

Search and Rescue Operations

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Policy statement and principles

What

The New Zealand Government provides a National Search and Rescue Plan (referred to as the '[Operational Framework](#)') for New Zealand to coordinate search and rescue (SAR) services to meet both our domestic needs and international commitments.

This Operational Framework establishes the national framework for overall development, coordination, and improvement of search and rescue services within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR).

Police plays a key role as both a lead and a contributor to the Operational Framework.

Why

The intention of a SAR operation is to save lives, prevent or minimise injuries, and remove persons from situations of peril by locating the persons, providing for initial medical care or other needs, and then delivering them to a place of safety. The New Zealand Government has ensured that SAR services are implemented by incorporating appropriate requirements into New Zealand legislation to meet both its national and international obligations.

The New Zealand statutes that pertain directly to the provision of SAR services are the [Civil Aviation Act 1990](#) and the [Maritime Transport Act 1994](#). The Minister of Transport, through both the aforementioned acts, is responsible for the organisation and conduct of particular SAR activities within the NZSRR.

Other New Zealand statutes that relate to the provision of SAR services include:

- [Policing Act 2008](#)
- [Coroners Act 2006](#).

Collectively, New Zealand's international obligations and these Acts provide the mandate for the establishment and provision of search and rescue services within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.

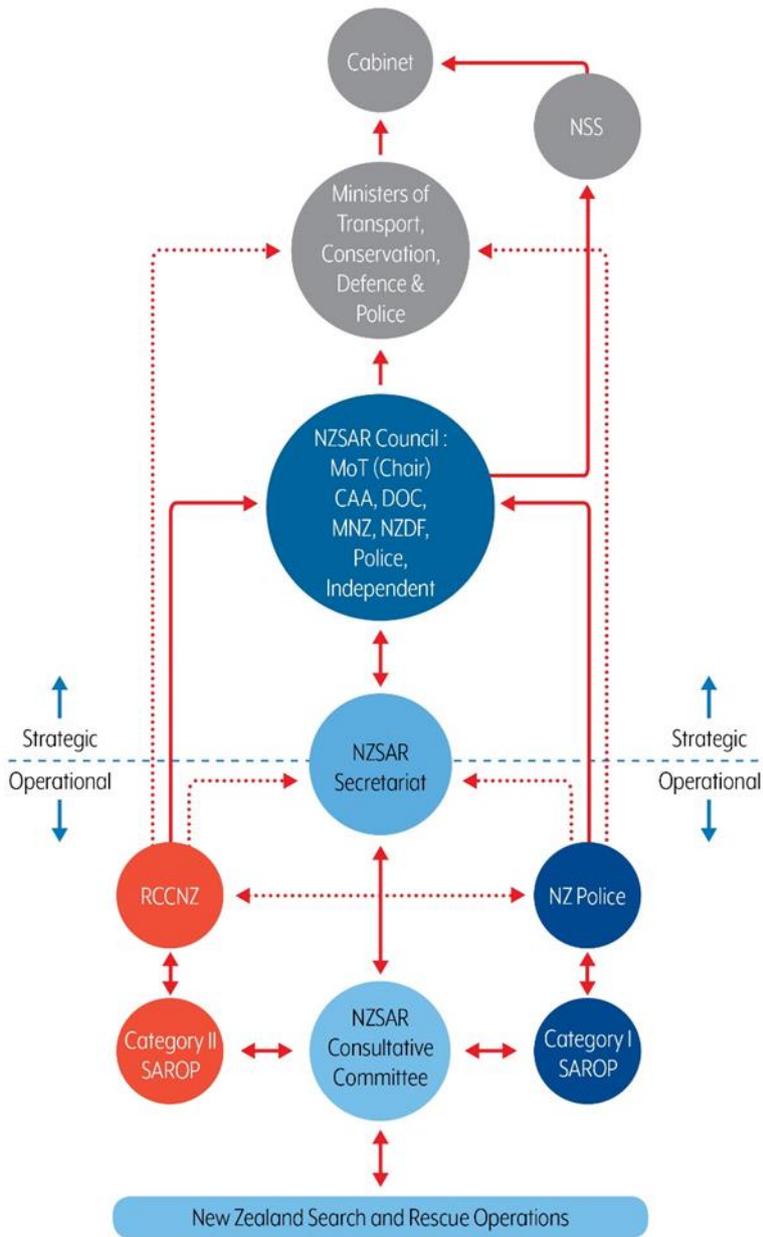
New Zealand Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR)

By international agreements, the world is divided into Search and Rescue Regions (SRRs). The NZSRR covers over thirty million square kilometres of ocean expanses and relatively small, isolated land masses. The NZSRR contains a number of Pacific Islands and part of the Antarctic Treaty Area. This area of responsibility is roughly one twelfth of the world's oceanic surface.

How

This diagram illustrates the structure of New Zealand's SAR system and the strategic relationships. Further details about the various components of the Police SAR system are contained within the chapter.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...



Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Who and when

Who

The New Zealand Search and Rescue Council (NZSAR) provides the national strategic governance to the New Zealand search and rescue sector. In keeping with the Council's high level strategic function, its membership is drawn from the chief executives of the Ministry of Transport (chair), New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force, Maritime NZ, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Department of Conservation, and an independent member representing the non-government sector.

The Coordinating Authorities have responsibility for the operational coordination of SAR operations. The Coordinating Authorities work in close cooperation and coordinate the activities of the organisations, groups, and individual assets that respond to search and rescue operations.

The Coordinating Authorities rely on many other agencies and assets to conduct SAR operations. In order for SAR operations to be effective, they are conducted in accordance with established policies, practices and procedures. These policies, practices and procedures are contained across a variety of documentation including:

- IAMSAR Manual
- New Zealand Coordinated Incident Management System ([CIMS](#))
- [Operational Framework](#) for the NZ Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR)
- This (SAR) chapter of the Police Manual
- New Zealand's Search and Rescue Guidelines
- SAR Plans of Operation (as the collective name for all individual specific SAR readiness plans, standard operating procedures, and aides-memoir).

For any search and Rescue Operation (SAROP) there can only be one Coordinating Authority who is responsible for the management and coordination of the operation. The current responsibilities are as follows:

- New Zealand Police are the Coordinating Authority for all Category I SAROPs in New Zealand.
- The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) is the Coordinating Authority for all Category II SAROPs.

Category I (Category 1): A SAROP coordinated at the local level; including land operations, subterranean operations, river, lake and inland waterway operations, and close-to-shore¹ marine operations².

Category II (Category 2): A SAROP coordinated at the national level; including, operations associated with missing aircraft or aircraft in distress, and off-shore marine operations within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region³.

A full definition of SAR coordinating responsibilities can be found in the [Operational Framework](#) for the NZSRR.

¹ The nature of 'close-to-shore' will vary according to the availability of local resources and the need to task national assets. Typically such operations will be within NZ Territorial Waters (12 nautical miles).

² Category I SAROPs typically require the use of local personnel and resources and can be carried out efficiently and effectively at the local level.

³ Category II SAROPs typically require the use of national or international resources and may involve coordination with other States.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

[CIMS](#) establishes the framework of consistent principles, structures, functions, processes and terminology that agencies can apply in an emergency response including SAR events.

The purpose of CIMS is to achieve effective coordinated incident management across responding agencies by:

- establishing common structures, functions and terminology used by agencies in incident management, yet within a framework that is flexible, modular and scalable so that it can be tailored to circumstances specific to any level or type of incident; and
- enabling agencies to develop their own processes, procedures and training for the execution of CIMS.

New Zealand Police Search and Rescue Organisation

The organisation of SAR within Police is at a national, district and area level. Within each Police District, the District Commander appoints a District SAR Manager (senior sergeants, inspectors or above) to administer and supervise SAR.

National Service Level Agreements (SLA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) agreements support the national structure and provide direction and guidance on the strategic and operational principals of the lead agency roles and the supporting volunteer agencies comment and capabilities.

Body recovery

Police have the legal responsibility for all body recovery activities in New Zealand in accordance with the Coroners Act 2006.

- During a Category I SAROP, Police is the Coordinating Authority and will handle body recovery as part of the SAROP.
- During a Category II SAROP, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand is the Coordinating Authority and will manage all SAROP activity but, where practicable, will defer all matters relating to any subsequent body recovery activity to Police.

Mass Rescue Operations

A Mass Rescue Operation (MRO) is a low-probability, high-consequence event that will require a response to provide immediate assistance to a large number of people who are in distress. The definition of a MRO is:

- "For any Category I or II search and rescue (SAR) incident, a mass rescue operation (MRO) is one that involves the need for immediate assistance to large numbers of persons in distress, such that capabilities normally available to search and rescue authorities are inadequate"

A MRO incident is a nationally significant SAR operation, which may require the activation and involvement of the National Security System. Further information about MROs can be found in the NZSAR MRO Operational Policy.

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ)

The RCCNZ is responsible for coordinating operations associated with missing aircraft or aircraft in distress, and off-shore marine operations within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region⁴.

These are termed 'Category II' incidents. RCCNZ also assists with other rescues when required and provide SAR services 24 hours a day.

⁴ Category II SAROPs typically require the use of national or international resources and may involve coordination with other States.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

When

The Coordinating Authorities are responsible for preparing comprehensive readiness plans for the conduct of SAR operations in their respective areas of responsibility. These plans should be based on agreements between the Coordinating Authorities and the providers of SAR facilities or other support for SAR operations.

