

Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

news

NZSAR Awards



NZSAR Award recipients with Hon. Steven Joyce at Parliament

"Search and rescue experts, whether in a uniformed service or as volunteers, showed an outstanding level of professionalism, preparation, courage and commitment when the people of Christchurch needed their help (on February 22). The deeds of USAR are well known, but I want to acknowledge the tremendous response by other members of the search and rescue (SAR) sector."

The Minister for Transport, Hon Steven Joyce, recognised the major contribution from SAR organisations to the Christchurch earthquake response during his speech at this year's NZSAR Awards in April.

Speaking at the ceremony held at Parliament, Minister Joyce also noted the value of collaboration across the sector. He used the recent launch of the Water Safety Code, which sits alongside the Boating and Outdoor Safety Codes, as an example of "the spirit of cooperation running through the search and rescue sector that helps make your operations so successful."

SAR people can look at other search and rescue organisations and know that together they can accomplish much more than they ever could alone. "Because you know you can rely on each other, the rest of us know we can rely on you," Minister Joyce said.

Before handing out the Gold Award and four Certificates of Achievements, the Minister thanked the SAR people at the ceremony for their bravery and commitment in the service of others.

Gold Award recipient Greg Lyall, Captain of the Fishing Vessel Amatal Atlantis, was unable to attend the ceremony as he was away at sea. He and his crew received the Award for the rescue of crew from the Oyang 70 on 18 August 2010.

Greg later told us the rescue had been a traumatic experience, but it was fortunate that they were in the right place at the right time and able to help.

"We have training drills for this, but nothing prepares you for the real thing. We didn't know for a couple of hours how many people were missing, but remained searching as long as we could before it just got too dangerous."

Greg says they had four different nationalities on board and were dealing with hypothermia, as well as survivors and bodies covered in oil.

"My crew worked so well together; we rescued as many as we could, cleaned them up, and got them warm. In some cases that took hours. We gave them all clean dry clothes, a good meal and a warm bed. But that's just what you do – we would expect the same."

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NZSAR awards continued

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Gold Award

The NZSAR Gold Award is awarded for the *most significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2010.*

Captain Greg Lyall and the crew of the fishing vessel Amaltal Atlantis

For the rescue of crew from the Oyang 70 on 18 August 2010



Hon. Steven Joyce, Minister of Transport, Captain Brendon Cosmatsos, Amaltal Atlantis (on behalf of Captain Greg Lyall), First Mate Isaac Davis, Amaltal Atlantis

At 4.30am on 18 August 2010, the fishing vessel Amaltal Atlantis received a distress radio message from the fishing vessel Oyang 70. The Amaltal Atlantis was in the Southern Ocean close to the Bounty Islands. They relayed the MAYDAY message back to New Zealand and then travelled as fast as they could in the direction of the distress message. At the same time, the Rescue Coordination Centre received two signals from the 406MHz distress beacons that were registered to the Oyang 70.

The Amaltal Atlantis located the Oyang 70 on its radar, but within ten minutes it had disappeared. When the Amaltal Atlantis arrived at the distress location it found that the Oyang 70 had sunk, so it commenced a search pattern and was able to recover life rafts from the sunken vessel. One of the life rafts recovered had three survivors on board and was partly submerged in oil and water. Two of the survivors were probably only minutes from death. In total, the Amaltal Atlantis rescued 45 survivors from the sea and recovered 3 bodies. The crew provided clothing, food, comfort, and support to the survivors during the search and rescue operation and the voyage back to Lyttleton.

This Award recognises the initiative and sound decision-making of Captain Greg Lyall; the professionalism of the Amaltal Atlantis crew in responding to the distress call; their recovery and care of the survivors; and their respectful treatment of those who died.

NZSAR Certificates of Achievement

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement are awarded for an *important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region, either during 2010 or over an extended period.*



Constable Brent Swanson, NZ Police, Tony Delaney, Helicopter Line Mark Quickfall, Helicopter Line

The Helicopter Line

For services, leadership and dedication to Alpine Search and Rescue at Aoraki/Mt Cook

The Helicopter Line is a commercial tourist operator that has provided SAR services in the alpine environment of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park since 1980. In 1997 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Police for the commitment to provide both Human Sling Load rated pilots on standby and financial assistance for training. Human Sling Load rescue is identified as one of the most hazardous roles of any alpine rescue operation and the altitude and weather conditions in the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park only increase the operational challenges Helicopter Line pilots face.

