

Exercise Evaluation Report

SAR EX Seagull

Location: *Gisborne Police Station*

Date: *23 July 2022*

Report version: *Final*

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1. Executive Summary

Considerable planning and forethought went into this Exercise. The use of an SAREX evaluator as an exercise manager/controller added value in the planning process and in the outcomes of the entire process. All participants were encouraged to complete CIMS 2 and a 1-day refresher ahead of the exercise. If executed efficiently the concept has the potential to add greater value for participants and extract a greater return on investment in terms of quality learning and increasing competency of IC's and IMT members.

Overall, the exercise was of a high standard. The fact that there was a need for a rapid change in plans due to the weather, the learnings and involvement of all participants was not disadvantaged significantly.

Useful learnings have emerged regardless of the in-field component being put off till further notice. If the recommendations are implemented the lessons learned will be capitalised.

1. Recommendations

- 1) Create Readiness Plan/s
- 2) Establish MOU/MOA with Eastland Port
- 3) Consider advantage of early notification of the DCC and the services on offer
- 4) Maintain currency of skills and knowledge among IC's
- 5) Consider the use of suitably skilled and experienced evaluators in the initial planning and controlling phase of the exercise
- 6) Follow up full SAREX within 12 months
- 7) Maintain adequate supply of marine charts

2. Introduction

This exercise was initially planned to involve multiple agencies and their resources in the field. The intention was to test how different organizations such as Police, Coastguard, Eastland Port, Search and Rescue Services limited (Gisborne Rescue Helicopter), Surf Life Saving, Land SAR, and local Fixed-wing assets would work together in a real-life environment and in the IMT role.

Leaning more towards marine based activity, there was a Land SAR element. Due to poor weather conditions and sea state the decision was made to abandon the field exercise portion, as the risk of harm to persons and damage to property was too high.

The IMT component of the exercise continued as three scenarios had been prepared. It was anticipated that eleven to thirteen people would be present and the IMT would still be tested as per the objectives and in its ability to work with and coordinate the various agencies in a table-top fashion. When thirty-two individuals turned up in support of the exercise, a quick pivot was made to run three separate IMT's simultaneously, running each scenario across all three IMT's at one time. This would give every member an opportunity to participate meaningfully and multiply the learning for all three Incident Controllers as they rotated through each team on the completion of each scenario.

The exercise was held at the Gisborne Police Station.

3. Background

3.1. Background to the Exercise

In 2021 a Myanmar national went missing off a logging ship. It later transpired that he had lowered himself off a logging ship at anchor in the bay and into the water in an attempt to swim to the shore and seek asylum. When it was confirmed that he was not aboard the vessel, and he was in fact missing, a search was launched over the water and along the shore. He was located floating a short distance offshore, alive. The debrief highlighted an opportunity for deeper and wider connections to local resources, skills, and knowledge. This SAREX has been designed with that in mind.

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

The initial plan was for the exercise to run over two days. However, in light of the weather and sea conditions, it was held on the 23 July 2022, at the Gisborne Police Station.

Organising agency NZ Police, Gisborne.

Gisborne SAR-CO- Maui Aben

SAREX Controller – Vince Ranger

SAREX Evaluator- Sunny Peeters

3.3. Participating organizations

NZ Police - Maui Aben – Police SAR Coordinator
Claire Trezise – SAR assist

NZSAR - Andy Greig- Observer

Land SAR

Coastguard – Aaron Boyle- Skipper/IMT and Adrian Brown- Skipper/IMT

Surf Life Saving- Justin Martin

RCCNZ - Kevin Banaghan- Observer/Drift pattern assist

Rescue Helicopter- Kelley Waite

Eastland Port – John Gordon

Local Fixed Wing (stood down)

3.4. Exercise aim

To test IMT capability and inter-agency cooperation/collaboration during marine/land-based SAR.

