

Exercise Evaluation Report

EXERCISE CARSON

Location: Tararua Forest Park, Mt Cone-Totara Flats, Wairarapa, Wellington

Date: 15-16-17 November 2019

Report version: FINAL

Evaluator: *Brett Main NZ Police Wellington SAR*

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Executive Summary

The Wellington District SAREX held in the Wairarapa 15 to 17th November 2019 met all of their objectives.

Police and Land SAR skills were tested and relationships developed through the SAREX. A lot of learning was gained from those involved. This SAREX showed a professional and focused attitude to working together to gain the desired outcomes.

Some opportunities for development have been identified and are listed in the recommendations.

1. Recommendations

- For new members to the IMT to complete the Manage The Initial Response (MTIR) course.
- Paying particular attention to the full completion of the Land SAR forms.
- Having LandSAR assessors in the Wellington and Wairarapa areas available for the SAREX.

2. Introduction

This SAREX 2019 conducted in the Wellington District was hosted by Wairarapa as it is shared between Wellington and Wairarapa on alternating years.

The use of the Tararua Ranges for the SAREX gave an opportunity to practice skills and planning in an area that is known for search operations.

The main focus of the SAREX was to introduce new LandSAR members, Police Incident Controllers to searching and provide an opportunity for competencies to be assessed.

3. Background

3.1 Background to the Exercise

Tramping is growing in popularity in the Tararua Ranges. This SAREX provides an opportunity for NZ Police and LandSAR to practice search skills and gain knowledge of the terrain and difficulties it presents to missing persons and searchers. Use of a Helicopter to deploy teams had been budgeted for.

This provided an opportunity to test competencies from probationary team members to IMT including safety correspondence and dealing with media.

3.2 Dates, location, organising agency(s), key people

Friday 15th November to Sunday 17th November 2019.

Tararua Forest Park, Mt Cone and Tototara Flats area.

IMT run from the Wairarapa Land SAR Base at Hood Aerodrome Masterton.

Anthony Matherson – NZ Police SAR Wairarapa SAR Coordinator

Murray Johnson – LandSAR Wairarapa

Noel Bigwood – LandSAR Horowhenua (Assessor)

3.3 Participating organisations

Wairarapa LandSAR

Wellington LandSAR

Wairarapa Police SAR

Wellington Police SAR

AREC

Amalgamated Helicopters

3.4 Exercise aim

To provide an opportunity to test competencies from probationary team members to IMT including safety correspondence and dealing with media.

3.5 Exercise objectives

- 1) Introduce 2 Police SAR members to Incident Controller position for the first time.
- 2) Conduct an IMT handover.
- 3) Provide an opportunity for LandSAR competencies to be assessed for field teams and IMT.

3.6 Exercise Scenario

On Wednesday the 13th of November 2019 a party of 4 trampers was dropped off at Walls Whare in the Tararua Forest Park.

On Friday the 15th at about 1400 hrs Police Communications received a call from one of the party saying they had become separated from their group the day before and he was in the Cone area and suffering from Diabetes. He had been disorientated going between Cone and Neill.

Contact was made with the next of kin and she reported that the party had failed to arrive at their arranged pick up point at the Holdsworth road end that afternoon. Their intentions as she understood was to go to Cone and then to a hut in Totara Flats.

At 2000 hrs the event and information was handed to Police SAR when an IMT was formed and taskings completed for deployment the next morning Saturday the 16th. 11 teams were expected for the SAREX deployment on the Saturday morning. 3 tasks were to make use of the helicopter with a poor weather alternative.

The other 3 in the party had also become separated from each other and were injured or unwell on different spurs off Cone ridge heading toward Totara Flats as their destination was Sayer Hut.

4. Evaluation Methodology

4.1 The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The evaluator was asked at short notice to participate as an evaluator. The evaluator was asked to observe and report on the SAREX objectives.

4.2 Evaluation scope

The evaluation was limited to the functions of the IMT to establish if the Objectives were being achieved and competencies were being assessed.

4.3 Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

Attendance was made at the initial briefing for the SAREX and the handing of the scenario to the first IMT.

Observation was made of the IMT processes and the introduction of new Police SAR squad members into IC roles. Observation was made of an Assessor collecting evidence of IMT competencies and field teams conducting attestations with their team leader and passed on to the LandSAR Assessor.

The final debrief of the SAREX was also attended.

No observation was made of the field activity.

4.4 The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

Some details and a brief outline of the SAREX objectives were forwarded 2 weeks prior to the SAREX. The evaluator was initially to be involved in the SAREX as a participant.

It was agreed the evaluator would focus on the objectives and observe the SAREX activities and report on the findings.

The report was submitted in draft for comment from the Police SAR Coordinator and organising committee. The final version contains what the evaluator and Police SAR Coordinator consider appropriate.