Plans are intended to be valuable aids for time-critical search planning and SAR coordination processes. The Coordinating Authorities should develop plans that:

- meet the requirements of applicable international SAR manuals
- cover all potential SAR emergency scenarios likely to occur within the NZSRR, or within the Police district or area of the NZSRR relevant to that plan
- are based on identified SAR risks and analysis of SAR trends
- are reviewed and updated regularly
- are readily available to SAR coordinators in convenient form for quick and easy use.

Police must have prepared plans at a national and district level to meet the demands of a SAR event. Included in this preparation is the surety that organisations supporting Police at a district level, i.e. LANDSAR, are connected, competent and capable of delivering.

See: [Guidelines for the preparation of SAR Readiness plans](#).

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Abbreviations and definitions

This table shows abbreviations and definitions relevant to SAR.

Term/abbreviation	Explanation/definition
AREC	Amateur Radio Emergency Communications .
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand .
Cave rescue controller	An expert in cave SAR skills appointed to take charge of the rescue at the scene.
CIMS	Coordinated Incident Management System . The model of command and control used in SAROPs. CIMS provides a structured approach for managing emergency and SAR incidents. See the SAR Incident Action Plan(s).
CGNZ	Coastguard New Zealand
Coordinating Authority	The Coordinating Authority is the agency or body responsible for the overall conduct of the Search and Rescue Operation. The Coordinating Authority will lead and manage the operation. Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand are the recognised Coordinating Authorities in New Zealand.
Incident Control Point (ICP)	The location where the Incident Controller and, where established, the Incident Management Team provide overall direction of response activities in an emergency situation. See CIMS .
Incident Controller (IC)	The IC is responsible for the overall management of the incident. See Incident Action Plans .
Incident Management Team (IMT)	The IMT is established under the CIMS model. See CIMS .
IAMSAR	International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue. A SAR manual jointly produced by the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Maritime Organisation.
IMTEX	Incident Management Team Exercise - usually tabletop.
Land SAR NZ	New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Inc.
Logistics manager (LOGM)	Responsible for providing facilities, services and materials in support of management of an incident. Member of the IMT. See: CIMS .
Maritime Operations Centre (MOC)	RCCNZ's communication centre. The Maritime Radio network Channel 16.
Mass Rescue Operation (MRO)	A SAROP that involves the need for immediate assistance to large numbers of persons in distress.
National Crisis Management Centre (NCCMC)	Based in the basement of the 'Beehive' at Parliament and facilitates the Central Government crisis management arrangements and offers inter-agency and scalable operability to deal with any type of emergency.
Operations Manager (OPSM)	The Operations Manager activates and supervises operational organisational elements as needed or in accordance with the IAP and then directs its execution. See CIMS . While the Incident Management Team (IMT) includes an operations manager, the higher level coordinating unit does not - this acts in support of rather than directs IMT.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

On Scene Coordinator (OSC)	A person, appointed by the IC during a SAROP to take charge at the scene. For marine operations usually the skipper of one of the rescue vessels. In a Category II search the OSC is a resource to the RCCNZ and will be SAR trained.
Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)	A PCBU is a 'person conducting a business or an undertaking'. It is a broad concept used throughout the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) to describe all types of modern working arrangements, which we commonly refer to as 'business'.
Planning function	The Planning Manager oversees Action planning, Long-term Planning and Contingency Planning, and contributes to the Incident Action Plan. See: CIMS .
Intelligence function	Intelligence relates to the collection, analysis and distribution of information. The Intelligence Manager is responsible for the Information Collection Plan, Situation Reports and contributes to the Incident Action Plan. See: CIMS .
Police Liaison Officer (PLO)	The appointed Police employee to liaise between an ICP (such as the RCCNZ) and Police staff.
National Command Coordination Centre (NCCC)	The NCCC is located in the Response and Operations Group at PNHQ. When activated it supports operations nationally.
Police SAR Squad	A group of Police employees in each district trained and competent to command, control and support a SAROP including being deployed into remote and difficult terrain and in marine and water based environments, and includes Police Maritime Units. Police SAR Squad members are trained in Disaster Victim Identification .
SAR Officer (SARO)	An officer of the RCCNZ trained to coordinate SAR incidents. Reporting an incident to them fulfils the obligation under the Maritime Transport Act 1994 to report maritime incidents/accidents to Maritime New Zealand.
SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC)	The role the SARO takes during a SAR Operation.
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Experts in SAR and other areas. Police may call on advice from SME. SME must be consulted early in a SAROP (if relevant).
SLSNZ	Surf Life Saving New Zealand
RCCNZ	The Rescue Co-ordination Centre New Zealand, RCCNZ is part of Maritime New Zealand and is responsible for co-ordinating Category II operations.
Relay station	A base established to relay communications.
Rescue Coordinator	The person appointed by the OPSM to take charge of a rescue at the scene.
RIOD	Real Time Intelligence for Operational Deployment – a shared platform that supports an integrated national common operating platform.
RNZPC	Royal New Zealand Police College. The Police training establishment centrally sited in Porirua City has teaching sites throughout New Zealand.
Staging area	A designated location where resources are gathered before being sent to the incident area. Managed by Response and Operations.
SAR	Search and Rescue.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

SAREX	A SAR training exercise. A planned training event often involving several response agencies.
SAROP	A search and rescue operation (SAROP) is an operation undertaken by a Coordinating Authority to locate and retrieve persons missing or in distress. The intention of the operation is to save lives, prevent or minimise injuries and remove persons from situations of peril by locating the persons, providing for initial medical care or other needs and then delivering them to a place of safety. For Police, a SAROP may extend to the recovery of deceased persons including from difficult terrain and/or conditions.
Search team	A portion of a search party (usually four persons) allocated a specific task within the overall search plan. There may be any number of search teams in the search party.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Operational Framework for the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region

See [`Operational framework for the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region`](#).

Please refer to the NZSAR [website](#). This site includes considerable information about SAR in New Zealand, including policy agreed between SAR partners, operational documents and templates and a resource database of SAR assets.

New Zealand Police Search and Rescue Organisation

The organisation of SAR within Police comprises Police at national, district and area levels. Within each Police district, the District Commander appoints a District SAR Manager (senior sergeant, inspector or above) to administer and supervise SAR.

In the event of a SAROP, a currently qualified Police employee is the IC. As a SAROP progresses a trained SAR squad member should be appointed IC. The IC leads an Incident Management Team to manage the SAROP and must have completed the defined course of training for this (see [District Commanders responsibilities](#)). The minimum qualification as an IC is for that member to have completed training to CIMS4 and having completed initial search management course being Manage the Initial Response (MTIR Land) and Manage the Initial Response (MTIR Marine). Utilising trained staff in SAR activity ensures that the right tools are employed, the right persons involved and the risks as they relate to search principal of saving lives are minimised. See: [District Commander's responsibilities](#).

See also Comms Centre [`Master Standard Operating Procedures`](#).

National Coordinator: Training & Development: SAR

The National Training & Development coordinator: SAR is part of Operations Group at PNHQ, and performs a liaison function for District Commanders at a national level with government and non-government agencies involved in search and rescue.

The National Coordinator: SAR provides a resource and advisory service for Police districts and, on request, must provide an input into training for search and rescue and disaster victim identification procedures.

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ)

Maritime New Zealand maintains and operates the RCCNZ which is the co-ordinating authority for Category II SAROPs, and for managing beacon registrations and the response to distress beacon activations.

The IC must consider advising the RCCNZ of any coastal marine SAR operation. RCCNZ are available for advice in Category I operations. It must be specified what advice is sought (e.g. Search Area Determination).

While the transfer of a Police Category I search may be discussed personally with the RCCNZ SMC, a formal record of the request must be submitted using the prescribed form. This is available in Police forms, also in Annex 5. This form is also used for the transfer of responsibility from the RCC (Cat II to a Cat I).

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

RCCNZ SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC/Incident controller)

The RCCNZ SMC:

- in a Category II operation, provides communications and directs how they should be used
- advises the Director CAA/ Maritime NZ when to suspend/terminate a Category II operation (they should consult Police on the decision, taking into account Police action yet to be taken)
- retains overall responsibility until the missing party is found, the SAROP is suspended or it has been determined coordination will be transferred to Police (e.g. for a body recovery)
- Is available 24/7 to advise Police on request of marine SAR planning methods, and provide specialist marine advice.

District Commanders responsibilities

The District Commander must:

- appoint a suitable Police employee as District SAR Coordinator to be responsible for the administration and coordination of SAR activities within their district - see [Position Description Sergeant: SAR/DVI](#)
- maintain the capability to command, control and support SAROPs by having Police employees trained in SAR and CIMS See [Requirements for SAR Management diagram](#)
- maintain a pool of Police employees (Police SAR squad members) competent and available to be deployed into remote and difficult terrain and water based and marine environments, including for the purposes of Disaster Victim Identification;
- ensure that SAR squad members are issued with personal equipment and clothing for SAR purposes and to protect them from any harm that may be caused or may arise out of those hazards - a recommended list is itemised [here](#)
- ensure that SAR responsibilities are included in the performance appraisal process – see Specialist Squad policy
- approve a decision to suspend a SAROP (as outlined in the [Operational Framework](#) for the NZSRR)
- initiate and support liaison with SAR resources and partners (e.g. Land SAR and Coastguard) (see '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter)
- ensure the IMT seeks advice from relevant SME early in a SAROP (if required)
- where a volunteer is killed or injured during a SAR operation or training, as well as meeting organisational and Health and Safety requirements, report the facts as a notifiable incident to the National Manager: Response and Operations as soon as practicable. LandSAR must also be notified.
- ensure that the district has an up-to-date SAR DMP and SAR response plan which:
 - must have sufficient trained staff available for SAR response covering all call outs and operational responses
 - must include contingency planning if local Police SAR staff are unable to respond
 - may include utilising neighbouring SAR or other Police
- ensure a suitable on-call response is maintained that enables a trained IC to be appointed to manage SAROPs – refer to "[Requirements for SAR Management](#)"
- ensure that members of SAR squads are called upon when SAR assistance is required
- ensure that the National Response and Operations Group Duty officer at PNHQ is advised where the following applies:
 - the SAROP involves a foreign national;
 - a change in coordinating authority occurs; and/or
 - NZDF assets are required or requested ; and/or
 - a fatality occurs:

Response and Operations at PNHQ will then determine the level of liaison both with RCCNZ, NZDF and in District

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

- ensure that the Police District, in any deployment or training, acting as the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), ensures that all attendees operate under the principles of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- ensure that the IC is fully aware of their responsibilities as a PCBU and the safety of Police staff, volunteers and general public
- ensure that all staff deployed are suitably trained and fit for purpose.

