



# Op Whirlpool - Wellington SAREX 2012

## Briefings

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## **Task 1 Brief – First Aid**

### **Background**

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

They did not leave specific timings with Barbara's mother but only took enough for a day walk with a picnic lunch.

Neither Barbara, nor Kenneth is considered particularly 'bush smart'. They both have cell phones but neither one is answering as they are going directly to answer.

They have not returned home and have not contacted Barbara's mother as would be normal for Barbara.

Kenneth's phone last polled from the Belmont Vodafone site at 0904hrs on 20/04/2012 for 29 seconds. It is unknown who this call was too as the number is unlisted.

Their vehicle CDM544 is parked at Belmont Regional Park near a picnic table.

Neither party has any previous dealings with Police.

Kenneth's Family are aware (as is Barbara's as her mother is the informant to Police) but are not surprised because Kenneth has a family history of making poor choices without thinking about the consequences. At this point in time Kenneth's family are not particularly concerned.

Barbara's mother is worried sick as this is extremely out of character for her daughter as they have a very close relationship and they talk daily. Barbara always calls her mother before her mother goes to bed at night, usually around 8.30pm.

### **Task Story**

The search party whilst on task to another area to complete a sign cut around a picnic table, and likely area come across Barbara.

Barbara (Constable Lisa Toseland) is conscious and alert but is rather withdrawn.

She has an obvious open wound to her left forearm and has lost a fair amount of blood already although the bleeding now seems to be slowing.

Barbara has 'self harmed' in that she has cut her own forearm down the length of it with a large knife.

Her complexion is pale.

Her breathing is rapid and shallow (28) and she has an elevated pulse (96 bpm) on her uninjured arm and a very faint, thready pulse on her injured arm.

If asked if she has feeling in her hands, her injured side hand has pins 'n' needles.

If pressed about what happened Barbara becomes agitated/ if she is dealt with sympathetically she will admit to having stabbed Kenneth.

Within the first aid scene is a large knife but it is not immediate to Barbara **(but needs to be secured to ensure staff safety.)**

### **First Aid skills brief**

**“You are to deal with what you see, you do not need to make things up...e.g. if you cannot see a broken bone, do not worry about broken bones.**

**Remember what you have been taught at Workplace First Aid course, What you have learnt through SAR, and your own previous experiences.**

**If you are seen to take a recording the instructor of the Scene will give you vital signs.**

**You will be expected to be able to hand over your patient to ‘higher aid’ if required.**

**Remember that you are part of a team, that you have been tasked to another area already by SAR Base, and D.R.S.A.B.C...Good Luck!”**

### **Goals**

- To deal with the scene as it presents, working as a team, work safely, to the best of the teams ability.
- Complete a hand over to the site controller when team is sufficiently happy that they have done what they can or time runs out.
- The ‘hand over’ does not need to be relayed via radio if the site controller is happy with the teams report.

If the team ‘hand over’ leaves information disconnected and missing, and time allows then the site controller can ask for the ‘hand over’ to be relayed to SAR base.

## **Task 2 Brief – Crime Scene**

### **Background**

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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Barbara's mother is worried sick as this is extremely out of character for her daughter as they have a very close relationship and they talk daily. Barbara always calls her mother before her mother goes to bed at night, usually around 8.30pm.

### **Task Story**

The search party whilst on task to another area to complete a sign cut around a picnic table, and likely area come across a deceased male.

Kenneth (Unconfirmed Id. - Mannequin) is deceased in a prone position with a knife in his shoulder (front side).

**Crime Scene brief      TO TEAMS:**

**“You are to deal with what you see, you do not need to make things up...e.g. if you cannot see a gun or other weapons, do not worry about them.**

**Remember what you have been taught at previously through SAR or life experience.**

**In your field guide notebooks there is a good reference card to assist...**

**You will be expected to be able to hand over your ‘scene’ to attending Police (Scene Controller)**

**Remember that you are part of a team, that you have been tasked to another area already by SAR Base, and S.T.O.P.P.E.R. ...Good Luck!”**

**Goals**

- To deal with the scene as it presents, working as a team, work safely, to the best of the team’s ability.
- Complete a hand over to the site controller when team is sufficiently happy that they have done what they can or time runs out.

