made the **most significant contribution** to search and rescue in the NZSRR.

The **NZSAR Certificate of Achievement** can be awarded to a person, group or organisation that has made a **significant contribution** to search and rescue in the NZSRR. More than one NZSAR Certificate can be awarded each year.

The Council hopes the introduction of two annual awards will encourage individuals, groups or organisations to showcase their achievements, because SAR is a complex, highly skilled, often difficult task. Nominations will be accepted for those who have performed outstanding work in the field of SAR above and beyond routine work and service. The contribution can also be in the form of sustained effort over a period of time or for a particular incident or set of incidents.

The people who work or volunteer their time and skills in this area, and those that support them, often receive little public recognition for the feats they achieve and the continuous effort

they put in to accomplish these tasks. The awards will also raise community awareness and celebrate their success.

NZSAR Gold Award and the Certificate will be judged and presented annually by the NZSAR Council. Nominations for the reshaped awards open on November 1 this year and close October 31, 2008.

For more information on the revamped awards and to download a nomination form go to the NZSAR website: www.nzsar.org.nz

New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Stocktake

A stocktake of all SAR providers and enablers within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region was conducted in mid 2007. The stocktake acknowledges that for significant parts of the sector, the SAR role represents only a small part of their work and that many key SAR assets exist primarily for other purposes. In recognition of this individuals or assets who were actively involved with SAR in some form or capacity during 2007 were included.

The aim of the NZSAR stocktake is for the sector and its stakeholders to gain an understanding of the dimensions and capacity of the entire NZSAR sector.

It describes the size of the NZSAR sector, the elements that comprise it and its key capabilities.

NZSAR hopes this stocktake will be available as an important information resource for people working in search and rescue. It offers a coherent, unified picture of the sector and provides a measure of the sector's scale within New Zealand society. The stocktake is public information and it will be updated annually in order to maintain accuracy and identify trends. Future stocktakes could include other measures such as funding levels and expenditure.

SAR in action



Changes at LandSAR

When Deputy Chair of the LandSAR board John Scobie, first became involved in search and rescue, many operations were as he puts it, “run by one joker sitting in a caravan ‘til he fell asleep.” And that could be four or five days.

John says things are very different now.

An operation is run like a business, its purpose – to find the missing person.

Major incidents since the late 1990’s have had a Co-ordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) in place with an Incident Controller, and managers of Operations, Planning & Intel, Logistics and Communications.

Society’s growing demand for Search and Rescue operations is such that the volunteers do not have enough time to cover all the roles expected of them. John says the 2,500 trained volunteers put in on average between five and 15 days a year on SAR work alone. “That’s two or three searches a year, might be more, plus the training involved to keep yourself up to scratch. Most people become involved because they’re into climbing, tramping, caving, whitewater kayaking, or the like and they’d like to think that someone would come and look for them.

“Police fund the actual operations, but funding for work such as training and purchasing equipment is all done by volunteers.” On top of that, “Our volunteers are committing an awful lot of time into searches and training and we are required to not only be good at what we do, but ensure that all that training is documented and recorded for OSH, employment act requirements and the possibility of litigation.” So John is keen for someone other than the SAR volunteers to do the fundraising leaving them to get on with what they’re good at.

LandSAR is now lobbying for extra funding to take it to the next level. As part of this process the organisation has recently undergone some major changes. A new structure now in place has a board of directors reporting to The Council of Land SAR (NZ), employing a business manager and field support officers to

support 54 Land Search and Rescue groups in seven regions. The field support officers have been operating since early September.

“Their job is to work with the groups and regions to ensure that best practices are widely adopted and our volunteers don’t spend their time reinventing the wheel. For example they find out where good funding sources are and save some groups a hell of a lot of time and money. If you’ve got an experienced fundraiser in one area, why not use them in another, mentor someone in another group to get up to the same standard. John says training is another field where the Field Support Officers will have a big role to play.

Groups get together for monthly training and do a Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) annually to evaluate their procedures. “It could be a mock search, but we have some definite things we have to deliver, and lessons to learn – for example how long did it take to contact everyone on the callout list? Even though they were waiting for the call, it still took us several hours to get through them. We have to work out how we can do that quicker and better.

“The police put their faith in us and provided transitional funding to put all these things in place so we could get the support volunteers need to do their job.