4.5 Other information

The high winds and poor weather on Saturday did not allow the exercise to play out as planned with the early deployment of field teams by helicopter. All teams had to walk into the search area. An area of exclusion from the search was given to IMT along with injections of information to reduce the search area and ensure the scenario worked as planned.

On the Saturday evening a no duff overdue person was reported in the Mt Reeves area near the SAREX. Teams that were nearby were re tasked closer to the Mt Reeves area for early morning deployment. This overdue person managed to make his way out of the area at about 11pm.

5. Findings

Introduce 2 Police SAR members to Incident Controller position for the first time.

On the Friday evening Sgt Anthony Matherson briefed the two Police SAR members on what was expected and that they needed to conduct a handover on the Saturday Morning. A time was arranged for one of them to return on the Saturday for the handover. An overall SAREX safety plan had been developed and was gone through.

Both the Police SAR members taking on the IC role have SAR experience but very little experience in IMT and have only completed CIMS 4 as an introduction to IMT roles.

During the initial phase the new IC was able to gather his team assign CIMS positions and take an overview of what was being completed by the IMT. Although initially he was unsure of how to run an operation he was given guidance from more experienced LandSAR and Police members, allowing him to have direction and getting the job done. All the tasks were completed for the incoming teams on Saturday along with an IAP and briefing.

Saturday morning a full GSMEAC briefing was given by the IC and his IMT team. Safety was part of that with the requirements being brought to everyone's attention. A helicopter briefing was completed for everyone prior to deployment even though the weather was not conducive for flying in the Tararua Range.

After the Saturday handover the new IC was able to take control of his IMT and review the IAP and have meetings to set direction for the search. There were also some other new members to the IMT alongside some experienced members to mentor them into the role.

The IMT worked well together and were able to take the information coming from the field to re task teams. There was some lack of completeness to filling the tasking forms, once this had been brought to their attention the IMT was able to take this and be more thorough.

A media release was produced by the IC and this was released to the media through the Police Media section at PNHQ. This was also noted on the Saturday IAP.

The safety plan used for the SAREX had an evaluation and review time for Saturday. This was brought to the attention of the IMT at about that time one of the missing persons were being located. The IMT were more focused on the re-tasking of teams. The safety plan was looked at later and agreed upon that it could continue as it stood however it was not documented.

Good use was made of SARTrack as a tool for tracking information, teams and keeping a log of activities and decisions.

Conduct an IMT handover.

After all teams had been handed their tasks and had deployed an IMT handover was conducted. A GSMEAC brief was given and a discussion around their initial tasks and thoughts on the direction of the search to the incoming IMT.

The incoming IMT were impressed with what had been completed the prior evening and that morning, making comments that they could take over easily and see the direction of the prior IMT planning making their job a little easier.

Provide an opportunity for Land SAR competencies to be assessed for field teams and IMT.

Noel Bigwood was able to be at the SAREX as an Assessor of the LandSAR competencies. He was observing the IMT and checking their competencies. When the field teams returned from the field the team leaders made attestations as to the competencies completed in the field, the completed competency log books were handed to Noel Bigwood for him to check and certify completion and entry to the database. This created a lot of work for one assessor and some work was needed to be done once the SAREX was concluded.

6. Conclusions

This SAREX was well planned and met the objectives set for this exercise.

The SAREX provided an excellent opportunity for those new to the IC role to have a realistic search to deal without the pressure of an operational incident while being mentored into the role and developing confidence in the IC position.