See also: '[Police exercises](#)' in the Police Manual.

District Commander's responsibilities for SAR training

The District Commander must:

- support training and development of SAR resources and assets
- support the activities of Alpine Cliff Rescue teams by ensuring a liaison officer is assigned, providing transport for operations and providing regular training exercises involving no more than 10 days per year
- ensure that Police SAR squad members undergo regular training exercises totalling 12 days duration in each year per member. At least one training day must be utilised for training in Disaster Victim Identification procedures. Five of the training days of each squad member must be devoted to joint volunteer training initiatives.
- ensure SAR training records are kept
- where SAR squads are established, maintain a store and appoint suitable members to be in charge
- encourage SAR members to attend training exercises held in adjoining districts and SAR related courses arranged by other organisations (such attendance must be a district expense)
- conduct at least one Police controlled Category I SAR exercise annually (SAREX); both land and marine (districts with a large geographical spread or unique or individual areas of risk should hold more than one SAREX). See '[Training](#)' in this chapter. NZSAR are able to support SAR training
- by 30 June each year, forward a copy of proposed SAREX dates for the forthcoming financial year (including requests for SAREX air support from RNZAF) to the National SAR Coordinator at PNHQ
- by October each year provide the National SAR Coordinator at PNHQ training needs that might be met through NZSAR
- assign SAR staff, as subject matter experts, to direct or facilitate SAR courses managed by the RNZPC
- ensure that all external assets that maybe called upon for use either a training or operational deployment comply with the HSW Act 2015.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Requirements for SAR Management

Requirements for SAR Management									
	National SAR Course	Selected Core Training Courses	Selected Specialist Training	CIMS 4	Manage the Initial Response (Land)	Extended Search Planning (Land)	Marine SAR Technical	Manage the Marine Response	SAR Managers Course
Operational SAR Squad Members	✓	✓	✓						
SAR Incident Controller (Land)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
SAR Incident Controller (Marine)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
SAR Incident Controller – Extended Search (Land & Marine)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Review of extended and/or complex SAROPs

It is recommended that extended and/or complex SAR Operations are reviewed during the operation by a suitably qualified and experienced SAR Manager who has had no prior involvement with the search. The purpose of the review will be to ascertain whether the SAR arrangements, documentation and procedures utilised for the SAROP and its Incident Management Team (IMT) are sufficient, relevant and appropriate for the operation.

Suspending a SAROP

A search suspension is a difficult decision involving humanitarian considerations, and has a broad range of impacts. The approval to suspend resides at the executive level for both Category I and Category II searches.

When all avenues of SAR investigation and search have been exhausted and the missing person has not been found, the IC, having consulted with the IMT and specialist advisors (as to factors such as person profile, likely behaviours, survivability, risk to searchers) may recommend suspending a search.

All aspects of the SAR investigation and operation must be documented and collated by the IC. This must be peer-reviewed by a Police SAR Coordinator not involved in the SAROP (who may establish an IMT to assist in this review, and may include external expert advice, such as the RCCNZ).

Responsibilities for search suspension are as follows:

Type of Operation	Approver
Any Category I search	Police District Commander
Category II aeronautical search	Director Civil Aviation Authority
Category II land search	Director Maritime New Zealand
Category II maritime search	Director Maritime New Zealand

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

For instances where the SAR operation involved the activation of the National Security System, then the approver (Police Commissioner for the Police District Commander) must bring the decision to suspend to the relevant level of the NSS for approval to suspend.

Details on both review and suspension considerations can be found in the NZSAR [Operational Framework](#) for the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.

The Coroner must be consulted prior to suspension where it is thought a person is deceased.

Where possible, prior notification of the intention to suspend a search should be given to the Next of Kin (NoK) at least 24 hours before suspension is effected and media notified

See '[Family liaison](#)' in this chapter.

The recommendation to suspend a search must be referred to the District Commander or delegated person for a decision.

Factors to be addressed

Survivability of missing person(s), taking into account:

- time elapsed since the incident;
- environmental conditions;
- age, experience and physical condition of (potential) survivors;
- survival equipment available;
- studies or information relating to survival in similar circumstances.

Determination of survivability should be made by a suitably qualified and experienced medical professional.

Other factors to consider:

- Sustainability and availability of resources
- Political pressure to continue
- CIB involvement
- Staff welfare and safety.

Ante-mortem information must be gathered for each missing person.

Debriefing

Following a Category I operation, it is necessary to give volunteers and other agency representatives assisting Police an opportunity to review what took place. It is therefore important to debrief for significant Category I operations where improvements to SAR responses can be learned, inviting key personnel to attend. Such debriefs should be held within 21 days of the operation.

A SAR incident can involve many persons and there may be issues arising, which require a formal debriefing process.

A debrief should be held if a land SAR exceeds 300 hours (total time contributed), or marine SAR 50 hours, a loss of life has occurred (except for a suicide), or when directed to do so by a District Commander.

The debrief must be chaired by a senior Police employee, or other suitable person who has not been directly involved in the search.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Any SAR Support agency can request that Police conduct a debrief into a Category I operation. Should Police decline to run a debrief, the matter can be referred to the National Manager: Response and Operations Group at PNHQ.

The format of the debrief should follow the process in the '[Debriefs](#)' chapter.

A suggested two step model for participants, or participating agencies to discuss the SAROP/SAREX:

- **Firstly**, they identify those things that require improvement using the DESC model (**D**escribe what happened; **E**xplain the consequences; **S**uggest an alternate approach; explain the **C**onsequence, how the outcome would have been different if that alternate approach were followed).
- **Secondly**, they then identify those things that went well and that should be retained in any future SAROP/SAREX.

The debrief for a Category II operation is the responsibility of the RCCNZ. Police should also debrief personnel under their direction so that comment can be conveyed to the RCCNZ debrief. In appropriate cases, key personnel should attend both Police and the RCCNZ debriefs.

Note: Police transport, or reimbursement of travelling expenses, can be provided for volunteers attending debriefs.

Format of a formal debrief:

- a debrief should be chaired by a senior Police employee or other suitable person who did not have an active part in the search. A debrief should be run in a formal manner in this recommended format:
 - the chair commences the debrief by outlining the order
 - reports should be presented by the incident controller, planning intelligence, operations and logistics managers. Issues to be covered should include all phases of the SAROP
 - the team leaders from each team must be invited to report
 - resources such as the rescue helicopter personnel must be asked to comment
 - the debrief should cover the incident, call out, search and stand-down phases.

The written report should cover these points:

- Outline (what happened?)
- Key events (brief chronological abridged version of events)
- Key conditions (short statements such as experience, weather conditions, what eye witness saw)
- Contributing factors (anything else that may have contributed to the incident)
- Cause (what caused the incident to happen etc.)
- Recommendations (any changes to local or national policy regarding search procedures)
- Outcome (how the recommendations have been implemented/noted/ignored).

For significant incidents, a copy of the notes or written report from the debrief should be provided to the National Coordinator SAR at PNHQ and may be provided to NZSAR and to SAR partners. See the '[Debriefs](#)' chapter.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Operational roles and responsibilities

Initial reports to Communications Centre and local Police

Many missing person's cases will first be reported to a Communications Centre or to local Police. This table details the responsibilities in each case.

If the case is first reported to . . .	then. . .
a Communications Centre,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Communications Centre must take initial command and control of the situation in accordance with the provisions of Master Standard Operating Procedures (MSOPs) and District Mobilisation Plans (DMPs) until local command and control is established, and • the Communications Centre's supervising team leader must immediately inform senior district field supervisors of the situation and the area's on call SAR IC as per DMPs, and • consider the urgent deployment of a SAR asset (see the 'Police air operations' chapter which allows Comms to arrange this), and • if advised of a Category II SAROP by RCCNZ, advise the on call SAR member in the relevant District.
local Police (either on patrol or at a Police station),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the report taker must immediately notify the DCC or senior district field supervisor of the situation, the area's on call SAR IC as per DMPs and their Communications Centre.

Roles and responsibilities (CIMS)

See [CIMS](#).

SAROPS are supported by a toolkit of standard forms and worksheets. See '[NZSAR](#)' website.

Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)

A PCBU is a 'person conducting a business or an undertaking'. It's a broad concept used throughout the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) to describe all types of modern working arrangements, which we commonly refer to as 'business'.

Health and safety

Safe operations are essential. Good practice in terms of outdoor safety management must be applied in operations coordinated by Police.