Regular flying in the National Park is essential, as it gives the pilots the opportunity to hone the advanced skills they need to perform search and rescue operations at high altitude and in challenging weather conditions. The Police and the Department of Conservation's Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team have a high level of trust in the Helicopter Line.

Over the last 15 years, the Helicopter Line has provided assistance to almost 80% of all search and rescue incidents at Aoraki/Mt Cook, at an average of almost 17 per year.

This Certificate recognises the commitment of the Helicopter Line to Alpine SAR in the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, as well as the dedication of the company and its pilots for the great many lives they have saved, rescued, and assisted over the last 30 years.

NZSAR awards continued

*Larry Charles
From LandSAR NZ Dogs*



For services, leadership and dedication to Search Dogs in New Zealand

Larry Charles has been involved in Murchison Land Search and Rescue (LandSAR) for over 30 years. During this time he became convinced that dogs would be very useful to help find missing people, so he researched training methods and subsequently trained his first search dog. Larry's training skills quickly led to him being appointed a search dog assessor by the NZ LandSAR National Search Dog Committee.

Over the last ten years, Larry has trained three dogs and has had 10 finds from around 90 searches. His operational achievements are among the best in the history of search dog handlers in New Zealand.

Larry has been passionate and instrumental in helping develop other search dog teams around New Zealand and he has not missed a search dog assessment camp during the last ten years. He has given large amounts of his own time to attend those training camps and to train search dog teams, around running his own business.

This Certificate recognises Larry's commitment and excellence in land-based SAR, in particular with search dogs. It also reflects his high standing within New Zealand's search dog community.



*Alasdair Lean, Daryl McMillan, Dave Cox, Geoff Pollard
Ian Blackler, Murray Paul, Richard Craig
From Coastguard Kaikoura
For the rescue of the yacht Marguerite on 18 June 2010*

On 18 June 2010, the yacht Marguerite hit what the crew believed to be a whale, sustaining damage to the rudder. The lurch of the vessel injured the two crew members on board. With their rudder jammed in heavy seas, a large wave pushed water into the cabin, disabling their electronics. They spent a very uncomfortable night at sea and activated their 406MHz distress beacon in the morning.

Coastguard Kaikoura was tasked to assist the Marguerite, which was 30km offshore and well outside their normal operational area. Their vessel Kaikoura Rescue battled swells of five metres and winds gusting 55-75 km/h, so it took them 90 minutes to reach the stranded yacht. Then, the Marguerite crew had to set off two flares to help the Coastguard crew locate the yacht because the visibility was so poor. The injured crew were transferred to the rescue vessel in difficult conditions and were taken back to shore for hospital treatment. The volunteers later returned to the yacht and took it under tow to the harbour.

This Certificate recognises the skills and dedication demonstrated by volunteers Alasdair, Daryl, Dave, Geoff, Ian, Murray and Richard in the severe weather conditions they faced during the search and rescue operation.

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NZSAR Awards

Do you know of an organisation, group or individual who should 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 search and rescue in New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region.

Go to www.nzsar.org.nz for more information along with details on the simple nomination process.

Nominations for the 2011 awards close on 31 January 2012.

NZSAR awards continued

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*Harry Stevenson,
Life Flight Trust*

*Peter Collins, Wellington
Free Ambulance*

*Dave Greenberg,
Life Flight Trust*

*W/O Darren Smith,
RNZAF*



RNZAF Iroquois Rescue Operation at Pukerua Bay on Anzac Day 2010

On 25 April 2010, three RNZAF Iroquois helicopters were flying in formation to Wellington to conduct an ANZAC Day parade flyover. They flew into adverse weather and, while manoeuvring clear, lost contact with one of the helicopters. The lead Iroquois in the formation declared a MAYDAY and a search commenced. Shortly after dawn the searching Iroquois detected an emergency locator signal.