3.5. Exercise objectives

1. Planning documents demonstrate preparedness

Test how IMT implements readiness plan

Test mobilization of readiness plan

2. SAR Partners collaborate effectively

Appropriate agencies are selected for and participate in the SAR exercise

All agencies operate within CIMS model and principles

3. IMT effectively manages the exercise

The IMT operates within the CIMS principles

The IMT operates within the CIMS model

4. Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response

Intra and Inter team communication is effective in maintaining situational awareness

5. Risks are identified, removed, minimized, and managed

Risk management systems and processes are identified and communicated by the IMT

6. SAR Operational personnel refresh and practice search and rescue skills

SAR personnel carry out a search to locate missing party

IMT implement SAR process for managing field-based personnel

3.6. Exercise Scenario

Scenario. 1

I am a skipper of a small runabout.

This morning at 0500 we left Gisborne for a dive on Ariel Rocks. There were two of us, myself and Bill Blogs.

We anchored the boat and we both went for a dive.

I came up after about 35 minutes of diving and got into the boat. I wasn't worried about Bill. He is an experienced diver and usually lasts longer on the bottom than I do.

I started to get worried about him after about 50 minutes. I hadn't seen him surface. He should have been up by then.

I lifted the anchor and did several circles of the rock, looking for him on the surface. I couldn't find him.

It would have been about 0600 that we actually started the dive.

Bill has got a 5mm wetsuit. It is black. He wears a thermal shark skin vest under his wetsuit.

I have reported this by phone as I don't have a radio. I am still out here looking around Ariel rock.

The phone call came in 20 minutes ago to Police comms.

The Police SAR on call member has been activated.

Coastguard have been advised.

The rescue Helicopter has been advised.

Both the coastguard unit and Rescue Helicopter are waiting for a tasking.

Your task is to Plan the response to locate Bill.

The resources you have available are whatever is ready and available in the Gisborne area now.

You are to complete the NZSAR form-set for Marine SAR including

Search urgency

Sitrep

Action Plan

Taskings to resources you have responded.

Information collection plan.

Weather conditions. Slight sea. 1-meter Easterly swell with a westerly wind 5 knots.

Time limit. 1 hour 30 minutes to complete

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Scenario 2

Last night a commercial fishing vessel Snapper was returning from a fishing expedition.

They had left Gisborne port on the 18 July. There were 2 crew Bob and Stu, and the skipper Merrill STUBING on board. They had been fishing for Tuna off the East cape, and have been focusing on the 1000-meter line.

They finished fishing just North of the Ranfurly Banks at about 6.00 p.m. on the 22 July with the intention of motoring back to Gisborne.

They were travelling at about 12 knots on auto pilot.

They had couple of beers as they were motoring back.

At about midnight both the crewmen went to the bunks to have a sleep.

The skipper remained at the helm.

At 0700 hrs today Stu came to the helm station to find Captain STUBING asleep at the helm.

He had noticed that Bob wasn't in his bunk.

Captain STUBING said that he hadn't seen Bob, and that he must have drifted off to sleep at about 5.30 a.m. He is sure that he would have seen Bob come up from the bunks prior to that time.

They have searched the boat. He is not on board.

They have assumed that he has gone to the duckboard to relieve himself and fallen over-board.

Their current position is about 1 nm inside Ariel Rock.

Your task is to plan the response to locate and rescue Bob

The resources you have available are whatever is ready and available in the Gisborne area now.

You are to complete the NZSAR forms for Marine SAR including

Search urgency

Sitrep

Action plan

Tasking to resources you have responded

Information collection plan

Weather conditions. Northerly wind 10 knots sea choppy with 1.5-meter swell.

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Scenario 3

An emergency call has been received by the Police by a skipper of a vessel that was off the coast North of Gisborne at a position .5 mile off Gable end foreland.

He reported that his boat is an 8-meter trailer boat and that another trailer boat of about the same size have collided. He said that he had right of way and that the other boat was not looking. He was panicking and wouldn't or couldn't give his name or identify the occupants on the boat.

He said that he had himself and 3 on board. He thought the other boat had 2 on board but others may have been thrown overboard as a result of the collision.

He said that one of his passengers has been thrown overboard and that he cant see him now.

He was on the surface and drifted off. He was wearing a lifejacket

The boats are still stuck together, and both are taking on water. One more so than the other.

It looks like the skipper of the other boat is on board but is unconscious. The motor of the other boat is still going. He can't get to it to turn it off. The other on board the other boat can't get any sense out of.