The [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) (HSWA) provides a framework to protect workers and others from harm to their health, safety and welfare by eliminating or minimising risks arising from work. This encompasses work undertaken by Search and Rescue personnel (whether paid or volunteer) on behalf of the SAR Coordinating Authorities.

In keeping with the principles and the requirements of the HSWA, the SAR sector has a collaborative and collective approach to health and safety management.

Each SAR partner has a Health and Safety Policy developed in agreement with NZSAR and detailed in each Service Level agreement.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

The outdoor sector has developed guidelines for safe practice.

The [Education Outside the Classroom \(EOTC\) guidelines](#) on the Ministry of Education website outline current good practice in terms of risk management in the outdoors and should be applied as applicable, and adapted if necessary.

Pre-Qualification Safety Assessment

Prior to engagement of services, all companies (excluding Police and Defence) **must** undergo a Pre-qualification assessment by completing the prescribed form available through Wellness, PNHQ.

Death of, injury or near miss to any worker (including volunteers)

Search and rescue activity often occurs in dangerous situations or locations. The SAR sector is committed to ensuring that SAR personnel conducting SAR activities must not have their lives placed at unacceptable or unnecessary risk.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) applies to all persons involved in a SAREX or SAROP who suffer a near miss, injury or fatality while travelling to, from or participating in a SAR operation or exercise.

All near misses and injuries to workers must be reported in MyPolice; District Health and Safety advisors will create a "Visitor Incident" report for volunteers suffering an injury or near miss.

Where a worker is killed or seriously injured during a SAR operation or training, the District Commander must, as well as meeting any other requirement, investigate and report the facts to the National Manager: Response and Operations as soon as practicable.

Claims for injury or death for any worker (including volunteers) involved in an accident in the course of a SAR operation or exercise must be made direct to ACC.

Consideration should be given to applying the '[Trauma policy](#)' to volunteers in SAROPs.

Family liaison

A SAROP is a significant event for family and kin. The Incident Controller must ensure the next of kin are regularly informed and updated on the operation's progress. Police have employees who are trained to assist with family liaison. Follow the general provisions for family liaison outlined in '[Part 2 Role of the OC Investigations in homicide and serious crime investigations](#)' and '[Part 6 Family liaison in homicide and serious crime investigations](#)' of the '[Homicide and serious crime investigations](#)' chapter of the Police Manual.

Where the incident involves a school or other training provider close liaison with the school or training provider is essential. See '[MoE EOTC Incident Protocol](#)'.

It may also be useful to provide an opportunity for any specialist (e.g. ACR, medical advisor) to brief next of kin.

RCCNZ Police Liaison Officer

When a Category II SAROP is initiated and is of such scale that multiple resources are deployed or significant liaison is required, a Police Liaison Officer may be assigned to RCCNZ. Alternatively RCCNZ may request a Police Liaison Officer for a Category II incident. The request is made direct to PNHQ (Response and Operations Group).

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

The Police Liaison Officer when responding to a request to assist at the RCCNZ provides the link between RCCNZ and Police, and will:

- attend RCCNZ Operations Room or MNZ MIRT (Maritime Incident Response Team, activated in case of major incident) as required
- seek a briefing and maintain awareness of SAR operation and pass to Police (at EOC level or other as appropriate) for other areas of response.
- act as attached liaison point for communications with Police, including but not limited to NCCC, DCCs, Comms Centres, Police field staff and Victim Support
- form part of the wider CIMS/Incident structure of the incident as Liaison Officer and technical expert as required – this might include the role of Family Liaison Officer
- maintain a log of events/activities to provide to RCCNZ or MNZ, including decision logs, (for major incidents these will be placed on the RIOD incident active EMS)
- contribute as part of a Planning Team to the response or incident; contribute towards situational awareness, SITREPs, action plans, and contingency plans as required
- be able to speak for Police and influence Police activity
- attend briefings and debriefings as required
- arrange succession and hand over to any incoming PLO, (if it is a major 'high tempo' operation then call for a second staff member from R&O Group to assist)
- coordinate victim/family liaison when required.

When an operation reaches the stage where only Police-controlled tasks remain and the RCCNZ is no longer required, the PLO continues to liaise with the district involved and the RCCNZ SAR Mission Coordinator.

SAR Duty Officer

The District Commander must ensure a suitable on-call capability is maintained that enables a trained IC to be appointed to manage SAROPs. This person will normally be on standby to:

- answer all calls from Communications Centres and/or District
- undertake an initial assessment including Search Urgency
- seek advice from a Subject Matter Expert as required
- commence initial action
- commence enquiries and information gathering process
- establish an ICP
- activate Police SAR members and supporting agencies as required
- establish the IMT and appoint IMT members
- ensure the necessary equipment and supplies as required for the task are available
- commence appropriate Incident Action Planning
- ensure the appropriate District notifications are made
- complete the Pol130 report at the end of the SAROP.

More detailed guidelines for Land Search and Rescue can be found [here](#).

Recovery of a deceased person

A SAROP may extend to the recovery of a deceased person. See '[Sudden death](#)' chapter.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

General procedures for land and marine operations

The procedures for land and marine searches can be found in the District Mobilisation Plans (DMP), Master Standard Operating Procedures (MSOP) and District SAR response plans.

The procedures for land searches can be found in the 'LandSAR Field Guide' which includes:

- roles
- food and equipment
- communications
- helicopters
- navigation
- searching and search techniques
- rescue
- specialist teams (ACR, avalanche, cave, swiftwater and dog teams).

See: '[Initial reports to Communications Centre and local Police](#)' in this chapter.

Searches for missing aircraft

Advise the RCCNZ of any missing aircraft as they are Category II searches.

Note: When the RCCNZ is coordinating the SAROP, Police must not use aircraft without advising the SMC at the RCCNZ.

Flare sightings

See '[Search and Rescue: Flare Sightings](#)'.

MayDay calls

See '[Search and Rescue: Marine Operations](#)'.

SAR Technology

Celltower polling information

The Police Crime Monitoring Centre (CMC) and Police Communications Centre have an established relationship with various Telco providers to search for and provide cell tower identification, subscriber information and outbound activity of mobile phones. The technology provides Police with the ability to enquire as to the last known location of a mobile phone used by the subject of a SAR Operation.

The relationship with the individual Telco National Operation Centres (NOC) is managed by the CMC. The CMC retains oversight of all requests from Police.

All requests for information must be made through Police Communications Centres using the Information Request Form in Police Forms. The standard processes agreed with Police Comms and the National Operations centres for Spark, 2Degrees and Vodafone must be followed.

CMC may be able provide further granular detail in some instances. Contact CMC directly at cmc@police.govt.nz. Please note these services are only available on weekdays during normal work hours.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

RCCNZ can make requests for relevant SAROPs through the District SAR Coordinator whose position is relevant to the search location; the Coordinator will facilitate the request via the relevant Police Communications Centre.

Emergency Caller Location Information (ECLI)

The Emergency Caller Location Information (ECLI) service provides the best available probable location of mobile callers when a 111 call is made from a mobile device.

The ECLI service provides two sources of location information, depending on the type of mobile phone:

- **All mobile phones** – Network-based location, derived from the cell tower that the emergency call is connected provides a low-precision broad area of probability of where the caller is calling from. This will be provided for all mobile phone types, operating on any network (e.g. Vodafone, Spark 2Degrees).
- **Android mobile phones** only will provide a high precision caller location information from the handset, using GPS, Wi-Fi or cell site information to define its location and make this available to emergency service providers. Note: Android handsets currently account for approximately 70% of New Zealand's smartphones.

Notes:

- **Access to the ECLI system is available to Comms staff only from a CARD terminal.**
- Mobile phone record/s will only be available within the PCL Web Interface for 60 minutes from initiation of a 111 call.
- Information provided by the PCL system will not provide 100% accuracy of caller location 100% of the time.

See [Comms Centre information](#).

Mobile Locate

Mobile Locate is an opt-in service that can help identify an accurate location of a cellphone where the caller has not called 111.

A text message is pushed to the device with a link to a website; the caller must activate the link, which will then display the coordinates of the device and its location on Google maps.

See '[Mobile Locate](#)' for more information

Incident Management applications

A number of electronic applications are available to support the IMT during a SAR Operation. Of those, SARTrack has been assessed as the preferred application for meeting the requirements of the IMT while also complying with the New Zealand Government standards for the use and protection of cloud based applications and services.

An [MOU](#) describes the working relationships between the Search and Rescue sector and SARTrack.

Marine towing

Police are responsible for rescuing people, not vessels. However, on occasions it is more efficient to tow the vessels and their occupants to safety.

The skipper of the rescue vessel must ascertain:

- the potential danger to persons on board the distressed vessel

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

- the prevailing and projected weather and sea conditions,
- and pass this information on to the IC.

The IC must decide, in consultation with the rescue vessel skipper, whether to:

- transfer the people from the distressed vessel, or
- tow the vessel to the nearest point at which this can safely be done.

Note: Recovering the vessel from this point is the owner's responsibility, and should be done at the owner's expense.

Where it is clear at the outset that only a tow is required, authorised commercial operators should be used. If recommending a tow operator Police must satisfy themselves that the vessel and operator complies with the maritime rules and Maritime Transport Act 1994. If there are no commercial operators available, Police may facilitate a tow if those in charge of the vessel have asked them to, and have agreed to pay the charges. However, both the vessel and operator must be evidently capable of undertaking the task safely and Police should continue to monitor the incident until it is safely concluded. The same conditions apply if Police are asked to continue towing a vessel past the point at which people can be safely transferred.