## **Task 3 Brief – Stretchers & Low Angle Ropes**

### **Background**

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### **Task Story**

Whilst on task to another area to sign cut a 'high probability area' they are contacted by SAR Base. They are required to assist by transporting a male that has been found deceased out to SAR Base for removal by Police.

Whilst completing their task they are presented with a moderate slope that will require the use of a belay to ensure safety.

## Goals

- To transport the deceased body, ensuring team safety, with no unjustified disturbance to the body.
- To demonstrate sound knowledge of safely setting up an anchor system suitable for belay.
- To competently carry out a belay or controlled lower of a stretcher containing a deceased body.

Discuss and consider alternatives, e.g.

- Same scene in inclement weather
- Lack of suitable anchor points
- No one in team with previous rope experience
- If the scene were steeper or more serious...

*Controller to complete. E.g:*

- Demonstrate appropriate knots and anchors
- Quick Q&A on stretcher carries and key principles (e.g. commands, patient carer at head)
- Stretcher safety brief

## Task 4 Brief – Search Observation

### **Background**

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### **Task Story**

SAR Base is pretty sure the missing party came through this location. They have asked you to observe the area for clues without entering and potentially contaminating the scene.

### **Search Observation skills brief**

*Nick Engleback to complete - Explain factors impacting on searching for an object or subject, locate items in a specified search area*

### **Goal**

How many items of interest can your team find within search area and what does each article tell us from what it is and where it's located?

## Task 5 Brief – Track & Clue Awareness

### Background

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### Task Story

A quick search by the local ranger of the car park noted CDM544 parked down near the picnic table area. This vehicle is known to be used by Kenneth Doll.

### TCA skills brief

*SARINZ to complete*

### Goal

The missing party's vehicle has been found. Work as a team to plan your approach, contain and preserve the scene, record as many clues as possible and maintain a commentary to the controllers during your processing of what clues you're looking for, finding, and how each is going to help or what it will tell you. Establish the DOT from the scene.

## Task 6 Brief – Fitness Challenge

### Background

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### Task Story

As a search party you are required, now at the park map immediately prior to Belmont Trig Station for another tasking.

Due to other operational requirements of this search there are no transport resources available to you at this time.

You are to inform 'Search Base' prior to starting your walk and advise them that you are starting your task and ask them to note the time that you called in.

### Goal

- To walk to the gated entrance to Belmont Trig Station in an acceptable time frame from the designated start point.
- Once at the gated entrance, work as a team to carry a repeater and aerial to the Trig Station and set up the repeater correctly, including a function test.

Pack the repeater down, ready for the next team to complete their task.

## Task 7 Brief – Offtrack Navigation

### Background

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### Task Story

SAR Base needs you to plan your route to 578384 so they know when you'll get there, and your route so they can mark it on IMT plans.

### Offtrack Navigation skills brief

*Jo to complete – e.g. brief on offtrack nav techniques for time estimation, and route selection etc.*

### Goal

To competently navigate through the bush in an off track setting, explaining your reasoning.

## Task 8 Brief – Search Methods

### Background

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 two day walkers, a female, Barbara Mattel and her boyfriend, Kenneth Doll made a passing comment to her mother that they might go for a walk to Belmont Trig as they had never done the walk before and wanted to explore Belmont Regional Park.

