

# Exercise RABBIT ISLAND

24 February 2013

FINAL REPORT

## Introduction

The Nelson Bays Police area held the marine SAR exercise at Nelson on the 24th of February 2013.

The exercise involved over 40 people from Coastguard, Surf Rescue, Coastguard Air Patrol, Nelson City Council Harbourmaster, Tasman District Council Harbour Master, LandSAR volunteers and Police SAR personnel.

This SAREX we will try to build on the good work that was done in 2012 in regards to on scene coordination with direction and backup from the IMT.

## Objectives

The objectives of the SAREX were:

- a) *To enhance multi- agency and inter group coordination between the New Zealand Police, Coastguard, Surf Rescue, Coastguard Air Patrol, Nelson City Council Harbourmaster, Tasman District Council Harbour Master and LandSAR volunteers within the area in the event of a marine SAR incident.*
- b) *To provide all participants the opportunity to refresh and practice their search and rescue incident management knowledge and skill during a full scale operational exercise and to identify gaps in training and knowledge, procedures and to identify areas that need further development.*
- c) *To ensure value was delivered to all participants.*

## Details for the day

On this occasion coastguard will be the first boat on the water to respond and will coordinate other boats joining the search as would happen in a real search (rather than all the boats go out in convoy).

The Coastguard boat crew will be activated by pager and will report directly to their base and will be given approximate splash point, possible target description and time in the water.

Coastguard boat will take on the On Scene Coordinator role and have a Police SAR observer. Coastguard is to coordinate and direct other boats as they arrive on scene while current sea/weather conditions are ascertained, drift data and tasking details are sorted from the Incident Management team.

Coastal Air Patrol (location of plane to be confirmed) will be deployed at approximately 9.00am for a maximum one hour flight as directed by SAR Incident Management team

All other players (Coastguard IMT, CAPS IMT, Surf Rescue, Police, NCC, TDC, LandSAR volunteers) are to report to the Talisman building (opposite Police Station) at 0830hrs Sunday 24th Feb for briefing.

After briefing IMT to set up in Police OHO OP's room and boat crews to head to their vessels. There will be some Police/ LandSAR people available to head out in the boats as observers.

Exercise will finish at midday when all boats should be back on land.

Debrief will then be conducted at 1300hrs at the Nelson Surf Rescue base. A BBQ with refreshments will be provided also.

### **Roles for the day**

S/Const Dave COLVILLE- Incident Controller  
S/const Gerry TONKIN- Planning Intel  
S/Const Dave Cogger- Operations Manager  
Ian Watts (LandSAR)- Planning Intel  
Coastguard and CAPS- three staff (TBA) for IMT support  
Dave Duncan (NCC Harbour Master)- Observing role

Craig Howden -Coastguard On Scene Controller-  
Sgt Steve Savage- Police Observer on Coastguard  
Steve Hainstock- Skipper TDC Harbourmaster  
TBA- -Skipper NCC Harbourmaster vessel  
Noah Hosie- Skipper Surf Rescue

**Scenario**

0630 hrs Targets into the sea. Targets are to suit the existing sea and weather conditions.

Two targets to replicate 1x person in water with life jacket and 1x person in water with no life jacket.

Location for exercise is 2-3 nautical miles off the centre of Rabbit Island, Tasman Bay. This puts us just outside the controlled zone around the Nelson airport.

0815 hrs Coastguard to be activated by pager

0830 hrs Location and description of incident to be reported to all persons involved.

Location to be provided will be as described by a civilian witness ie not coordinates. Location should be described for example *"2-3km off the toilet block at Rabbit Island towards Separation point"*

Scenario is that a small pleasure craft has sunk 3 nautical miles off Rabbit Island. Two POB, incident reported by father who was wearing his lifejacket, he initially reported the incident by cellphone but phone no longer works (wet or flat battery). He reports also that his 10 year old son is also in the water but he was not wearing a life jacket.

**Police Funding**

Police supplied Catering for the exercise at a cost of [REDACTED] and also provided fuel for four vessels and one aircraft.

The fuel bill for each resource used is as follows

Coastguard Nelson	\$	[REDACTED]
Surf Rescue Nelson	\$	[REDACTED]
CAPS	\$	[REDACTED]
TDC vessel	\$	[REDACTED]
NCC vessel	\$	[REDACTED]
Refreshments	\$	[REDACTED]
TOTAL cost	\$	[REDACTED]

### Lessons Learnt

This is covered off in the attached Debrief Appendix.