Evacuation of sick or injured people at sea

A medical evacuation of people from vessels at sea:

- may, or may not be a SAROP
- covers both illness and accidents.

Note: Deployment of an ambulance asset must be authorised by an Ambulance Communications Centre if Ministry of Health or ACC are to cover the cost.

RCCNZ also handles notified cases within New Zealand's SAR Region and may:

- send medical advice
- obtain approval from the ship's agents for the proposed course of action
- arrange for the vessel to sail to the nearest port
- if necessary, arrange for a helicopter to collect the person as soon as the vessel is within range
- send the account to the ship's agents.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Support services

Alpine and Cliff Rescue teams

Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) teams are a specialist resource within the LandSAR organisation. Their competencies include rescue in steep and alpine terrain.

ACR teams are established at specified sites (Taranaki, Mt Ruapehu, West Coast South Island, Mt Cook, Christchurch, Queenstown, and Wanaka). They are available to be deployed nationally.

Police make a financial contribution to ACR teams. District Commanders in Districts where there ACR teams are established, support ACR teams, including meeting their training needs. A Liaison Officer is appointed to each ACR team (See: '[District Commander responsibilities](#)').

District Commanders may call for assistance from the nearest ACR Team. All requests should be directed to the District SAR Coordinator in the district where the team is located and be accompanied by full details of the terrain.

Districts must identify and record other high angle rescue assets in their area.

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

Police together with Maritime New Zealand (Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand) and the Secretary for Transport have a service level agreement with AREC which sets out agreed levels of service. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Cave rescue personnel

Particulars of personnel and equipment for cave rescues must be listed as SAR assets. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Civilian aircraft operators

Each district's SAR plan must contain a list of available local civilian aircraft, including a schedule of permanently based helicopters with experienced pilots, and details of each machine's radio and specialised equipment.

Department of Conservation and Local Authorities

Many DOC and Local Authority staff, especially those employed at field locations, have SAR skills or local knowledge. They are usually available to assist Police with SAR incidents within their respective conservancies. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Emergency Ambulance Service

See '[Air Travel – unscheduled flights](#)' and '[Emergency Air Ambulance Service](#) (EAAS) in this chapter.

Search and rescue dogs

Consider using Police dogs, LandSAR NZ search dogs or Land SAR alpine search dogs (including avalanche dogs) in appropriate circumstances. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Only trained and certified volunteer search dogs must be used on a SAR operation.

Note: A trained and certified volunteer dog is one that meets the standards for search dogs set by LandSAR NZ and the NZ Police Dog Section. LandSAR NZ maintain a list of qualified dogs and handlers.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Untrained SAR dogs undergoing training as per Search dog standards may be permitted to attend a SAREX.

This instruction does not preclude the use of Police dogs for SAR operations. See: '[Police dogs](#)' chapters in the Police Manual.

Global Maritime Distress and Safety System

The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System operates from the Maritime Operations Centre situated at Kordia's offices in Avalon Business Centre in Lower Hutt. Operators monitor marine VHF and HF calling and distress channels on a 24-hour basis by receiving and re-directing calls for assistance to respective SAR agencies.

For 'all ships' broadcasts during marine SAROPs, the service can be contacted on:

- (Tel) 04 550 5282 or 04 550 5283
- (Fax) 04 914 8334.

Other local agencies such as the Royal New Zealand Coastguard Federation affiliates, Harbour Radio and Fisherman's Radio may also be able to assist with all ships broadcasts. Their contact numbers should be in your local marine SAR plan. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Land Information New Zealand

Land Information New Zealand maintains access to maps and charts and related services during emergencies. It has branches in all districts. Maps and charts for SAR are available free of charge and can be ordered through Blue Star.

New Zealand Defence Force

The three services of the New Zealand Defence Force (Royal New Zealand Navy, New Zealand Army and Royal New Zealand Air Force) may supply aircraft, vessels, transport, messing, tentage, personnel and the like. Usually, no charge is made, but this needs to be clarified before the service is used.

Requests from all districts for Defence assets for non-urgent operational deployments must be made through Police Operations Group at PNHQ.

All **urgent** requests for assistance from Defence for Category I SAROPs must be made via email as follows:

- Email HQJFNZJointWatchCentre@nzdf.mil.nz
- Title the email 'REQUEST FOR SUPPORT – CATEGORY I SAR OPERATION (..location..)
- Include specific and precise details of the Operation and the support required
- Include a contact number
- CC the relevant Area or District Commander into the email
- Follow the email up with a phone call to Joint Forces Watchkeeper PH: 04 529 6333.

Note: This number is staffed 24 hours a day.

New Zealand Search and Rescue

The New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Council has a mandate from the NZ government to provide strategic leadership to the New Zealand Search and Rescue Sector. NZSAR supply Police with a variety of non-operational support services (forms, guidelines, SAREX). NZSAR also coordinate service level agreements with SAR partners.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

LandSAR NZ

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Inc is established under the [Incorporated Societies Act 1908](#).

LandSAR is a national volunteer organisation which provides land search and rescue services to lost, missing and injured all over New Zealand. Their volunteers operate in suburban, urban, wilderness and rural areas including regional and forest parks, shorelines and caves.

LandSAR has over 3,000 trained search and rescue volunteers who are members of 61 local groups covering the length and breadth of New Zealand. There are also 11 specialist teams such as LandSAR Search Dogs, LandSAR Caving, Alpine Cliff Rescue and Swift Water Rescue who operate on a local level where there is a requirement for these specialist skills.

Police together with Maritime New Zealand (Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand) and the Secretary for Transport have a [Service Level Agreement](#) with LandSAR which sets out agreed levels of service. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Also see '[Volunteers](#)'.

New Zealand Meteorological Service

The New Zealand Meteorological Service provides Police with regular special weather bulletins and specific weather warnings.

Coastguard NZ

Coastguard NZ is a civilian charity made up of volunteers who provide Maritime SAR services in New Zealand. Coastguard also provide a suite of training courses through CBES, up to date weather forecasting, and safety messaging for boaties.

There are four Coastguard regions (Northern, Eastern, Central and Southern), with 63 units between these regions.

Police together with Maritime New Zealand (Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand) and the Secretary for Transport have a [Service Level Agreement](#) with Coastguard which sets out agreed levels of service. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Commercial fishermen are also a useful resource for SAR incidents.

Search and Rescue Air services

Search and Rescue air assets deployed and tasked by Police and/or RCCNZ for the purposes of search and rescue. These differ from an asset tasked by another agency, such as Ambulance.

Surf Life Saving New Zealand

Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ) is a National Association with the purpose of "preventing drowning and injury in New Zealand".

Police together with Maritime New Zealand (Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand) and the Secretary for Transport have a [Service Level Agreement](#) with SLSNZ which sets out agreed levels of service. See '[SAR Liaison](#)' in this chapter.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Volunteers

Volunteers are valued partners and make a considerable contribution to SAR in New Zealand. They enable Police and RCCNZ to fulfil their responsibilities as SAR coordinating authorities.

SAR volunteers are usually drawn from the sector to which they are offering their service (outdoor recreation sector, marine recreation sector etc.).

Vetting of volunteers

SAR Volunteers are approved and must be vetted by Police if they are likely to undertake SAR duties at or out of a Police Station. Computer based vetting must be carried out by the [Police Vetting Service](#) using the Police Form 'Vetting Form New Applicant (non-VCA position)' Refer to '[Police Vetting](#)' or '[Vetting Advice](#)' for further information.

Volunteers are trained and managed by the organisation to which they belong. Untrained people should not be included in search teams unless absolutely necessary. If used, they must be managed and closely supervised by trained SAR operators.

Recognition of volunteers

Volunteers provide a valuable service to Police and their service should be acknowledged. This may include a social event or certificate of appreciation. Police should consider nominating qualifying SAR volunteers for a NZSAR award.

SAROP – volunteer rations and accommodation

Whenever possible, volunteers should supply their own rations for the initial operational period. However, beyond this, rations packets or meals for volunteers must be provided by Police. Reimbursement of actual and reasonable cost should be considered.

District Commanders may consider the provision of refreshments to volunteers at Police expense on appropriate occasions, such as debriefs, or at the end of a protracted search. Care must be taken with the provision of alcohol particularly when personnel are required to drive a vehicle following an operation or other SAR activity. Claims for rations supplied personally may be made in accordance with the General Expense Claims policy, as they relate to reasonable costs, must be met by Police for a Category I operation.

These claims must not exceed the meal allowance provided by '[Travelling and Relieving Expenses \(Reimbursement\)](#)'.

SAR teams usually provide for their own accommodation in the field. Where teams are deployed for an extended operation, or where travel to or from an area of operation places volunteers at risk, accommodation must be provided at Police expense so that they may travel refreshed. This is a Health and Safety requirement.

SAREX expenses - provisions for volunteers

For the initial stages of a SAREX, volunteers should bring their own food and equipment. For later stages, Police should supply all meals. Financial provision should be made for this in the exercise directive.

Volunteers taking part in a SAREX are not entitled to claim for rations or loss of wages.

Claims for property loss or damage, however, may be submitted on the Expenses Claim Form (NFB2) form.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Compensation for volunteers

Claims for out-of-pocket expenses (including meals) must be made on NFB2.

Claims for loss of, or damage to, personal property that are not covered by the volunteer's own insurance company (to which they should claim first) or ACC must be made on NFB2. Follow these steps when dealing with claims.