Within 15 minutes, the Life Flight Trust helicopter Capital 01 was on the scene to join in a coordinated search with the Iroquois. While the Iroquois attempted to find an alternative route to the beacon site, Capital 01 persevered from the coastal side to find a way through the cloud and up the steep and rugged terrain. At the same time, W/O Darren Smith had started a 2km run up the ravine to try and locate the missing Iroquois from the ground.

Capital 01 located the wreckage of the crashed Iroquois and used hand signals to direct Darren to the crash site, where he found surviving crewman Sgt Steve Creeggan. Paramedic Peter Collins was winched down to the crash site and advised that Steve could be winched up in a nappy harness and that he would stay at the scene to help Darren search for the remainder of the crashed Iroquois's crew. Capital 01 flew Steve to the staging point, where treatment was started, and he was transported to hospital.

This Certificate recognises the combined efforts of Harry, Dave, Peter and Darren in locating and rescuing Sgt Steve Creeggan from the crash site, in extremely difficult conditions. •

news

SAR Training and Education



A wide range of SAR trainers and educators gathered in Wellington in March to spend time together discussing the latest developments and issues affecting their work.

Hosted by the NZSAR Secretariat, over 40 attendees began by examining the New Zealand Qualifications Framework to get an understanding of what is and how it works, as well as its benefits and downsides. This was followed by a group discussion about its possible fit for search and rescue both now and into the future.

Presentations were given on SAR training, exercise moderation and assessment, and keeping SAR skills current. The group discussed how we, as a sector, can achieve these things in a practical and common manner. Attendees were briefed on the progress of implementing the NZSAR Core Curriculum, with particular emphasis on training development progress for the On Scene Coordinator and Incident Management/Controller courses.

The SAR Training and Education Workshop also included presentations and discussions about:

- training our trainers, with a focus on ensuring SAR trainers are adequately trained
- limited literacy and other learning issues and how the SAR sector might recognise and address these issues
- identifying training needs and how to design effective training for SAR people
- training delivery methods and assessment techniques, with a discussion around what worked best for SAR people
- cross-training and centres of excellence
- joint and collective SAR training and exercises – how we best make use of limited resources and opportunities
- knowledge management – how we best share what we know.

A record of discussion from the workshop, as well as many of the presentations, can be found on the NZSAR website under Training and Workshops, or through this link:

<http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/training-and-workshops/workshop-material/346-training-and-education-march-2011> •

A very successful pilot On Scene Coordinator (OSC) course was completed at the Police College at the end of April. Feedback from those that attended will be used to improve the course content, and a second pilot course will be completed at the end of June. Early indications are that this course will be very useful for those asked by RCCNZ to perform the duties of an OSC as well as an excellent refresher for incident management team members.

news continued



Operational Framework Released

The NZSAR Council has released its Operational Framework for the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region. This has been prepared in consultation with the SAR sector in New Zealand.

This comprehensive framework pulls together all aspects of SAR and describes how the organisations that make up the New Zealand SAR sector operate and collaborate to effectively and efficiently provide services for SAR.

The Operational Framework presents:

- the strategic setting, scope and responsibilities of SAR in New Zealand
- descriptions of the authorities and organisations that provide governance and leadership of SAR in New Zealand
- profiles of organisations that provide significant SAR services in New Zealand
- the operational systems and procedures that produce the collaborative and comprehensive SAR response
- appendices of information, such as a glossary, NZSRR coordinates and asset distribution.

Covering everything from our international and national obligations (who is responsible for what) and descriptions of each of the organisations involved in SAR, through to the two command and control systems we use (CIMS and IAMSAR) and how our SAR sector fits together, this publication is extremely useful for anyone wanting to know anything about New Zealand's SAR sector.

It is well worth a read – you can download a copy of the NZSAR Operational Framework from our website:

www.nzsar.org.nz. Search: publications. •

Supporting the SAR Sector

The NZSAR Secretariat is delighted with the progress of its National SAR Support Programme.

The Programme was set up in response to the 2009 review of SAR Training in New Zealand and focuses on bringing people from across the SAR sector together to share their expertise and wisdom. It also provides them with the foundations to work better together.