“Now we have the team in place, we have the operational capability, and we have to prove we’re up to the job. But we do need appropriate, sustainable, funding – not to put too fine a point on it.

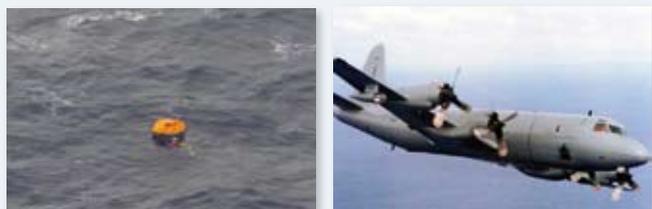
I would like to see an organisation where the time that people devote is spent on actual training or on operations, not on sausage sizzles to buy equipment.

Our long-term game plan is to supply some of the volunteers’ funding, paying for training, equipment, but that won’t happen for at least another 18 months.”

John says he’d also like to see training operating so consistently around the country, “that a policeman from Bluff can be posted to Rotorua and can expect the same level of service from his volunteers there. It would also mean we could create New Zealand’s own lost person behaviour data, which we currently get from the States. There are so many opportunities to make land search and rescue more efficient. Reshaping our organisation is just the beginning.”

New Zealand Search and Rescue Council (NZSAR), Secretariat and Consultative Committee.

The NZSAR Council exists to give advice to government on search and rescue matters. The secretariat provides policy advice to the Council and strategic coordination of SAR organisations. The secretariat also leads a consultative committee made up of all SAR players in New Zealand, enabling their voice to be heard as policy is developed.



The secretariat is a one man band. Duncan Ferner is the secretariat manager, his role is to ensure this process runs smoothly and efficiently. He focuses at the strategic level, maintaining and coordinating relationships with senior SAR management, preparing papers, providing policy advice for the NZSAR council and occasionally he leaves his desk to visit search and rescue organisations and coordination centres.

Formally an Army Lieutenant Colonel, (he also spent 5 years working in government minister Mark Burton's office) Duncan says he finds this job extremely satisfying. Underlying all his work is the knowledge that the benefits of a co-ordinated strategic approach to SAR flows down to the coal face and inevitably is a factor in saving lives.

"Prior to the council existing there was no central forum for sharing ideas and processes, either at an operational or strategic level. It was a very fractured system. Various government CEOs reported to various ministers from their own perspectives on SAR. There were no common targets, no common goals. As a result we suffered a number of significant failures in our SAR practice, some of which involved the loss of life." Duncan says that although no SAR system could guarantee there wont be loss of life, NZSAR is constantly striving for improvement.

This means his role is varied and the tempo changes constantly depending on the projects at hand. "One of my current projects is the search and rescue stocktake. This is the first time New Zealand has ever tried to measure all the assets and people involved with SAR in New Zealand. (More details on the stocktake can be found in the news section of this edition.) Having a hub for this type of material is essential to a cohesive, efficient sector."

Another outstanding component within the SAR sector is its 'workforce'. The variance between paid and non paid staff. Layered on top of that, the skill levels required to do the work.

"I've been consistently amazed by the high level of skills that every SAR organisation brings to the table.

These people are very focused on providing the highest level of service whether they are paid, partly paid, or not paid at all.

The intellectual grunt is quite astounding and there is never a motivational problem. I find that extremely attractive.

I think this sector is made up of highly motivated and passionate people who make New Zealand a safe place to enjoy our environment. Their heart is always in the right place, it is never a matter of encouraging people to give more. People are always putting their best foot forward."

stats attack – SAR people

Summary:

People in the sector:	10161
• Full time	469
• Part time	460
• Non paid	9232

SAR People

10,061 people are involved in the New Zealand SAR sector. In addition to this, there are many others who enable these SAR individuals to perform their role. There are also many thousands of other individuals such as New Zealand Defence Force personnel and those within the wider NZ Police Force who are only occasionally required to assist with search and rescue operations and therefore are not part of the totals presented.

Paid and non-paid. Over 90% of New Zealanders involved with SAR are volunteers who receive no remuneration for their involvement. Less than 10% do receive some form of remuneration in either a full or part time basis. Figure 1 illustrates the dimensions of the sector. Previous studies have identified that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of volunteer involvement in SAR in the world.