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### Task Story

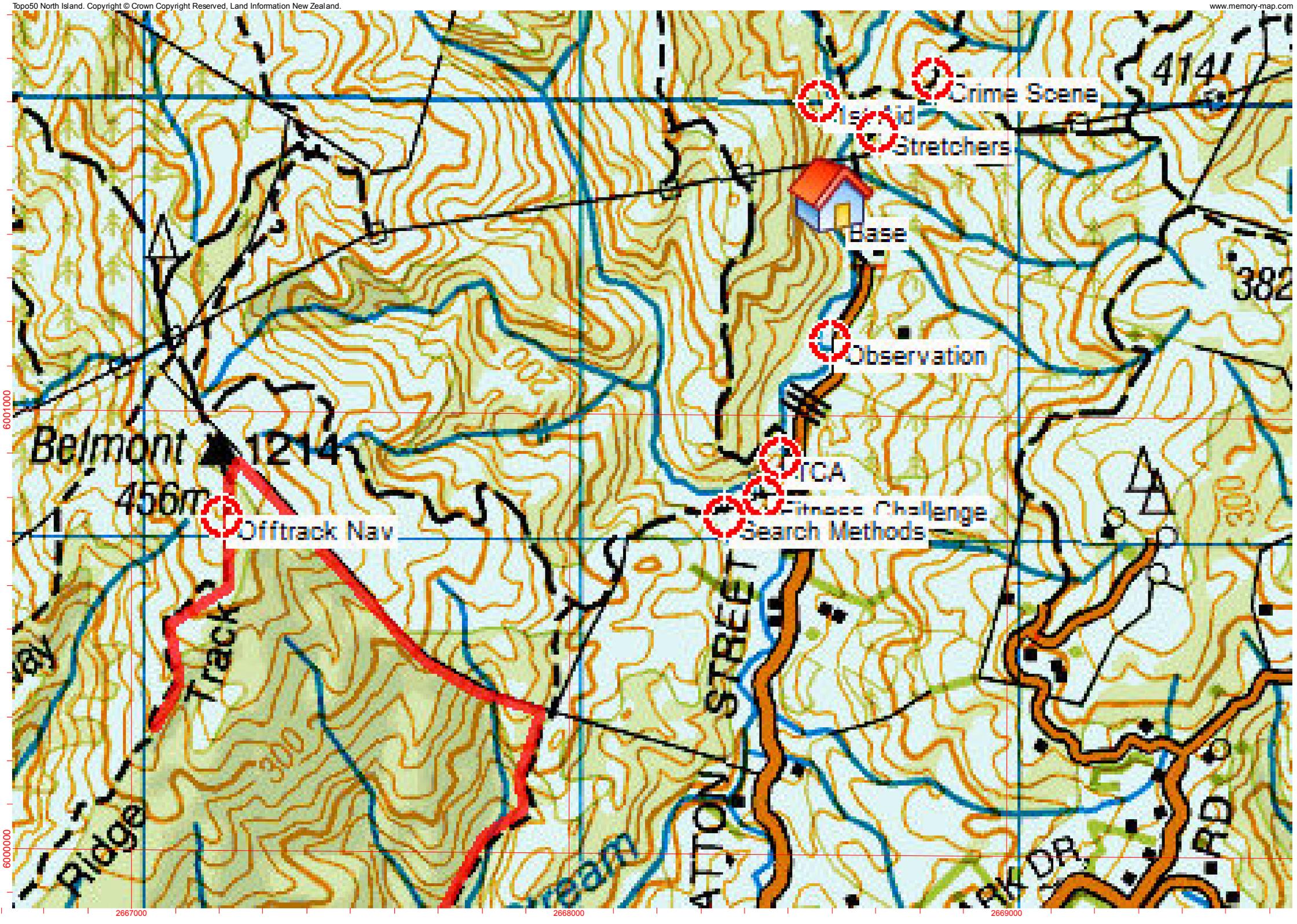
To continue effective planning the IMT needs to be able to record confidently areas that have already been searched knowing that it has been searched competently and with a high level of confidence.

### Search Methods skills brief

*Ross to complete on search methods skills and techniques*

### Goal

To demonstrate a sound knowledge of appropriate Search Methods for a given setting.



