



## Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

### NZSAR Awards 2012



2012 Award recipients with Hon. Michael Woodhouse

*"It is wonderful to see the sector united in the concept of "one SAR body" across all modes of search and rescue – and that this major transformation is being achieved while simultaneously building the sector's ability to respond to people in danger."* Hon Michael Woodhouse

Teamwork was a consistent theme that featured predominantly throughout this year's NZSAR Awards ceremony, held at Parliament in May.

Every award presented an aspect of SAR people working closely together – in some cases across a number of organisations – and combining their skills to get the best outcome possible.

The Hon Michael Woodhouse, Associate Minister of Transport, recognised the value of this teamwork as he presented the awards.

He spoke of his "special appreciation for the vital contribution made by the many thousands of volunteers involved in New Zealand's search and rescue sector" and acknowledged new funding provisions.

"Your role in saving lives cannot be overstated, and the Government has recognised this by making provision for search and rescue training to be provided to much of the sector at no personal financial cost."

Opunake Surf Life Saving member Kim Danz, who was involved in the rescue of two fishermen off Opunake, says the Certificate of Achievement they received is quite special.

"We're extremely stoked to get it, in particular to be appreciated by the full SAR sector. Incidents like this one are what we train hard for; they are tough, but when you get a good result like we did that

night it's worth it. Recognition from the sector through the award acknowledges our value as volunteers, our commitment, and the commitment of those that support us."

**Five NZSAR Certificates of Achievement were presented alongside this year's NZSAR Gold Award.**

**The NZSAR Gold Award for the most significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region was awarded to Alan Deal, Andrew Cronin, Jayden Strickland and Phil Dwyer, from the Taranaki Rescue Helicopter Trust.**

**For their outstanding efforts during the Paritutu Rock incident on 8 August 2012.**

During this incident the crew conducted a 30 minute search for the people missing in the water, before carrying out ten winching operations to rescue the survivors from the rock face. They were recognised for their outstanding combined efforts, teamwork, and skill in rescuing the ten survivors in extremely difficult conditions.

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[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)



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The following Certificates of Achievement were awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2012, or over an extended period:

**LandSAR Wanaka and the Wanaka Police SAR Squad.**

*For their efforts to rescue 15 year-old Dion Latta, who was trapped in a waterfall in the Motatapu Gorge, on 1 January 2012.*

Dion was freed from the waterfall; however, he tragically passed away later in Dunedin Hospital. They were recognised for the high-level of personal commitment, teamwork, discipline and skill involved in this rescue.

**Cape Egmont Sea Rescue, Coastguard South Taranaki, Opunake Boating Club, Opunake Surf Life Saving Club, and Taranaki Police SAR Squad.**

*For the rescue of two fishermen at Opunake, in horrendous conditions in the middle of the night, on 22 February 2012.*

This rescue exemplifies the 'One-SAR' approach. All of those involved demonstrated outstanding skills and cooperation. Those on the water demonstrated exceptional courage. Without the assistance of the shore-based support, this rescue would not have been successful.

**Bruce Joy, Mark Cannell, Russell Clarke, and Steve Oliver, from the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust.**

*For their efforts during the rescue of the solo sailor from the yacht Frolic III, which was being battered by a storm, on 3 March 2012.*

The exceptional teamwork of Bruce, Mark, Steve and Russell ensured that the rescue was carried out safely in the very dangerous storm conditions.

**Russell (Sherp) Tucker, from NZ Police, for his services to search and rescue in New Zealand.**

This certificate acknowledges Sherp's long standing involvement in the SAR sector, particularly in the Tasman District, and his passion, commitment, and dedication to find the lost and missing.

**Gerard Prins, from NZ Police, for his services to search and rescue in New Zealand.**

This certificate recognises Gerry's long-standing involvement in the SAR sector, particularly his efforts in establishing the current governance arrangements for the SAR sector in New Zealand. ●

*The NZSAR Council and Secretariat congratulates all our 2012 winners.*

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

Go to [www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz). You will find more information about the awards along with details on the simple nominations process.

**Nominations for the 2013 awards close on 31 January 2014**



The NZSAR Awards ceremony was held in the Grand Hall – Parliament

## Congratulations

SAR people have once again been recognised for their contribution to New Zealand through their services to search and rescue in the latest Queen's Birthday honours list, all becoming Members of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

**Don Bogie**

Don started as a mountaineer with the DOC team at Aoraki in the summer of 1978/79, and in recent years has been instrumental in implementing systems for measuring avalanche risk.