SAR People

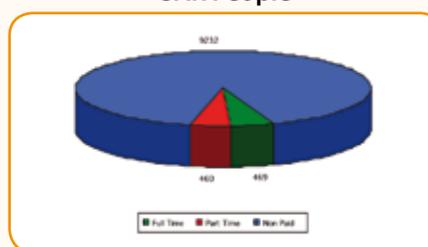


figure 1

Numbers in each sector. The largest segment of the SAR sector is marine search and rescue which represents just over half of all people involved at almost 5300. The organisations primarily involved are Surf Life Saving New Zealand and the New Zealand Coastguard. The land sector is the next largest segment with 2777 people involved. These are primarily drawn from NZ Land Search with a smaller number from Amateur Radio Emergency Communications.

People by Sector

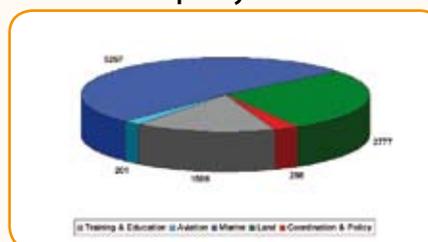


figure 2

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The training and education segment of the SAR sector is surprisingly large with 1598 people involved. Many of these people are involved with the Mountain Safety Council and the polytechnics who provide training for both the land and marine SAR environments.

While the aviation segment is relatively small with 201 people involved, it is very flexible and involved with a large number of SAR incidents in all three SAR modes, land, sea and air.

The bulk of the 288 people involved with coordination and policy belong to either the NZ Police or Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre. The New Zealand SAR sector is operationally focused with only small numbers being involved at the strategic and executive levels.

beacons update

As the closedown of the 121.5MHz distress beacon system in February 2009 draws closer, the campaign to advise people to make the switch to registered 406MHz beacons has stepped up. All aircraft ELT's and EPIRB's on commercial vessels must be changed by July 2008. New brochures are available now. For more information, visit: www.beacons.org.nz

calendar

- North Island Police SAR Coordinators meet 19-20 November.
- New Zealand Consultative Committee meets at the Rescue Coordination Centre on Wednesday 21 November.
- New Zealand SAR Council meets on 28 November.
- Inaugural meeting of the Drowning Prevention Councils Rescue Committee early Dec.

useful website links

- <http://www.nzsar.org.nz> – New Zealand Search and Rescue Council
- <http://www.beacons.org.nz> – Information on switching to 406 distress beacons
- <http://www.cospas-sarsat.org/MainPages/indexEnglish.htm> – providers of the distress beacon satellite system
- <http://www.teara.govt.nz/TheBush/BushAndMountainRecreationSearchAndRescue/en> – Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, SAR entry
- <http://natsar.amsa.gov.au> – Australian SAR Council
- <http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz>

from Duncan's desk

Over the past few months my main priority has been providing advice to the NZSAR Council on how best to sustain the NZSAR Sector while addressing the key risks to the sector. I have received a lot of great information from the sector which has made this task much more manageable. I appreciate the great reports and hard work from all involved.



I have also been involved with developing the 2007/2008 distress beacons campaign. Three new brochures have been produced for land, sea and air respectively. They all emphasise not only the need to make the switch to 406 MHz beacons but also the need to register the new beacons with the rescue coordination centre and to dispose of the old 121.5 MHz ones responsibly. I have a large number of these brochures along with posters available so please contact me if you want some. Advertising space has also been purchased in a range of outdoor publications so you may notice some beacons ads over the coming months. Comprehensive information can be found on the beacons website: www.beacons.org.nz

Another recent project for the NZSAR Secretariat has been to produce the inaugural NZSAR stocktake. This is an attempt to define the dimensions and capacity of New Zealand's search and rescue sector. Work on this is nearing completion and it should be made available shortly. I have also been representing the search and rescue sector at meetings of the Accident Compensation Commission led drowning prevention strategy. Effective delivery of this strategy is important to our sector and I welcome the opportunity to participate in it.

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The newsletter is available as a pdf, visit the NZSAR website: www.nzsar.org.nz

To view the pdf and access the hyperlinks you will require Adobe Acrobat Reader version 7 or above. A free download is available at:

 www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readerstep2.html

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