14 May 2012

Ants Harmer  
Acting Wellington Police SAR Coordinator  
WELLINGTON

## Report for Wellington SAREX 2012

Dear Ants

Thank you for the opportunity to assist in the delivery and assessment of the Wellington SAREX 2012. We are pleased to be able to support the Wellington Police and LandSAR group to seek on-going improvement of your services.

### Background

Police and Wellington LandSAR Groups conducted an annual Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) over the weekend of 20-22 April 2012. The SAREX was conducted in the Belmont Regional Park, Stratton Street entrance. SARINZ was requested to provide 1 tutor to assist in the teaching of a round robin session focussing on sign cutting at an LKP, and one person to rove and observe personnel with the ultimate aim of providing independent feedback on the overall capability and performance of field personnel.

The SAREX followed a round robin format consisting of 8 stations. One team of 2-4 persons attended each station at any one time. There was no planned overnight "SAR" activity; instead, the Saturday evening was planned as a social evening, which included a social quiz with spot prizes.

### SAREX Objectives

The Wellington Police and LandSAR Committee have recognised that SAREX's provide valuable learning and teaching opportunities, and as the 2011 Wellington SAREX had been cancelled due to the combined Police/LandSAR response to the Christchurch earthquake, it was deemed important to ensure that Wellington held a SAREX in 2012. That said, the Wellington region has had a high operational tempo during the previous 6 months, and a format was selected that that:

1. provided opportunities for members to test their skills and learn new techniques and methodologies
2. recognise that many personnel had been operational over the summer period and did not require "flogging" or time consuming SAREX
3. encouraged those that are relatively "new" members or current 'Tier 2' the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and perhaps move towards becoming Tier 1 or similar,
4. the strong encouragement on a 'social' SAREX, where members could interact, share stories and generally have a good time, but also not have their time wasted.

### SAREX Personnel

This report is based on observations of individual and team performance and the results have been collated and listed under subject headings followed by recommendations where appropriate. The observations have come from the SARINZ personnel in attendance as well as comments made formally and informally by the round robin station facilitators, from SAREX participants as well as general comments made at the hot debrief.

The personnel participating in the SAREX were predominantly Wellington LandSAR members with a couple of Police members also included in the field teams. Whilst some of the field personnel have had a long-term involvement with LandSAR and have well-recognised skills

and abilities, many personnel were relatively new, yet to become operational, or have become operational in the last year or two. All comments and feedback provided in this report should be considered in this context and with generalisations based on the overall performance of those witnessed. Comments on specific individuals have been collated in a separate report for consideration by Wellington SAR Police as requested. Senior members of the Wellington Police SAR squad and Wellington LandSAR group were involved in the SAREX design and control. Some experienced members were not involved in the SAREX due to other commitments and/or the recent high operational tempo. A pleasing note was that some of those that could not partake completely in the SAREX did show up and support the event. This suggests a healthy culture within the LandSAR environment, when individuals want to demonstrate support in conjunction with personal needs.

It is worth noting that some attendees who are yet to attend any 'formal' training performed at a very high standard. These individuals should be given every opportunity to formalise their knowledge of SAR processes to complement their existing skill base. This could happen at a local level in the short-term, and there is no reason that they could not have an immediate contribution to a SAR team under a skilled and experienced field Team Leader. Names/details are included in the separate report.

One or two of the more experienced individuals demonstrated knowledge and skills that would benefit from on-going higher level training to extend their development – this training could be either formal or structured quality refresher/continuation training events. Details are included in the separate report.

Many of the more experienced personnel commented on the fact that they would enjoy and benefit from more externally delivered, contextualised, operational relevant, quality continuation training. As is often the case with volunteer groups, those with good skills or knowledge are usually involved in the development and implementation of local group training events and therefore receive very little on-going training themselves. Whilst being involved in the delivery of 'in-group' training is a great way to cement current knowledge and practices, it does little to further develop or extend the better individuals skills and abilities. Cost is obviously the prohibitive condition, but a small number of well-planned and conducted events can provide extensive learning and improvement for the group through a trickle-down effect.