**Sergeant Dene Duthie**

Dene is Auckland's Police SAR coordinator and is actively involved in DVI and SAR. He was appointed to Police's National Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) in 2003. He has been in charge of SAR for the three Auckland Districts since 2004 and a national SAR course instructor for 10 years.

**Senior Constable Phil Simonds**

Phil is a member of the Canterbury Police SAR squad. Like Dene he was also appointed to Police DVI in 2003 and has been involved in numerous DVI responses since then. He has also been a national SAR course instructor for 15 years and is the current course manager.

**David Withers**

David has been involved in LandSAR for half a century. Helping to set up Wairoa LandSAR in 1963, he has been involved in over 200 multiple day searches.

**Queens Service Medal**

**Barry McLean**

Barry McLean has been "on the beach" as a member of Surf Lifesaving New Zealand for 65 years. He has completed a number of dramatic surf rescues. He is also a surf lifesaving competitor, coach, instructor, administrator and judge.

*The Governor-General recently held the investiture ceremonies for the people honoured at New Year. Amongst them were:*

**Sir Bob Harvey** – Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit  
Sir Bob has given 58 years of service to Surf Life Saving New Zealand to date. Dubbed "the first knight of lifesaving", he is the first person to receive a knighthood for Surf Life Saving.

**Dave Saunders** – Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit  
Dave has been an active search and rescue volunteer since 1960 and was first appointed as a Land Search and Rescue Advisor to the New Zealand Police in 1973.

**Ross Gordon** – Queens Service Order Companion  
Ross has been involved in SAR for over 33 years and started his search and rescue experience as a 13 year-old in Horowhenua Search and Rescue in 1972. ●

## ● SAR IN ACTION

### It's A Family Affair

*“When I get a call from Police to assist in a search I can look around one room and confirm at least four members will respond before I hang up!” Josh Spence says this is just one of the many bonuses of being part of a family of LandSAR volunteers.*

Alongside his father and two of his brothers, Josh makes up a third of the small rural Omarama LandSAR unit. Although Josh has recently moved to Dunedin, joining the local group there, he still gets back home with the family and involves himself in Omarama LandSAR's activities.

Josh's brothers, Ben and Jonathan, believe being part of a family involved in LandSAR has given them opportunities from a young age, as they enjoy a sense of trust that comes from growing up together.

“Even though we do so much together, we all still have different experiences, and so we share with each other. When someone comes back from a course they share what they learnt and, in doing so, help keep the rest of our skills up to date with any new methods of search and rescue. We also tend to talk about the job for a while, even after a debrief, which means we will learn from each other's decisions, good or bad,” says Jonathan.

Their father Andrew agrees: “We each have slightly different skill sets and focuses, different strengths and weaknesses, so as we work together we learn from each other's strengths. There are already strong bonds and good channels of communication and understanding.”

He says family occasions can often turn into an informal training session: “We'll start discussing, practicing and using various SAR related skills and equipment, such as tracking techniques, radios, GPS devices and ropes.”

The men's abilities are reflected in their roles with Omarama LandSAR, where between them they handle a number of jobs from advisor, coordinator, team leader and Police liaison through to Incident Management support. They are often also a big part of the initial planning, and all have valuable input into the reflex tasking.



At a recent SAREX – left to right – Andrew, Jonathan, Josh and Ben Spence

*“We are a family of hunters, so we enjoy getting out into the bush and tussock, and trying as best we can to find a missing person.”*

Of course Andrew says there is some frustration when an incident occasionally clashes with a family activity.

“But my wife Chris points out that if the boot was on the other foot she would be grateful to have someone searching for one of her family members. One search happened on one of my younger son's birthdays, and he was very disappointed at the time, but he appreciated that I was out helping others. Plus he helped deliver supplies up to us. He too hopes to be involved when he's older.”

The benefits, though, definitely outweigh those disappointments. Josh says although there have been times when family plans have gone down the drain as soon as the phone rings, everyone swings into action.

The Spence family is obviously very good at what they do – all four members were involved in the search and subsequent recovery of David Palmer in the Ahuriri Valley in May 2012. Their outstanding efforts were recognised nationally, receiving LandSAR's 2012 'Supreme Award'.