### Effect of Funding

The funding provided by NZSAR has enabled a large scale marine SAREX to be held utilising all our marine resources including the use of a search aircraft.

Nelson Bays has the potential for a number of large marine SAR incidents in having a large port, a huge amount of recreational boats and a busy airport near Tasman Bay.

It provided the best opportunity for Police to work together with Coastguard and other units to practice a large scale response together.

Each year we hold a Marine SAREX and it is noticeable that all groups have developed in their roles and that we have some very skilled and capable people involved.

Great progress has been made and we will endeavour to keep practising the CIMS based structure and work on the areas identified in the debrief notes.



Steve Savage  
Sergeant H745  
Search and Rescue, Nelson Bays

05/03/2013

# Nelson Bays Marine SAREX 2013

24th January DEBRIEF notes

1300hrs start

Present:

Police [REDACTED]

Coastguard [REDACTED]

CAPS [REDACTED]

Surf Rescue [REDACTED]

NCC Punawai [REDACTED]

Absent

## Overview of exercise

Overview of day provided by Steve Savage then opened up to each group. From an observer on Coastguard point of view I found them to be an effective team with sound processes.

## Incident Controller- [REDACTED]

- Initially took an hour or so for things to get running smoothly, this was put down to not enough people working in IMT
- Complicated further by reported helicopter crash in our area (later found to be Rotorua)
- Initial confusion over who knew what, groups met at briefing and heard scenario and IMT unsure if they needed to be retold (\*\*see notes for next time\*\*)
- e Search patterns as viewed on Tracplus seemed to work well and be well coordinated.

## Coastguard group

- Initially only one other boat (Surf) responded so they were tasked to search the shallower areas close to shore.

- Search was complicated by the large amount of debris and seabirds on the water, search patterns were constantly being halted and disrupted whilst sightings were investigated further.
- Appreciated the tasking and info coming from the IMT as the ability to do the fine chart work is somewhat difficult in the confines/ conditions.
- On Scene Coordinator role was easier once the boats arrived all at the same spot
- Initial splash point was given in two separate locations over the radio which resulted in first responding boats going to different areas. This came down to the description given by the witness (they didn't marry up so left two spots which needed checking).
- On Scene Coordinator this time would like to be involved in the IMT side of things next time to gain a perspective from that side of the search.
- Boat crew thought a creeping line search would have worked best but tasked by IMT to do an expanding box search. Either deemed suitable but due to the tide turning at commencement of search the box search was deemed more suitable.

### **Surf Rescue Group**

- Initially tasked to search in close whilst sufficient boats arrived to commence the search pattern.
- Lots of targets in the water (rubbish and seabirds)
- Comms worked well

### **CAPS**

- Great visibility, could see sharks, rays, nets in water etc
- Believes the bigger target was likely picked up by a boat as it should have been very visible
- Optimum spotting height in the conditions today was 500 feet
- A bit close to airport zone which made things difficult with constantly having to check in.

### **NCC Punawai**

- Felt it was well directed
- Large amount of flotsam and birds made things difficult

Dave Duncan (Reviewer)

Separate reviewer evaluation provided

### **Learning points**

- " Next time we will advise all groups of the exercise but not get them in at a certain time, rather we will advise that there will be an exercise in the morning of .....The IMT can meet and have all units paged and then they can respond in real time with no prior info about the scenario. This will let the exercise run in real time
- " Run the exercise further away from the flight zone as we were still too close (only a problem when utilizing CAPS)
- " Continue to give opportunities to new skippers and crew to help gain experience.
- " All staff not on boats to be working from ICP

Debrief closed 1325hrs

SAREX 24 February 2013

On 24th Feb at 0700 the HM vessel was used to drop a target in the Tasman Bay for a subsequent SAR exercise.

At 0830 all parties involved in the SAREX ,:-

Police, Land SAR, Air Patrol, Coastguard, Surf Rescue, Tasman District HM and Nelson HM staff met at the Talisman Sea Cadets building for a briefing on the day, organisation of the crews for vessels and a reminder of precautions to take.

The various skippers and crews then went to their tasking whilst some joined the police to attend the IMT and observe.

On the water ..

Coastguard and Surf, due to the efficient paging system and the crew were already on board and on standby responded first to their tasking.