## **Subjects and Recommendations**

### **Excellent Police – Volunteer Relationships**

A key component contributing to the success of the SAREX (and one assumes operations) is the working relationship between Police and volunteers. There was a strong camaraderie witnessed. Whilst SARINZ have made the same observation elsewhere earlier this year in a different region, it was more evident at this SAREX. There was a real "team" approach and attitude demonstrated. The strength of this relationship between agency personnel is key to quality SAR performance – particularly when operating under stress and/or pressure.

The Wellington Region has had a concerted effort over a number of years to conduct joint Police/LandSAR training events and to push towards more of a 'one team' approach to search and rescue activities. Whilst there will likely always be tasks that the Police SAR team may attend or resolve internally, joint response to training and operations has created a respectful working relationship. The current relationship is evidence that this approach has paid dividends and will continue to keep improving well into the future.

It is our belief that efforts should now be made to extend this 'camaraderie' beyond just the Wellington group by involving neighbouring groups. "Outside" attendance of Wellington SAR events should continue to be encouraged and facilitated wherever possible. The reverse is also true, with Wellington members being encouraged to attend neighbouring events. Beyond just the learning, it will continue to establish and build relationships, provide a mechanism for informal moderation of abilities and practices; it will also prove beneficial for major operations which require resources and personnel beyond the capabilities that any single group can supply. Some of the above has occurred over the last few years, and whilst it may sometimes feel time consuming or frustrating, the interaction of both field and IMT personnel between neighbouring 'regions/groups' should be considered as a priority in the coming years.

#### Recommendations:

Every effort should be made to maintain activities between volunteers and Police including:

- Joint exercises and training
- Joint sharing of eating, accommodation, and tasks at training events
- A continuation of the 'one-sar-team' policy and processes that has been in effect for a last few years which have led to a more fully integrated approach
- Joint leadership. This was demonstrated by the Police, with strong partnership and involvement of key volunteers in the organising and hosting
- Continued investment (mainly time) of inter-group activities including training and social events to improve operational interoperability.

#### SAREX Format

The format was popular with those in attendance as it was tailored to achieve specific learning outcomes, whilst recognising the level of attendee's abilities and the recent high operational tempo. Many participants commented that the SAREX was "just what they needed".

The round robin sessions were all relevant to the spectrum of current operational requirements, and allowed both the testing of skills and knowledge, with enough latitude that participants at every level also had the opportunity to learn and improve. The timing of the sessions allowed a reasonable debrief to be conducted with each team to focus on learning points and improvements moving forward – one of the fundamental reasons for having a SAREX.

The scenario design and brief maintained an overall realistic scenario, with each station being a portion of that scenario. This helped tie the sessions together and demonstrate the relevance of each session, but also allowed sufficient latitude for each of the station facilitators to ensure customisation of each task to suit the location and team in attendance.

The round robin stations included what we would consider fundamental skills – Search Methods, Fitness, Navigation, and Observation – all basics that are often overlooked when planning a SAREX. The difference between "just having a station" and this SAREX was the overall continuous scenario tying all of the aspects together, and the fact that all of the stations were relevant in the context of the scenario and realistic in an operational context. The First Aid scenario is another "basic" function, but any team treating it as an isolated station and not in the context of the scenario, missed dealing with the safety issues (knife) and failed to gather additional information relevant to the scenario. The design of this station reinforced the concept that no task occurs in isolation in a SAR environment. Experienced "markers" were able to provide real time feedback and comments relevant to each team for improvement. In many ways, although this was a "First Aid" station, the first aid component

was only a small 'straight forward' portion of the station. We would strongly endorse continuing to offer First Aid scenarios with this level of thought and design.