The family know they don't do it alone; all credit the other members of Omarama LandSAR and the wider LandSAR groups with helping grow their knowledge and skills, and supporting them into LandSAR from a young age.

They all talk of the camaraderie they enjoy, the contribution of LandSAR volunteers and the enjoyment of a job well done, best summed up by Andrew.

“I am proud to see some of my sons being actively involved and contributing substantially in their own right. It gives a different perspective on life to be doing something to help others without any reward other than the satisfaction of giving your best and seeing the gratefulness and relief of those you are out there to assist.” ●



Ben (left) and Josh (right) standing on a ridge with the Ahuriri Valley behind them

Ben, who has been involved with the unit for three years, says apart from it being a good way to keep out of trouble, the whole family is motivated by being able to help others when they need it.

## A Mixture Of Teamwork And Good Skills

Regardless of whether it's the vessel crew that rescues the distressed fisherman at sea, or it's the support vessels, shore-based on-scene coordination, the Incident Controller or an observer sitting on top of a hill, every role is vital to ensure a successful outcome. And when people come together from a variety of organisations with that understanding, it turns what could have been the tragic death of two fishermen into an award-winning search and rescue.

Central District Police SAR coordinator, Sergeant Bill Nicholson, says the rescue of two fishermen 700m off the South Taranaki Coast, near Opunake in February last year – in atrocious conditions – is a demonstration of such insight.

*“That night we had around 20 people from five different organisations actively involved in the search and rescue operation (SAROP), along with another four organisations assisting. Three vessels were deployed with experienced crew on board who relied heavily on those people onshore for communications, local knowledge (regarding the whereabouts of uncharted reefs) and for simple things like lighting, which became a vital guiding tool.”*

Effective communication was another key lesson. Mt Taranaki police are unable to talk directly to surface assets from New Plymouth so they rely heavily on Coastguard South Taranaki's (CST) mobile communications truck. On this night it proved invaluable. CST's Gary Darnell worked effectively as the on-scene coordinator from this comms vehicle, stationed at the top of the Opunake lookout. The truck is fitted with an excellent comms suite, including a Police radio that was installed to help overcome the identified radio communication issues with Incident Command.

Gary set up communications between the Incident Controller, based in New Plymouth, and all the vessels involved. He also equipped Opunake Boating Club member Sean Lutteral with a handheld VHF radio to help safely guide the rescue vessel to the two stricken men.

“Sean offered to take it to the top of the cliffs. He relayed his local expert knowledge of the bay and of the dangerous underwater reefs to the rescue vessel, boosting their confidence. He was also fundamental in helping navigate them to the boat needing help,” says Gary.

*Sean (an observer from the Opunake Boating Club) came on the radio as a local and introduced himself. Having someone locally that knew that area and could give us a way in boosted our levels hugely, unbelievably.*

*– John Linn, Coastguard South  
Taranaki Boat Skipper*

Good judgement calls were another feature of this incident, in particular the Opunake Surf Life Saving Club (OSLSC) IRB crew's decision to turn around.

OSLSC crew member Kim Danz was on board that night. “When conditions became too severe we had to say ‘this is far enough’. Our boat was at the edge of its limit in those conditions. The biggest problem for IRB's is they're inflatable, so wind isn't much of a friend, and blowing offshore is a risk for us. If it blows onshore we can swim, but offshore's not much fun,” he says. A call that has been applauded by everyone involved. Bill Nicholson says part of a successful rescue is taking calculated risks.

“We will never criticise a search asset's decision to pull out if conditions are beyond them. The safety of the rescuers is the highest priority. They made the right decision,” says Bill.

John Linn, skipper of the Coastguard South Taranaki vessel, says they reassessed the risk factors a number of times during the search, but continued because the system had put in place the necessary support.

*“Being out there by ourselves is a pretty scary situation. Whatever gave us support emotionally was really important: the command vehicle; knowing the Marine Ops Centre people were listening on Channel 16; the TracPlus set up constantly updating our position; and, of course, Sean guiding us with land-based lights. Plus when we heard the Cape rescue vessel was there to back us up it gave us more confidence.”*

John reiterates the importance of knowing your limits and using the team around you, adding they also took on board some lessons learnt.