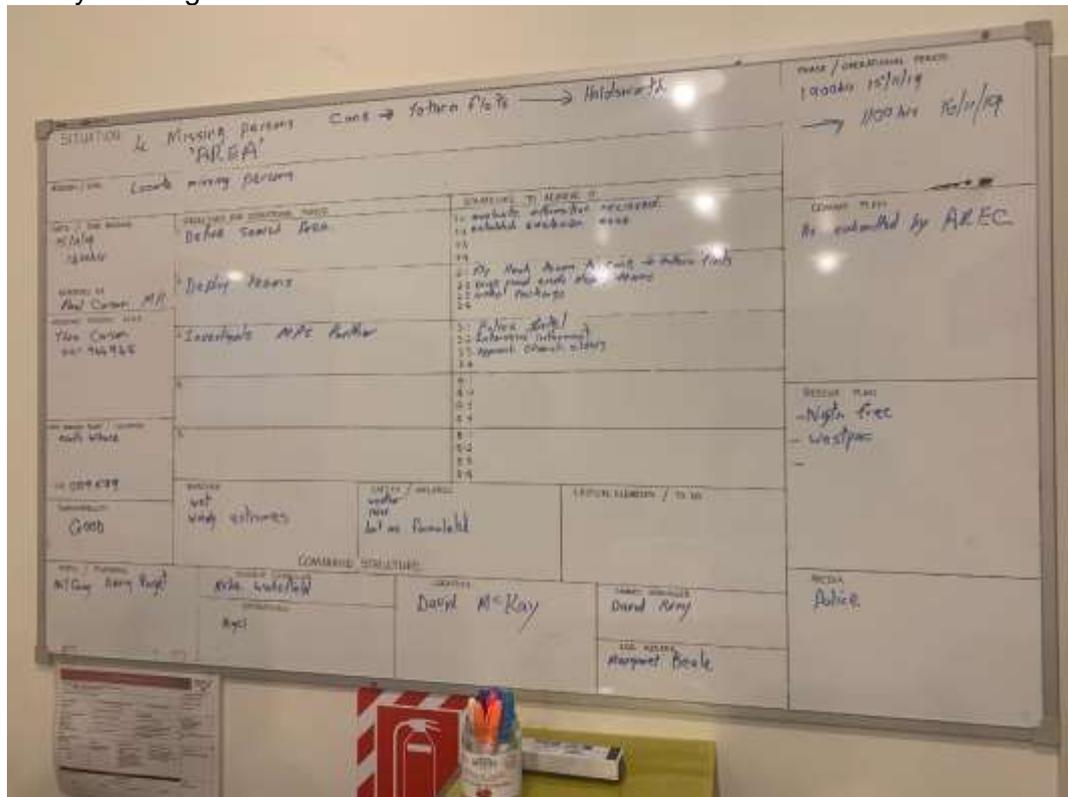
The SAREX has given the opportunity to develop and strengthen relationships between Wellington and Wairarapa SAR groups that had become unfamiliar without regular contact. Both areas worked well together and a professional team spirit was evident throughout.

7. Appendix

Mt Cone area Tararua Range



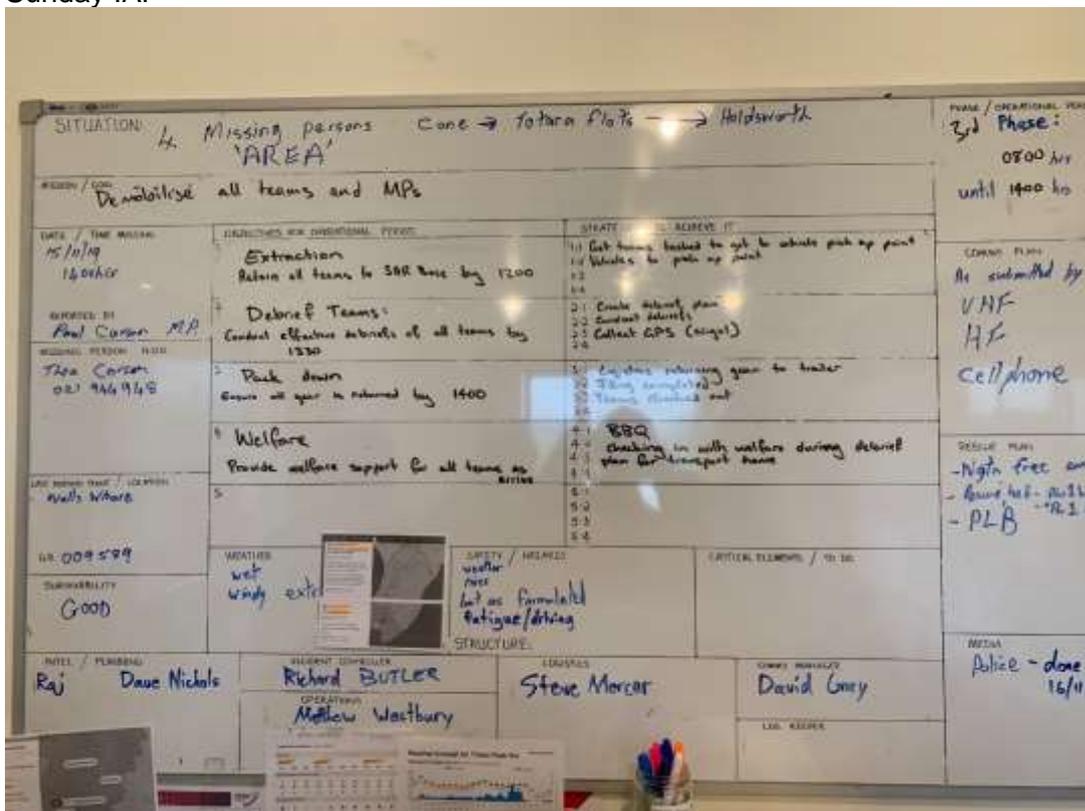
Friday evening IAP



Saturday IAP after handover



Sunday IAP



Competency assessments