Highlights of the support programme include the numerous workshops held around the country where hundreds of SAR people have gathered with colleagues to examine their specific discipline.

Workshops have brought together: helicopter hoist operators, on scene coordinators, land-based communicators, marine SAR people and those that search for people who wander, just to name a few.

In many cases, organisations outside the SAR sector that share an interest are invited and provide valuable knowledge and perspectives; one such example was Alzheimers New Zealand who offered an important contribution to the *SAR for People that Wander* workshop. (You can read more about the latest workshop *SAR Training and Education* on page 4.)

The three Safety Codes are another achievement of the SAR support programme.

To date, the NZSAR Council has supported the production of Safety Codes that contain simple messages aimed at outdoor, water, and boating activities. The Outdoor and Boating Safety Codes were widely distributed throughout the summer, and we are now concentrating on expanding the website www.adventuresmart.org.nz. This website holds all the information about how to plan for outdoor activities as well as general safety information and links to organisations with specific safety information about the reader's chosen pursuit.

SAR organisations do an excellent job of informing New Zealanders about keeping safe, but one group that falls between the cracks is overseas visitors. The NZSAR Council is intending to target them with these safety messages to ensure that their stay in New Zealand is filled with as much "prepared" adventure as they would like. To this end we will be working more closely with tourism organisations, as well as groups working with the visitor intentions system.

We intend to build on the momentum we've started; we plan to facilitate more workshops and refresher courses; we'll continue to work with all SAR agencies to improve overall SAREX quality; and of course, spread the safety messages far and wide. •

SAR people

The Team Behind the Team



Lynne Craig, Tracey Lean, Annie Cox, Carol Pollard

There aren't many women who would consider it normal to receive a phone call from their young son asking to be picked up from Coastguard HQ – and by the way, please stop by the supermarket and pay for the groceries dad left on the conveyor belt as he dashed out the door. Or, who are not surprised when they are left to entertain friends in the middle of a dinner party, or children half way through Christmas Day. These are just a few of the more inconvenient call-out moments that Annie Cox, Carol Pollard, Lynne Craig and Tracey Lean, wives of Coastguard Kaikoura members, recall with laughter.

Fortunately, their family, friends and local community understand these frequent disappearing acts whenever a SAR incident occurs and assist however they can; whether that means packing the groceries and making sure the frozens don't thaw out, to offering a couch to sleep on:

"Once we were out for dinner with another Coastguard couple when the men received a call out and quickly took off in our car. Of course, my husband left with the money and the house key, so I ended up sleeping on their couch till 3.30am because I couldn't get back in to the house," says Carol.

Annie adds, "Yes, there are moments when he disappears on me! I usually have to leave as well because we only have one vehicle. My husband is very skilled, and I'm happy that he can use those skills and help the community – it's a good thing – but what affects him affects me too."

There's no denying that many voluntary hours are also dedicated to training and fundraising, on top of those spent attending call-outs. However, none of these women would have it any other way.

"It doesn't present an issue, but it is something that you have to think about and plan around", says Tracey. "It becomes part of our social life as well; we have functions at the Coastguard station and often we combine them with St John's Ambulance. So as a group, the wives, girlfriends and partners actually get to be part of it and know what's going on. We also become friendly with each other, which in a small community is very useful!"

Lynne agrees, "it's just a part of our family life and we just work around it. We were at a function one night and there was a bit of a drama and the Fire Brigade and Coastguard were both involved – and of course a lot of our friends are Fire Brigade and Coastguard people – so it was kind of like 'whoosh' and all the blokes were gone. All the girls had a lovely night!"

In April, their husbands were part of a team that was awarded a NZSAR Certificate of Achievement for the rescue of the yacht Marguerite on 18 June 2010. Annie, Carol, Lynne and Tracey accompanied their husbands to the award ceremony in Wellington and all agree that it was wonderful to see the men's hours of voluntary work publicly recognised.

"These guys do work hard and it's nice to be appreciated and noticed, so I was proud of them. They did good," says Annie.

Just like their husbands, all the women are quick to credit the team effort involved in this successful SAR incident, with Carol and Lynne commenting: "The award was a team effort and they were all quite pleased, but they don't do it for the glory. The Coastguards are a team – everybody for everybody – and they are very dedicated to it." Tracey sums up the group's attitude.