**INSIGHT**

*"We knew we needed to be there as a backup for peace of mind. It's about getting the job done, and the more people out there, the more peace of mind everybody has. The job was done successfully and that was the most important thing."*  
 – Frank Goodin, Cape Rescue Skipper

I was a bit concerned about my own ability to helm the vessel as well as try and be on-scene command, as I had had a busy day prior to getting this call. One of the things we'd learnt from a previous incident was when you are helming the vessel, that's all you can do in those conditions. So one of my crew took the helm, meaning I could look after radios and command the vessel without actually having to helm the boat."

Incident controller Jeff McGarth says although this was an extremely successful rescue there is always something you could do better.

"The Incident Management Team (IMT) was geographically separated, but we had good communication links. In hindsight, a local advisor joining me would have been a good idea."

Gary Darnell says they also picked up some good insights. "Next time we will access a unique piece of equipment based at New Plymouth – namely a WW2 mobile spotlight that would have easily lit the stricken boat up like a beacon. And, in hindsight, we should have put strobes on the rescued people's life jackets in the event of a mishap getting back to shore."

*"All in all a job extremely well done in what was one of the most challenging rescues in Central District's recent history,"*  
 says Bill Nicholson. •

**INSIGHTS**

- Good teamwork recognises the value each role has in achieving a successful outcome.
- Plan ahead – find solutions to issues such as problematic communication coverage before an incident. This paid dividends that night.
- Gather a good team of local advisors around you.
- Create an environment where others have confidence to decline a job or abort in the interests of safety.
- Use the lessons learnt from previous incidents to do a better job.
- Share all the 'in hindsight' insights no matter how small.

A selection of the crew and members of the organisations involved in the Opunake rescue, receiving the Certificate of Achievement from Hon. Michael Woodhouse and NZSAR Chair Martin Matthews.



# Prevention Update

## Safety videos released

All three Safety Codes are now available on video. While the Outdoor Safety Code has been available in the digital format for a number of years, the Boating and Water Safety Codes have only recently been produced.

The videos, which outline the Codes' simple steps, use imagery relating to various adventurous activities that illustrate the importance of being fully prepared before people head out. The videos support a portfolio of products, including posters and banners, all aimed at getting these safety messages across.

You can watch the videos on Adventuresmart:  
[www.adventuresmart.org.nz/resources/safety-codes.asp](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/resources/safety-codes.asp).

Once you've enjoyed them we'd appreciate you passing the link onto anyone who can help raise awareness of these important safety messages.



# Training Update

## CIMS 4 course now available 'fees free' to SAR People

The new SAR ACE funding model has begun offering 'fees free' courses for SAR people.

Following a review of sector training last year, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) created an annual ring-fenced funding pool within the Adult and Community Education appropriation, called "Search and Rescue ACE". It will be used by TEC to purchase SAR Short Award training for SAR people. Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) is currently the sole approved training provider.

The two CIMS 4 (Coordinated Incident Management System) courses are now available and will be delivered at no cost to the volunteer or the SAR organisation. There is a 2 and 3 day version which will provide advanced instruction of CIMS, the incident controller's responsibilities at an incident, and the role and function of the operations manager, the planning/intelligence manager, and the logistics manager.

In line with the intention to more closely align training with sector needs, and train people from our sector as well as other related groups – side by side, the CIMS 4 course has also been made available to Emergency Management (EM) personnel; a positive development given SAR and EM personnel could well end up working together.

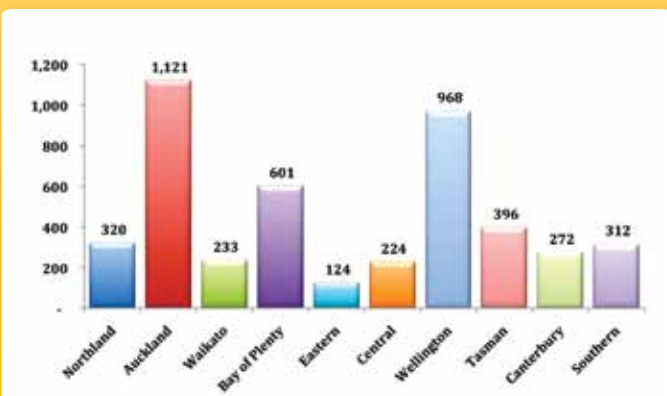
These courses should be of particular interest to SAR volunteers, and it is expected Police, LandSAR, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ and AREC people will take up the opportunity to upskill when the course is conducted in their area.