Likewise, we were pleased to see an observation stand as one of the round robin stations. Observation is critical to SAR efforts, and is a skill that can be improved with on-going and regular practice. To assist in padding this station out, options include developing a "walk through observation component or a separate observation exercise conducted with binoculars. Other options could be to include observation techniques such as 'snap shots', 'the cube' methodology and/or improvements for visual techniques at night (see appendix). Participants could be briefed on these techniques halfway through the session and given additional time to implement them to see if they can discover additional clues/objects.

The only issue that arose from the round robin sessions was the duration of differing sessions. There were one or two stations, which due to the requirements at each site, were quicker than others. Overall this had little impact, but in future if similar sessions were to be run, planning could include either an additional task at that station, or plan to have two "half" stations – ie: two stations allocated half the time of a normal session. This would minimise downtime of participants and maximise learning.

#### Recommendations:

- Continue to use targeted training stations tailored to suit Wellington SAR needs
- Keep the assessing criteria, as a mechanism of feedback
- Keep the overall scenario based approach
- Increased consideration of the duration of activities at the planning stage – either half sessions for short topics or double sessions if a topic needed to be covered in more detail
- Continue to design stations that test operational competencies in a realistic manner, but also allow continued improvement of participants.

#### SAREX Location

The venue was close enough to Wellington city to allow those that wished to return home, or were only available for shorter periods without having to commit for the entire weekend. This planning enabled a number of persons to partake in the SAREX that may otherwise have not been able to attend. The choice of venue had sufficient space for all to camp, as well as enjoy the Saturday evening BBQ and social evening without being too cramped. Had registrations been near the traditional attendance number, the venue may have been under some pressure, but the planning group had considered these issues.

The venue had sufficient terrain and locations to conduct all of the round robin sessions without conflicting for space requirements and the stations were close enough to easily allow for travel due the allocated time.

#### Recommendations:

- Continue to choose SAREX locations based on the desired outcomes and SAREX format as a priority, influenced by the number of participants, rather than necessarily choose the location then try to design the SAREX to suit.
- Where applicable, utilise SAREX sites relevant to operational needs, whilst recognising that this may need to vary to cover the full spectrum of operations.

## General

The following topics are incorporated as general points which the Wellington SAR Committee may wish to consider incorporating into future training sessions or SAREX's.

Rope Rescue module:

There are no issues with the session as it was taught and implemented and the guidelines that were put in around its use. The reality is that many SAR members will not be responsible for implementing the system without guidance from someone with more technical knowledge, which does make many of the following points mute. The following points are for consideration only as not all personnel utilising the Grigri are aware of its limitations.

- The Grigri is primarily designed as a belay device for climbing, as such it is not designed to exceed a one person loading – (in this case a one person load plus stretcher) ie: not designed to belay a stretcher load where stretcher attendants are tethered to the stretcher creating additional loading.
- A Grigri has limited dynamic belaying abilities – ie: any sudden stop or locking of the device may create large forces throughout the system and on the anchor. More of an issue if dubious anchors are being utilised. In the case of a moderate slope (as per the exercise), much of the load is taken by the stretcher dragging on the slope and the stretcher attendants, ie: the Grigri and anchor are only taking a portion of the load.
- A Grigri will have reduced or limited braking abilities if the rope is muddy, wet or icy. Under these conditions, an Italian Hitch would be more appropriate. Consideration could be given to teaching both techniques as part of the session. The obvious differences in braking techniques would need careful consideration.
- Whilst the purpose of the session was to familiarise Wellington LandSAR members with the pre-packaged kit, additional methods of a turn around a tree or similar could also have been demonstrated and utilised for comparison – ie: the belayer would have been able to experience the difference between systems.
- Almost all of the above points were mentioned by the facilitator, but it is unclear as to whether participants absorbed the points.
- We would definitely recommend incorporating a similar topic in a future training event or SAREX to continue the familiarity and learning.