"Small communities like ours need people to step up and be involved otherwise these services can't run. These are services that you rely on, so it's important to be part of it, because you never know when you're going to call on one of these services yourself. And it really isn't that tough if I have to pick up my shopping a bit late, knowing that my husband's saving peoples' lives. It's a small price to pay really!" •

news continued

New Standard for Air Ambulances

Ambulance New Zealand has released a new Standard for air ambulance services that addresses a number of safety concerns experienced in other parts of the world.

The Standard will apply to rotary and fixed wing aircraft operators who hold contracts with Ambulance New Zealand and the National Ambulance Sector Office (NASO).

It has a best practice approach to quality and risk management that ensure patient and crew safety remains paramount, as well as providing consistency across the country. Air ambulance services will have to undergo an independent audit to demonstrate they are adhering to the Standard.

The Standard also includes sections on air rescue. These sections have been jointly developed with operators and RCCNZ. For SAR, the Standard will not be contractually mandated but rather will help us to work together better, building upon the excellent safety record experienced in the sector to date. The inaugural Air Ambulance / Air Search and Rescue Service Standard takes effect from July 1. Read the Standard at www.nzsar.org.nz •

SAR insights

The Difference Between Knowledge and Skills

When James Esbester went missing in Kahurangi National Park in February this year, the search for him yielded some important lessons for SAR in New Zealand. As a result, new training modules have been written and SAREXs redeveloped, among other things.

James Esbester went missing after becoming disoriented on the top of Mt Luna and following the wrong ridge down. The search began four days later, after a group of trampers raised the alarm when they found some of James's gear at Stone Hut on the Wangapeka Track. He had left a note with his gear outlining his intentions.

Assistant SAR coordinator for the Tasman District, Sherp Tucker, came on board as part of a review team on day two of the search. He says a combination of factors prevented them from finding James earlier and a number of lessons have been learnt, which will influence future operations and training.

"Firstly and most importantly, we found James Esbester alive, but we should have found him about three days earlier. The search team was behind the eight ball from the start, because James had been missing – unreported – for four days. Then, once we were alerted, all we had was his name and some information in a notebook."

Sherp says the initial reflex tasking was let down by a number of small issues that all contributed to the search effort not being as effective as it could have been.

"It began with the Hut check: we never brought James's gear back and having this would have reinforced our intelligence.

"Searching is the classic mystery, nobody knows the solution until the very last page – you have to examine all aspects. Searching should be intelligence-led."

The operational period concentrated on James's proposed route, as well as some other routes a lost person might take, but were subjective or deductive; based and designed to find evidence of James direction of travel.

"Unfortunately", says Sherp, "many of the people who implemented the actual field search did not have the skills necessary for the task. Also, the incident management team (IMT) didn't recognise this deficiency, which affected their ability to meet their planned objectives."

Another issue was documentation, precise documentation is vital. If something happens it needs to be written up, allowing constant review as well as smooth personnel changeovers.

"Our IMT's documentation was limited and not secure enough to use as a resource. Everything that happens must be written down because you will need to be able to produce timelines, logs, etc, for future actions within the operation."



Sherp says there was not any single thing that could be rated as the definitive reason for the delay in finding James.

"It was a bit like holding three blocks of cheese together, with each block having 70 holes going through it. At times, we let ten or so of the holes line up in all the blocks and things fell through them relatively unseen."

He reiterates, though, that it was a happy outcome.

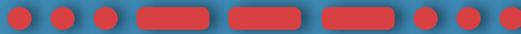
"James was found suffering from mild hypothermia 10 km down the Crow River by a helicopter that had been tasked to check the drainage systems running off Mt Luna."

The SAR team in Tasman have now held a number of debriefings, training sessions and SAREXs.

Sherp says the Esbester incident reinforces the value of back to the basics and practical skills training: "Everyone has learnt something and we will continue to learn. In fact, James is now helping us – he is an expert in GIS mapping!"