For more details on the CIMS 4 courses please contact Lisa Mellish at TPP: [lisam@tpp.ac.nz](mailto:lisam@tpp.ac.nz)

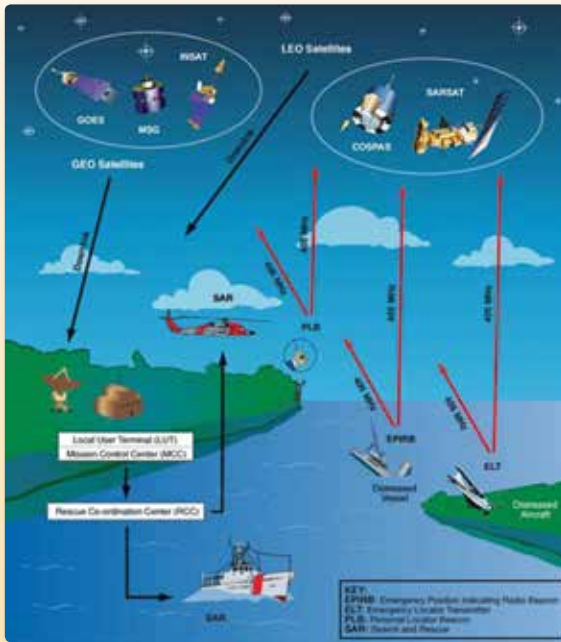
# STATS ATTACK

## Police Involvement In Marine Search and Rescue Incidents – By District

Over the last six years (2005/06-2011/12) the NZ Police has been involved in a total of 4,571 marine-based SAR incidents. This graph breaks down these incidents by each of the Police SAR Districts. It is not surprising that the largest number of marine incidents occur in the Auckland and Wellington Districts, which both have large populations with easy access to large harbours for recreational marine activities.



## ◉ SAR ORGANISATIONS



### Cospas-Sarsat

Both a system and an organisation, Cospas-Sarsat uses a network of satellites in both low-altitude earth orbit (LEOSAR) and geostationary orbit (GEOSAR), providing distress alert and homing data to search and rescue authorities around the world. The system also comprises ground receiving stations as well as control and coordination centres.

The use of satellites to detect and locate special-purpose radio beacons (EPIRB at sea, ELT in the air and PLB on land) reduces the time required to alert the appropriate authorities and the time taken to locate people in distress.

When a beacon is activated instruments on board satellites in GEOSAR and LEOSAR detect the signal it transmits. Ground receiving stations, referred to as Local Users Terminals (LUTs), which receive and process data from the satellites then link this data to Mission Control Centres (MCCs) where it is processed and the position of the beacon calculated. The MCC then forwards the alert to Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs), Search and Rescue Points Of Contacts (SPOCs) or other MCCs. In New Zealand's case they are received at the Rescue Coordination Centre operations room based in Avalon, Lower Hutt.

Only beacons operating at 406 MHz are compatible with the Cospas-Sarsat System. 406MHz is a digital frequency able to offer enhanced security, provide more comprehensive information and reduce the number of false alarms.

The Cospas-Sarsat programme is an inter-governmental organisation established in 1988 by Canada, France, the former USSR, and the USA. Administered by the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat, there are now 43 countries and organisations formally associated with the Programme (of which New Zealand is one) that actively participate in the management and the operation of the Cospas-Sarsat system.

Since its inception, the system has been used in thousands of SAR events and has been responsible for the saving of tens of thousands of lives world-wide. New Zealand is a major user of the system with over 40,000 beacons in commercial and recreational use and several hundred alerts being received each year. For more information go to:

[www.cospas-sarsat.org](http://www.cospas-sarsat.org) ●



## International SAR From Nepal To New Zealand

A personal locator beacon registered in New Zealand played a key role in the rescue of climber 6,000 metres up an eastern Nepalese mountain range. The beacon was activated by the New Zealand Anidesha Chuli Expedition whilst climbing a previously unclimbed 6,800m mountain called Anidesha Chuli/the White Wave in the Nepal Himalaya.

The expedition team of four had their plans abruptly halted when one of the climbers fell 90 metres. He sustained a serious knock to the head and concussion at approximately 6,450m up the range. His climbing partner managed to get him 500 metres back down to their camp. They then activated the beacon, alerting the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) and SAR authorities in India.