Step	Action
1	Do not acknowledge liability, either verbally or in writing.
2	Where practicable, retain damaged articles for inspection.
3	Forward all claims to the appropriate Delegated Financial Authority with a report of the circumstances relating to the loss or damage. Link does not work
4	Follow the policy on ex gratia payments; that is, payments that Police may settle for the sake of equity, even though they are not legally obliged to.

When volunteers are called upon to assist in an operation, and, with the approval of Police, use their own vehicle, they may be paid mileage allowance at the rate as prescribed in the [Police Collective Agreement for employees holding the Office of Constable 4.9](#). Claims for payment of motor vehicle allowance must be in the form set out in District Forms Folder (NFB2). Reasonable car-pooling is expected.

The use of vessels is to be compensated at an agreed rate.

Loss of wages by volunteers

Preference must be given to deploying volunteers whose employers grant paid leave for SAR purposes. Volunteers are to indicate prior to agreeing to deployment that they will claim for loss of wages (that is, obtain prior approval from Police). If a volunteer indicates that they will be seeking loss of wages, and it is necessary to deploy them, Police will cover wages for Category I operations.

A claim for a loss of wages must be submitted as an invoice to Police supported by NFB1.

Note: Claims must be made by invoice supported by the Loss of Wages Claim Form (NFB1), which includes the employer's certificate. An IR12 tax certificate is not required.

Payment for the first week's income

The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) covers claims for death or injury during an operation, but does not pay the first week's income. If the employer refuses to pay it, Police will meet the cost in accordance with the policy for loss of wages by volunteers. Claims under this section must be made on NFB1.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Communications

Radios

Radios used for Land SAR are listed in the [LandSAR Field Guide](#).

For more information on their use, see '[VHF marine handheld radios](#)' below.

Sources for radio equipment

SAR radio equipment is generally stored at Police stations or:

- LandSAR
- AREC
- Department of Conservation
- New Zealand Defence Force
- Community organisations (these usually have their own radios and radio frequencies).

VHF marine handheld radios

VHF marine handheld radios have been issued to selected stations. These radios are used for marine emergencies and searches, including exercises.

Police-issued VHF radios, some Police vehicle radios and LandSAR VHF hand held radios may also include marine channels.

Marine radio operators must have a current Maritime Restricted Radio Operators Certificate. In genuine emergencies this legal requirement may be waived and the radios operated by non-certified Police personnel.

The radios must be stored in a secure area (not necessarily Police premises) and accounted for when issued and returned. They may be issued by the:

- duty senior sergeant or O/C Station
- O/C SAR Squad

Note: The district must pay the annual licence fee.

Custody and maintenance of radio equipment

Police instructions relating to the care, maintenance and security of [digital radios](#) also applies to SAR radios.

Communications procedures

In a Category I operation, the Police IC and the IMT are responsible for communications.

Advice should be taken from an AREC member. See '[Amateur Radio Emergency Communications](#)'.

Call signs

The Police IC in consultation with the Operations Manager determines the radio call signs for a land operation. Particularly in the case of the base (ICP), preference should always be given to a name that is simple to pronounce and clearly recognisable on a national basis.

The call sign of a military aircraft is the type of aircraft, followed by the last two numerals of the aircraft's number; for example, "Orion 14".

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

The call sign of a civilian aircraft is the type of aircraft, followed by the last three letters of the aircraft's registration; for example, "Cessna BBM". It may also be the officially designated call sign for that aircraft.

See also '[Radio and Communication Centre Protocols](#)' in the Police Manual.

Communicating with boats

Channel 16 is the internationally recognised distress frequency. The IC will determine the appropriate channel for any SAROP.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Transport

Land/marine transport

Transport for emergency and SAR operations and to meet abnormal circumstances As far as practicable, transport for Police employees in connection with emergency and SAR operations must be provided on the same basis as for other Police duties. The District Commander may hire such transport as is necessary for emergency and SAR operations and for duties requiring transport not otherwise available.

When privately owned transport is hired for on scene operational requirements, e.g., four wheel drive vehicle and driver, launch and crew, an inclusive charge reflecting an element of depreciation, insurance, fuel costs, etc., should be agreed upon prior to deployment. See: '[District Commanders responsibilities](#)' regarding PCBU and Health and Safety.

Vehicles and craft (not being dedicated marine rescue craft) not having appropriate insurance cover may be hired only in cases of extreme emergency when it is not possible to obtain adequately insured transport in the time available.

Where the power craft to be hired for an operation which is one which is not used exclusively for pleasure, the Police employee responsible must, except in the case of an emergency, ensure the craft has a current certificate of survey as required by the Maritime Transport Act 1994.

Vessels that are not commercial vessels may be used as a resource of opportunity, but cannot be pre planned unless there is no commercial alternative.

When volunteers are called upon to assist in an operation, and, with the approval of Police use their own vehicle they may be paid mileage allowance at the rate as prescribed in the Police Collective Agreement for employees holding the Office of Constable [4.9](#). Claims for payment of motor vehicle allowance must be in the form set out in District Forms Folder (NFB2). Reasonable carpooling is expected.

The use of vessels must be compensated at an agreed rate.

Also see: '[Police air operations](#)' chapter in the Police Manual.

Air travel - unscheduled flights

The general principle is that aircraft used should be the preferred aircraft specified in the local SAR plans.

The District Commander, or employees authorised by the District Commander in writing, may approve Police employees to travel and carry out emergency SAR operations work in aircraft engaged by Police or by the SAR organisation. Only the National Manager: Response and Operations (under delegated authority of the Commissioner) can approve other official travel on unscheduled flights. All aircraft deployed by Police require certification.

Fixed wing aircraft

Fixed wing aircraft should generally be used only for:

- limited specific search when the terrain permits
- supply or equipment drops
- carrying equipment or personnel to a strategic location.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Helicopters

Helicopters should generally be used only for:

- rescuing severely injured or dangerously ill people whose lives are in immediate danger and who cannot be rescued by other means
- rescuing people who are in a particularly remote or hazardous area, who cannot walk safely and whose rescue other than by helicopter would be uneconomic
- carrying personnel and equipment to strategic locations
- searching areas not suited to fixed wing aircraft.

Briefing pilots

When circumstances permit, the OPSM should brief pilots personally.

Pilots must be set specific tasks and briefed in a clear and methodical fashion so that they understand exactly what is required to be achieved. They should be asked if they and their machines are capable of carrying out the tasks. Tasking must include primary and secondary means of communicating with the IMT.

Operating limits should be set where practicable and relate to a time, area or task. Pilots must understand who they are responsible to and who will give instructions.

Where an operator declines a tasking, and another is requested to carry out the task, the pilot must be advised that the first operator declined and the reason.

The briefing of pilots and the contracting of aircraft must be in line with Police Wellness Contracting of services, especially configurations in respect to aircraft and pilot capability, licencing to fly, and passenger / weight.

Civilian aircraft

District DMP and SAR response plans must specify who may deploy SAR assets and within what financial and/or time limits.

In any case; in a life threatening situation the Communications Centre has authority to commit resources for Category I SAROPs. Having done so, the district must be advised and the ongoing deployment is to come within standard financial approvals processes.

If tasking more than one aircraft there is an issue of maintaining separation. The IC must consider the appointment of an Air Directing Officer (ADO) if more than one aircraft is deployed. Controlling aircraft is a specialised task and such personnel should be named in the district SAR plan.

Do not accept an offer of free air transport. There is considerable risk in accepting such offers.

See '[Police air operations](#)'.

Support from Defence Force

Requests from all districts for Defence assets for non-urgent operational deployments must be made through Police Operations Group at PNHQ.

All **urgent** requests for assistance from Defence for Category I SAROPs are to be made via email as follows:

- Email HQJFNZJointWatchCentre@nzdf.mil.nz
- Title the email 'REQUEST FOR SUPPORT – CATEGORY I SAR OPERATION (..location..)'
- Include specific and precise details of the Operation and the support required
- Include a contact number

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

- CC the relevant Area or District Commander into the email
- Follow the email up with a phone call to Joint Forces Watchkeeper PH: 04 529 6333.

Note: This number is staffed 24 hours a day.

RNZAF aircraft

RNZAF helicopters are on standby at two hours' notice. They are best used for the deployment of a large number of search teams or for specialist winching. For a short task, or for the initial stages of a search, it may be more economical to use readily available civilian helicopters.

RNZAF require completion of an indemnity form for each deployment.

The Police 'Eagle' helicopter is a national resource and may be considered for extended operations. The request should be channelled through District management.

Air observers

A trained air observer is one who has completed a recognised Air Observers Course.

Trained air observers should be used in aircraft deployed for searching both for enhanced safety and enhanced search ability. Search personnel working in aircraft must have safety briefings prior to boarding.

Aircraft safety

Chapter 6 of the LandSAR Field Guide provides instruction on safety around aircraft, including helicopters.

Police employees working with helicopters must be trained and have had refresher training at least annually. Untrained employees must be managed and supervised more closely.

Consideration should be given to requesting a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) from CAA where it can be shown there is a safety/operational need to exclude other aircraft.

Note: For more details, see the ['Restricting Airspace over Police operations – No Fly Zones'](#)

Users of aircraft must be familiar and comply with the Police Air Operations policy which in itself includes validating the airworthiness of the aircraft and the qualifications of aircrew

See: ['Police Air Operations'](#).

Emergency Ambulance Services (EAS)

Emergency Ambulance Services (EAS) are part of the first line in the continuum of health care. They respond to medical emergencies and accidents, treat patients at the scene and, if necessary, transport them to hospital. EAS providers' primary role is to meet emergency pre-hospital care needs. EAS aims to make a positive impact on patient outcomes by providing the right care, at the right time, in the right place, delivered by the right person.