Overall – this station was pitched at a level to meet the requirements of the majority of LandSAR practitioners, most of whom will only ever operate with stretchers and ropes in the context in which this session was pitched. Whilst there is often a desire for facilitators to manufacture complicated rope rescue scenarios (mostly for their own amusement), ***we believe this session really hit the mark and clearly demonstrated how a small team can safely descend or ascend a moderate slope with a stretcher.*** For most participants this was a “new” SAR topic, and generated a lot of discussion and learning. The majority of persons witnessed would need much more familiarisation and practice to be proficient to conduct this unsupervised. We reiterate that the use of a Grigri in the context of the session was well within its safety limitations and appropriate use guidelines, and providing this is understood, have no issue with its continued use within these parameters.

Crime Scene module:

As identified by the facilitator, the station should have perhaps have been titled differently. The title “crime scene” came with preloaded connotations – perhaps “clue site” or similar might have been preferential. It is difficult with any training module, when multiple groups will utilise the same “clean” site, to implement a contextualised training session. The only alternative to the option utilised at the SAREX is to have 8 different similar sites, however the terrain/time it takes to set that up may outweigh any learning benefits. In a future training event, we believe it would be good to provide the opportunity for personnel to build on the

skills and knowledge of this session by having them go through the entire process from discovery, access, processing, reporting, protecting etc. to further ingrain the learning.

#### Fitness test

Fantastic example of contextualised and holistic assessment – ie: it was not just a task for tasks sake. Incorporated radio use as a logging technique, and used the exercise of going up the hill as a mechanism to access the next part of the task – putting up a VHF Radio Repeater. Arriving onsite, out of breath, simulated the operational pressures which led to some groups making decisions that they may not otherwise make in a non-pressure environment. A definite keeper when conducted in this operational context.

#### Search Methods

Once again, relevant task in a relevant environment for Wellington SAR. Great to see the use of an actual “subject” given that the methods practiced/assessed involved an assumed responsive subject. We chose not to have much oversight on this station, but from the outside and from discussion with participants, appeared to be operationally relevant and cover all of the main bases. Definitely worth keeping a similar session for future, perhaps with a variation of Search Methods year to year.

#### Off Track Navigation

Once again, loved it. A relevant task which included ‘route selection’ and ‘estimated travel time’ two basic, but often poorly understood or implemented navigation concepts. Operational SAR personnel should be able to read a map, compare that to the terrain, select a route, and give a reasonably accurate travel time for the route chosen. The location and the task design allowed plenty of scope for variation of routes. Participants seemed well versed in route selection and estimating travel times as most were close to their pre-trip estimations. A must!

#### First Aid/Observation

Comments made earlier in the report under the Format heading.

#### Sign Cutting

One of the misunderstood concepts in a SAR environment is Tracking in its various guises. This session involved processing a last known point (LKP), in this case a vehicle at a road end. The site was heavily contaminated as is expected in the Wellington environs. The exercise design was to push people into checking very close to the vehicle (high probability density area) to establish key information, then to move to sign cutting the natural exits and track traps to see if sign could be re-established – thus establishing DOT and refining the search area. Most groups were set a time limit to induce a little pressure and managed to achieve the task within the given time frame. A couple of groups did waste valuable time by attempting to sign cut further out before processing the vehicle – this achieves very little in a contaminated site as there is nothing to compare it to. Additional teaching points of tracking in waterways and sign cutting in given environment appeared to go well with plenty of positive feedback. A number of persons commented that it was great to be “tracking” in a Wellington SAR context and would love to do more of it.

### Summary

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to and be part of the Wellington SAREX in 2012. There are many positive aspects highlighted by the excellent working relationship between the Police and volunteers and the overall SAREX format.

The points raised in the report and attached recommendations are provided as part of the culture of continual improvement. If SARINZ can assist in any way with these recommendations or wish to discuss them further then please feel free to make contact.

Strong partnership was a vital component to the success and SARINZ would like to acknowledge the thinking, initiative and positive approach by the Police SAR Coordinator in conjunction with member of the Wellington LandSAR group. The SAREX was well planned, staffed and conducted. This set the scene and atmosphere for everyone and led to a beneficial and enjoyable SAREX.

Kind regards



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