"a vessel has sunk and there is a man in the water last known position understood to be approx. 3 miles off the entrance to Mapua and a few miles west of the North Cardinal mark"

At 0915 Surf began a Shore line search along Rabbit Island and Coastguard headed to what they believed to be a reasonable datum using the above position.

\*It is not clear who tasked Surf to search the beach

At 0915 the TDC HM advised "Legato" was underway.

The Nelson HM staff were on the water by 0930 however it is unclear who was advised of this.

It is understood by the author that all vessels involved in the exercise were in the vicinity of the North Cardinal Mark by 0935 however no individual or organisation was taking charge or co-ordinating a combined search effort, Coastguard were completing a search to the North West of their datum as shown in the attached Track Plus picture 1. Given the wind and tide of the day this is considered reasonable.

SE 10/Outgoing tide

At 0950 after monitoring little radio traffic the IMT tasked Coastguard to combine all units and commence a box pattern search from a position determined by the IMT .

\* no sitrep reports were actively being fed back to the IMT

\* No obvious on scene commander/ Training required

\* no requests for assistance were made by surf or CG and no offers of assistance were made by the other vessels in the exercise

\* An expanding box pattern search was commenced by all units with 100m spacing between the vessels, the first leg to the south using compass headings

## THE IMT

The IMT consisted of the Police members of LandSar, members of Air Patrol and Coastguard. It is believed all members of the IMT were relatively inexperienced in marine Search and Rescue. It was apparent at the commencement that Dave Cogger was overworked as he appeared to be the only person capable of logging into most of the systems and getting them working.

- Key personnel overloaded

It is acknowledged that in this exercise some police staff (usually part of the IMT) were on the water to gain experience and a better understanding of the challenges there.

The author believed he was there as an observer and consultant if required.

- At 0930 the author was involved in training / plotting a datum start point
- Training required for all IMT members.

At 0930 RCCNZ were asked if they would assist in this exercise and agreed to do so providing the attached chartlet with the Person In Water location well defined. It is valuable to note that their calculations were very close to the IMT chosen datum point.

- Use the professional resource supplied as checkpoint

At 0930 approximately the IMT were also notified that air patrol were preparing to take off. Given the constraints of communication (cellphone only) and normal air traffic in one of NZ's busiest airports this was excellent timing. Further comment relative to air patrol is the final part of this report.

Inexperience was the greatest challenge for the IMT team including a lack of detailed knowledge of the resources available to them

Radio communications were distracted by a real time incident occurring in Blenheim, and a misunderstanding that disrupted the leadership of the team as it was believed a senior team member was required to attend a helicopter crash in Lake Rotoiti – This was later realised to be in the North Island. The IMT team were further disrupted by a member being tasked with catering for all the members in the Sarex.

At 1150 the IMT tasked the search party to a new datum and a new search pattern . See Track plot #3.

Visibility on the day was perfect , light or no winds , calm seas, .At 1230 the search was called off and all returned to the Search and Rescue Centre on Rocks Rd for a de-brief and well deserved meal.

## Air Patrol

It was learned that for Air Patrol to be used most effectively in these exercises they must be conducted well outside Nelson City airport space.

Air patrol can and did cover a large area very quickly and their track plus demonstrated an expanding box search then a creeping line ahead search well executed over the target datum and surrounding areas, I unfortunately do not have a print of that success.

Air patrol is to be congratulated on a well-executed drill.

## Lessons Learnt and Summary

1. Vessel tasking in future is to occur on a by vessel basis as they would be in real life. This will enable Coastguard and Surf to practise being on scene first, planning and returning a SITREP to the IMT, communicating with each other and other members as they arrive. Developing an on water task force in conjunction with the IMT .
2. Further training is required in the following
  - Chart plotting - IMT and all vessel units
  - On scene commander – On the water and in the IMT using the CIMS platform
  - Radio comms criteria to be established for search groups
  - Search techniques- Direction, spacing ,tasking, monitoring
3. The IMT (police) require further training in the equipment available for use and process in Marine Search and Rescue.
4. SITREPS are a crucial part of any SAREX and a proforma is to be created to encourage this and the information it should contain {CG}
5. Key personnel must not be required for other duties or tasks until an exercise is complete
6. All likely IMT members require further training in their respective roles.

There is not intended to be any criticism of any party involved in this exercise as all parties responded well in a timely manner and when finally co-ordinated were part of an excellent exercise together. These exercises are an opportunity for us all to learn and develop and all parties are to be congratulated on their development and improvement to date.

Regards

Capt Dave Duncan