EAS (road and air) are authorised and dispatched through the Ambulance Communications Centre. This ensures:

- calls are clinically triaged and the most appropriate resource (road or air) is dispatched based on patient need

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

- ACC or the Ministry can pay for the emergency ambulance mission.

Emergency Air Ambulance Service (EAAS)

The Emergency Air Ambulance Service is used to transport severely injured or critically ill people whose lives are in immediate danger and who cannot be transported by other means. Early communication with the Ambulance Communications Centre is essential. They are able to provide advice before transporting any critically ill or injured person by air. If necessary, the Ambulance Communications Centre will dispatch medical assistance to the scene. See '[MOU with RCCNZ and Ambulance](#)'.

Note:

- At times an air provider, who is also a certified contracted Emergency Air Ambulance Service provider, could be on site having just provided SAR services.
- Depending on the severity of patient need, a road ambulance rather than an air ambulance may be more appropriate to provide EAS.
- The Ambulance Communications Centre triages the request and makes this decision.
- This ensures that as more urgent calls come into the Ambulance Communications Centre, the helicopter is then available for more urgent missions.

Primary retrieval missions

Emergency Air Ambulance Service Primary Retrieval missions:

- are authorised and dispatched by the Ambulance Communications Centre
- have an advanced level paramedic, and/or doctor on board
- may pick-up specialised clinical staff on the way to the scene
- treat the patient at the scene and may provide transport to a place of definitive care if required.

Note: Mission conditions to be met:

- The person's location is known and the pick-up is from a safe environment where the patient can be treated and if possible stabilised prior to transporting the patient, if this is required.
- The person is not in a location that requires a 'rescue' in an unsafe environment such as on a glacier, in mountainous terrain or offshore. This is a SAR operation.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Equipment

SAR Stores

Where SAR squads are established, District Commanders must maintain a store and appoint suitable employees to be in charge. Each store holds items of Police SAR equipment and clothing not on personal issue, and may store SAR equipment that is not Police property. Standard contents should include but not necessarily be limited to:

- tents/tent flies
- stretchers
- ropes
- first aid equipment
- rescue packs
- emergency lighting
- communication equipment
- DVI equipment.

The employee in charge must maintain accurate records of all items, with their descriptions, dates of receipt, and the names of owners if the item is not Police owned. When items are issued or returned, the date and name of the borrower must be recorded.

Equipment other than Police equipment

Equipment should be drawn without charge from local sources whenever possible. If this is not practicable, items may be purchased locally as directed by Police IC. The Police IC is responsible for ensuring that all equipment is recorded, whether it has been purchased or borrowed, and, if borrowed, the names of owners and of the borrowers. Borrowed equipment should be returned without delay.

District Commanders may allow non-Police equipment to be held at Police stations. This includes specialised rescue equipment for the ACR teams. All such equipment must be:

- clearly marked as to ownership
- properly stored in a secure dry place
- maintained in a clean and serviceable condition
- inspected regularly by the O/C SAR squad.

Police provisions & rations

Police employees on operations or exercises may claim expenses as provided by [‘Travelling and Relieving Expenses \(Reimbursement\)’](#).

Purchased rations or supplies must not cost more than the meal allowance provided by [‘Travelling and Relieving Expenses \(Reimbursement\)’](#). The allowance is calculated per employee per day.

Note: Receipts must be produced.

Ration packs may be purchased and held as reserve stock for operational use.

See [‘Volunteers’](#) in this chapter.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Administration

SAR Liaison

District Commanders must initiate and support relationships with the SAR sector. A Police Liaison Officer should be appointed to maintain liaison with specific SAR partners. This role would typically be undertaken by the SAR Coordinator(s).

Tasks include and are not limited to:

- liaison with all organisations assisting Police
- maintaining lists of people competent to help in operations
- planning and organising exercises in accordance with SAREX guidelines
- planning and arranging lectures, demonstrations and other SAR educational activities.

The Police Liaison Officer may participate in training courses as provided in SAR squad training, and may organise or coordinate the logistics for this training.

To ensure maximum cooperation between SAR organisations, liaison between adjacent areas should be established, particularly where Police district boundaries traverse areas prone to SAR incidents.

There should be regular meetings to ensure the maintenance of a viable and efficient SAR service.

Police SAR squads

See [definition](#).

As part of succession planning districts may identify staff who may be offered a development opportunity as 'reserve' squad members. These staff can be placed on the [training pathway](#).

SAR squads, because of their particular skill set, may be deployed in other than SAR operations (e.g. evidential searching, coronial and other investigations, working with helicopters, logistical support to remote locations).

Police SAR squad establishment

The establishment and location of Police SAR squads is a District responsibility. A SAR squad must have sergeants or senior sergeants appointed for the purposes of supervision, training and logistical requirements. This table illustrates the recommended strength for the different SAR squads nationally:

Districts	Location	Sgt/SSgt	Constable
Northland	Whangārei	2	11
Auckland	Auckland	2	16
Waikato	Hamilton	2	10
Bay of Plenty	Rotorua	1	6
	Taupo	1	7
	Tauranga	1	7
Eastern	Gisborne	1	8
	Hawkes Bay	2	10
Central	New Plymouth	3	10
	Wanganui	1	9
	Manawatu	2	13
Wellington	Masterton	1	5

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

	Wellington	2	10
Tasman	Nelson	1	8
	Marlborough	1	8
	West Coast	1	8
Canterbury	Christchurch	3	10
	Timaru	2	6
Southern	Dunedin	2	8
	Invercargill	2	8
	Queenstown	1	4
	Wanaka	1	2

Personal equipment and clothing

SAR squad members work in environments that have inherent hazards. They are issued with personal equipment and clothing for SAR purposes and to protect them from any harm that may be caused or may arise out of those hazards. Clothing and equipment issued must meet best practice for the outdoors. A SAR squad member should be issued with the following items (taking into account specialist and environmental factors).

Quantity	Item
2	Balaclavas: one heavy one light
1 pair	Snowgaiters
1 pair	Overtrousers* (outer shell)
1 set	Gloves and overgloves*
1	Parka* (outer shell)
1	Jacket* (mid layers)
1	Winter weight shirt (mid layers)
1 pair	Shorts
1 set	Base layer (underwear)
1 pair	Boots
4 pairs	Socks
1	Pack*
1	Day pack*
1	Inflatable sleeping mat*
1	Sleeping bag*
1	Sleeping bag cover (bivvy bag)*
1	Sleeping bag liner
2	Plates*
1	Mug*
1	Cutlery set*
1	Compass*
1	Cooker*
1	Headlamp*
1	Whistle
1	First aid kit
1	Tentfly*
1 pair	Overalls*

If a person leaves a SAR squad within 5 years of joining, items marked *above must be returned to store. After 5 years they may be retained by the employee as having worn out.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Replacement is based on need (wear and tear and continued fit for purpose).

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Training

SAR squad training

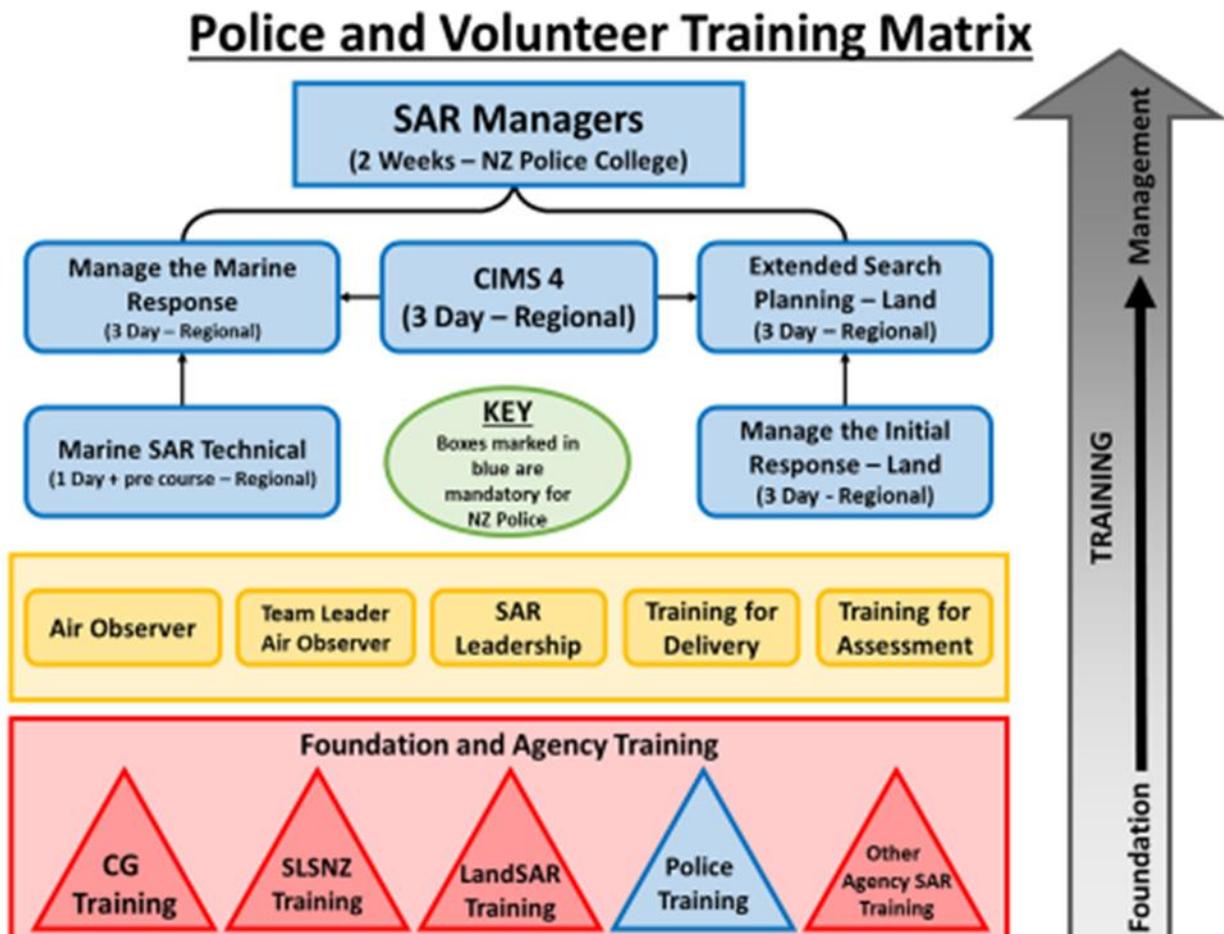
District Commanders must ensure that the SAR squad members undergo regular training exercises, appropriate to SAR, totalling 12 days duration in each year per squad member. 'Reserve' squad members must be included, subject to operational priority.