RCCNZ's Chris Henshaw was on duty when the alert came through. He says the team had registered their beacon and left behind the most comprehensive expedition details he has ever seen, ensuring RCCNZ was able to initiate a comprehensive SAR response.

*“The details were brilliant. As well as the NZ emergency contacts, we (RCCNZ) knew the timetable for the expedition and climb, the expedition's Nepalese guide's contact details, the medical stores they had, and their insurance company's details. All the notifications necessary were there.”*

This meant RCCNZ were able to work with the family, the insurance company and the New Zealand Honorary Consul in Nepal to arrange a helicopter to evacuate the two climbers back to Kathmandu. The injured climber and his climbing companion were admitted to Kathmandu Hospital.

Both climbers have subsequently been released from hospital and have returned to New Zealand. ●

## Duncan's Desk



Congratulations to all our 2012 NZSAR Award recipients. The extent of their rescues, commitment, professionalism and experience certainly demonstrates that New Zealanders are privileged to have such a healthy SAR sector (see story pages 1-2).

We had a high number of nominations this year, which reflects the growing stature of the awards. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Council has asked us to review the NZSAR Awards policy, so there may be some tweaks next year. We'll keep you posted on any changes.

It has also been great to see so many search and rescue people recognised via the Royal Honours system in the two lists announced this year. Dedicated SAR people make a huge difference to individuals, families and communities throughout New Zealand, so this positive and special recognition is richly deserved.

NZSAR is making good progress on a number of projects that require a number of agencies to work together to benefit the wider sector. Health and Safety is one example: because of the decentralised nature of our sector and the variability of the work, we need a collective solution that will meet our obligations while ensuring we don't affect our ability to conduct search and rescue – safely.

Carl has been working across a number of agencies to refine the draft mass rescue policy. Even though these incidents are a low probability they do have potential for very high consequences, so it is important we get this right. One thing that has become apparent is that the SAR response to a mass rescue will only be one of a wide range of responses by a wide range of agencies to the incident overall. We are now planning to test the mass rescue policy and plans with a series of desktop exercises in the coming months.

Phil has been busy visiting SAREXs around the country and planning the sector wide SAREX programme for the 2013/14 year. From the reports I have seen and heard, there is a lot of very good quality training going on. Phil has also worked hard with Tai Poutini Polytechnic and others on the arrangements to allow CIMS 4 to be delivered 'fees free'

for SAR people who require advanced CIMS skills (see story page 4). Strong knowledge of CIMS is crucial to good search and rescue and it also makes us better able to assist during other emergency situations. Phil's next big project is to deliver the pilot SAR Managers course in late June. This training represents a marked step change that we hope will create a good knowledge platform for future Police SAR coordinators.

The NZSAR Council has also asked the Secretariat to develop a number of new projects to advance Council goals. Many of these are now in the pipeline which, no doubt, will keep us occupied over the winter months.

*Duncan Ferner*

*NZSAR Secretariat Manager*

[d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz)

### Helicopter Search & Rescue Conference

The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter will be hosting a helicopter search and rescue conference, in Sydney on 23-24 October 2013

Planning is well underway and one of the key elements will be the networking opportunities for emergency service helicopter crews to gather and meet.

Please contact Steve Leahy for more information  
[sleahy@lifesaver.org.au](mailto:sleahy@lifesaver.org.au)



## CALENDAR

SAREXs and SAR training - see

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

- **Wednesday 10 – Friday 12 July: Harbour Masters/Harbour Management Special Interest Group**
- **Thursday 22 August: Combined NZSAR Council and Consultative Committee Meeting**
- **Friday 13 – Sunday 15 September: Coastguard Conference**
- **Sunday 3 – Tuesday 5 November: Water Safety NZ Conference**
- **Wednesday 23 – Thursday 24 October: Helicopter SAR Conference, Sydney, Australia**

## WEBSITES

[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz) – New Zealand Search and Rescue Council. This newsletter is available as a PDF on this website.

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

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

[www.metservice.com](http://www.metservice.com) – Comprehensive weather reports

[www.cospas-sarsat.org](http://www.cospas-sarsat.org) – International Cospas-Sarsat Programme

[www.landsar.org.nz](http://www.landsar.org.nz) – LandSAR New Zealand