Insights

- **Know your resources: task them, appropriately, within their skill base.**
- **There is a huge difference between knowledge and actual skills.**
- **You gain knowledge from attending courses, reading and listening.**
- **To become skilled you need to practice the elements of the skill. This takes time, dedication and commitment. You definitely do not become skilled by just attending courses or reading books.**
- **Record everything - NOTHING has happened unless it has been recorded correctly.**
- **Plan using all the intelligence you can gather. This may come from family, friends, witnesses, statistics, terrain analysts, subject matter experts, etc.**
- **Put your plan in the hands of a resource that has the skills to obtain the plan's objectives.**
- **Use the basic search planning blocks you have available.**
- **Remember: lost people develop a plan (normally a suspect one) and stick to it.**



Carl's corner



My congratulations to all our worthy winners of the 2010 NZSAR Awards, (you can read about them on the cover of this Link). All the nominations received for the Awards were of a very high standard, which reflects the extraordinary skills, abilities, and achievements within our

sector. The Awards are valuable not only for recognising people's contributions, but also for raising the public's awareness of the SAR sector in New Zealand – in fact, the Awards made the six o'clock news that night!

There have been two NZSAR Council sponsored workshops over the last few months – the Training and Education workshop (page 4) and the RCCNZ-hosted Aviation workshop. The workshop programme is continually proving its worth in meeting various NZSAR goals: enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector, promoting continuous improvement, and achieving a culture of 'one SAR body'. Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to the success of these workshops.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a fixed wing air observer's course. This was a very useful chance for me to understand the training and skills that are required to be an effective air observer. Helicopters were used in just over 25% of Category 1 land searches during the 09/10 year, so having a pool of trained air observers is vital to the SAR sector. The course highlighted the benefits of using air observers to cover a large area of ground in a short time, but also showed the challenges in identifying targets from 800 feet.

We have also made significant progress with our prevention messages over the last few months. If you attended the Auckland Boat Show in May, you might have spotted some of the pull-up banners that display the Boating Safety Code. Keep an eye out for more banners, posters and other promotional material for the family of Safety Codes – Outdoors, Boating and Water. Please make yourself familiar with the messages in these Codes, so that we can provide consistent safety messages to the public and visitors to New Zealand.

We are also working closely with the tourism sector in promoting these codes, as well as beefing up the AdventureSmart website.

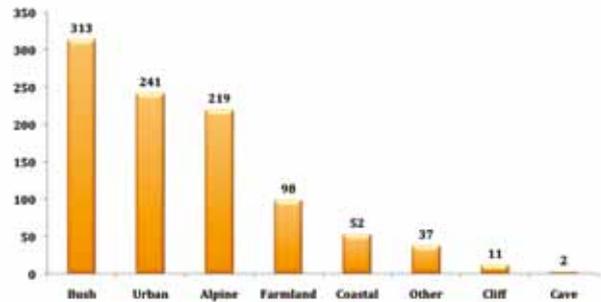
So, if you are planning to take part in any winter sports or recreation activities over the next few months, or you want to provide others with good solid safety information, check out www.adventuresmart.org.nz before you go!

*Carl van der Meulen
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stats attack

Where does land-based search and rescue happen?



This graph shows the type of terrain the 973 Category 1 (Police coordinated) land searches for the July 2009 – June 2010 period occurred in. Urban-based searches are now the second most prevalent terrain setting for land-based SAROPs. The NZSAR Secretariat, NZ Police, LandSAR, Alzheimer's NZ and other agencies are working together to address the increase in urban-based searches for people who wander.

calendar

NZSAR Consultative Committee Meeting: 13 July

NZSAR Council Meeting: 3 August

**Emergency Response Management Australasia
2011 Brisbane: 6 - 8 September**

A number of marine and land SAREXs are planned over the next two months including incident management and CIMS training. See our online calendar for more information about these significant SAR training events – www.nzsar.org.nz

useful website links

www.nzsar.org.nz – Information and resources for the New Zealand Search and Rescue community. The Training and Workshops section includes material from all the workshops run to date, as well as the SAREX Guidelines. This newsletter is also available as a PDF on this website.

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

www.adventuresmart.org.nz – General 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.avalanche.net.nz – Avalanche advisory service.

www.metservice.co.nz – Comprehensive weather reports.