- Training must include both Land and Marine SAR.
- At least one training day must be utilised for training in DVI procedures.
- Five of the training days of each squad member should be devoted to joint volunteer training initiatives.
- A training programme should be developed based on LandSAR competencies and CIMS
- Helicopter training must be refreshed annually.
- District SAR Coordinators are to maintain members' training records.

In liaison with RNZPC, residential courses of instruction for SAR must be held annually at the RNZPC or at some other suitable venue.

District Commanders may allow SAR members to attend training exercises held in adjoining districts and SAR related courses arranged by other organisations. Such attendance will be a district expense.

The prescribed courses of training to meet the competency of varying levels of deployment are exemplified in the following table. This subsequently aligns to the Requirements for SAR Management matrix.



Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

The National Coordinator: SAR at PNHQ must:

- monitor the training programmes
- raise issues as to appropriateness of the programme with the District Commander.

SAR exercises (SAREX)

Each year District Commanders must conduct at least one Police controlled Category I Land and one Police controlled Category I Marine SAR exercise (SAREX). Additionally, districts with a large geographical spread or unique or individual areas of risk should hold more than one SAREX.

By 30 June each year, a copy of the proposed SAREX Programme for the forthcoming financial year must be forwarded to the National Coordinator: SAR, including:

- dates of the proposed exercise
- areas where the exercise is to be held
- details of radio equipment and frequencies to be used.

Where air support is required from RNZAF, details of the support required (refer Annex 3) must be forwarded with the Exercise Directive form.

At least two weeks prior to a SAREX, an Exercise Plan must be prepared and distributed to the organisations taking part.

NZSAR maintains a national SAREX calendar, hosts SAREX and training and planning meetings, sponsors Police coordinated SAREXs and has a range of guidelines to assist with SAREX planning and evaluation, which will include funding to support the design and evaluation of SAREX.

No more than one SAREX using the HF frequencies 5680 and 3023 should be held at the same time, because high frequency radio communications can be picked up all over the country. These problems do not arise with VHF communications.

SAREX dates should be coordinated through the National Coordinator: SAR at PNHQ. The SAREX calendar is hosted on the NZSAR website.

See '[Volunteers](#)' in this chapter.

Conducting a SAREX

A SAREX remains the cornerstone of interagency training. The quality of the exercise will be significantly improved if attention is given to the pre planning stage and to post operation evaluations. There is a direct feedback link from evaluation to confirmations of good practice but also to improvements to be made to future planning and training activities. Therefore, SAREX should feature evaluation activities carried out by moderators and referees during the exercise. In some circumstances, consideration should be made to bringing in a person from outside the group that planned the SAREX.

The SAREX organiser must follow these steps when conducting a SAREX.

Step	Action
1	Assemble a SAREX planning committee comprised of representatives of the organisations taking part. See SAREX planning guidelines .
2	Attend and oversee all exercises.
3	Ensure that safety procedures are in place.
4	Ensure that all participants have been briefed on safety before the exercise.
5	Aim to hold a debrief within 21 days after the exercise.
6	Evaluates the SAREX using NZSAR guidelines (see NZSAR website)

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

7	Submit the evaluation report and invoice to NZSAR
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Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Expenses

Expenses are approved following standard Police financial processes. The IC should authorise, approve or recommend payment of expenses.

SAREX expenses

The District Commander or other authorised officer approves expenses for goods and services incurred by Police during a SAREX.

Claims for loss or damage to property are dealt with in terms of finance policy that deals with ex-gratia payments; that is, payments that Police may settle for the sake of equity, even though they are not legally obliged to.

See ['Volunteers'](#) in this chapter.

SAROP expenses

Costs of Category I operations are usually met by Police. The District Commander or other authorised officer will approve:

- accounts for goods or services
- claims concerning loss or damage to property.

Claims for Category II operations are usually met by the RCCNZ in accordance with Treasury instructions. When an operation begins as a Category I and is transferred to a Category II, claims are dealt with by the RCCNZ.

Where a SAROP extends to Police responsibilities other than SAR, for example body recovery, Police may contract for that purpose.

See ['Volunteers'](#) in this chapter.

SAR general expense claims

Public Service departments (government departments) are expected to bear their own expenses when participating in SAR operations.

Government trading departments and state owned enterprises must lodge claims for reasonable expenses in Category I operations with Police, and in Category II operations with the Rescue Coordination Centre.

Other claims for reasonable expenses incurred in Category I operations will be met by Police. Where an operation is a Category II, or subsequently steps up to a Category II, claims will be dealt with by the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.

Any claims received by Police for payment by the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand must be passed on through the District Commander to the National Manager: Response and Operations.

See ['Volunteers'](#) in this chapter.

Donations by the public

Police have a duty to save life and are not entitled to recover costs relating to SAR operations.

While Police may not accept offers of payment for SAR, volunteer groups assisting Police cannot function without some financial support. Therefore, persons wishing to make

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

donations to SAR should be referred to an appropriate volunteer organisation or SAR Trust.

Recovery of expenses

Where it is considered there has been a breach of section [24](#) of the Summary Offences Act 1981 regarding an intentional, reckless or wasteful diversion or deployment of Police personnel or resources on a SAR operation, a prosecution must not be commenced without the approval of the National Manager: Prosecutions.

Responsibility for aircraft costs

Police meet the costs when:

- as part of a SAROP, an aircraft is used to transport injured or ill persons whose recovery by other means would be uneconomic and/or unsafe, including where the Ambulance Communications Centre has requested the person be moved to an agreed safe location where an ambulance service can provide treatment and transport (either by road or air) to a place of definitive care if required
- a call comes into the Ambulance Communications Centre that is identified as a SAROP and transferred to Police
- a deceased person is transported from the scene (this applies even if the person was not known to be deceased at the time of hire).

Responsibility for Emergency Ambulance Services Costs

ACC and Ministry of Health meets the costs of Emergency Ambulance Services (EAS) when:

- missions are authorised and dispatched by Ambulance Communications Centre
- missions have on board an advanced level paramedic, and/or a doctor
- the person's location is known and the pickup is from a safe environment where the patient can be treated and if possible stabilised prior to transporting the patient, if this is required

The Police Communications Centre must be advised as soon as possible when an event is or has the potential to be a SAROP. Typically, an incident is deemed a SAROP when:

- the search and/or rescue requires a response by a SAR Coordinating Authority;
- a search is required to locate the subject(s)
- retrieval of the person(s) requires specialist SAR capabilities - the person(s) are in a location which requires SAR capabilities.

The Ambulance Communications Centre must be advised as soon as possible when a SAROP is commenced that may require ambulance services. The Ambulance Communications Centre must also be advised if an air ambulance is being used in the SAROP and the status of that air ambulance (i.e.: it is equipped and staffed to the standard set by ACC/MOH).

Emergency Air Ambulance Service providers are required to keep the Ambulance Communications Centre informed of their availability.

If a contracted certified Emergency Air Ambulance helicopter is being used for a SAROP, and is then authorised and dispatched by the Ambulance Communications Centre to provide Emergency Ambulance Services, the costs are shared between Police (for the SAROP) and ACC/Ministry of Health (for Emergency Ambulance Services).

Any inquiry as to responsibility for aircraft costs, including air ambulance must be directed to the National Coordinator: SAR at PNHQ.

Search and Rescue Operations, Continued...

Annexes - Reports and forms

Annex 1 - Search and Rescue Report (Police 130)

After an operation, the Police IC completes a Search and Rescue Report (Police 130) as soon as possible. There is one form for water, and another for land. It is important that these forms are completed correctly, fully and submitted in a timely manner as this enables the information to be analysed and reported on. This information is important as funding is also dependant on the correct capture of information.

Annex 2 - Search and Rescue loss of wages claim form (NFB1)

Download the [search and rescue loss of wages claim form \(NFB1\)](#).

These must be forwarded to the District Commander with a report of the circumstances relating to the loss or damage.

Annex 3 - Search and Rescue expenses claim form (NFB2)

Download the [search and rescue expenses claim form \(NFB2\)](#).

Annex 4 - Sample Exercise Directive

Download a sample of the [exercise directive](#).

Annex 5 – Transfer of SAR Coordination responsibility between Coordinating Authorities

Available in Ms Word>Police Forms.