This has just happened. Comms have advised Coastguard and the rescue helicopter

Your task is to search for and rescue the people on the boats, and to search for and rescue the people in the water.

The resources you have available are whatever is ready and available in the Gisborne area now

You are to complete the NZSAR forms for Marine SAR

Search urgency

Sitrep

Action plan

Tasking to resources you have responded

Information collection plan.

4. Evaluation Methodology

4.1. The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The objectives were carefully selected through consultation between the SAR coordinator and the Exercise controller. The decision was informed in part by the report into Op Myanmar. The six objectives listed were settled and agreed on by the planning parties and the evaluator.

4.2. Evaluation scope

The intention was to observe the effective use of appropriate agencies and a depth of interagency cooperation across a wide range of partners and relevant groups

4.3. Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

The IMT aspect was well observed. The in-field aspect was called off.

4.4. The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

This report has been prepared in consultation with the exercise controller and the lead SAR coordinator, Gisborne Police. The objectives were set and presented to the evaluator in adherence to the NZSAR guidelines and recommendations. The evaluator attended and monitored the exercise making notes on observations, feedback and interviews with various participants and representatives. A draft report was sent to the organizer and the Gisborne Police. A final draft was completed and submitted to NZSAR.

4.5. Other information

Considering the field aspect of the exercise was abandoned for health and safety reasons there were aspects of the evaluation that were not possible. It was not possible to observe actual interagency cooperation and collaboration in the field. It was also difficult to assess real time information management and further development of plans going into the second and subsequent phases of the search.

5. Findings

5.1 There was no evidence of a Response Plan.

Objective 1- Planning documents demonstrate preparedness

- KPI's -Test how IMT implements readiness plan
-Test mobilization of readiness plan

The evaluator noted there was no Response Plan available.

5.2 It was clear to see all parties and partners selected to participate were appropriate.

Objective 2 -SAR Partners collaborate effectively

- KPI's -Appropriate agencies are selected for and participate in the SAR exercise
-All agencies operate within CIMS model and principles

The evaluator was not able to observe the agencies operate within the CIMS model and principles as there was no activity in the field.

5.3- The IMT did manage the scenarios effectively within the CIMS model and principles

Objective 3 IMT effectively manages the exercise

- KPI's -The IMT operates withing the CIMS principles
-The IMT operate within the CIMS model

The evaluator noted that there was active engagement of partners as SMEs. Advice was sought as and when needed from those in the IMT and other agencies. IC's heard and clarified information from partners, and used the advice to form key decisions in a timely manner.

Not all the participants were fully conversant with the CIMS model, however with the assistance of the wider team there was sufficient evidence to indicate an adherence to operate within the CIMS model and principles. Forms to manage information, taskings, weightings, action plans etc. were all used and completed to an adequate level under the circumstances. Paperwork did not conclude in a cohesive file for future reference.

5.4

Objective 4 Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response

- KPI's -Intra and Inter team communication is effective in maintaining situational awareness
Within the IMT the information was effectively managed and communicated.

The evaluator observed once the search area had been determined (SAD), there may have been a gap in understanding how taskings should be managed to ensure thorough coverage of the search area (SAC), and how this should be managed. This was not tested due to the fact there was no "in field" assets, however simple probing confirmed a gap in currency of process management skills and awareness.

5.5- As much as was observed the risks were identified.

Objective 5 Risks are identified, removed, minimized, and managed

KPI's -Risk management systems and processes are identified and communicated by the IMT

The evaluator noted risks were identified by the IMT. No further observations were made due to nil field participation.

5.6- This portion of the exercise was not completed as it was deemed unsafe in the conditions.

Objective 6 SAR Operational personnel refresh and practice search and rescue skills

KPI's -SAR personnel carry out a search to locate missing party

-IMT implement SAR process for managing field-based personnel

No observations possible.

5.7 Evaluators observation.

The use of a SAREX Evaluator from an early stage in planning of a SAREX has been an intention to reduce the workload on the Police SAR-CO and other Police staff. In this instance the early engagement of Vince Ranger has proven to be a real benefit. The exercise planning has been of a high standard but more importantly ALL Police staff have been able to get improvement opportunities out of the event without overloading or distraction from BAU roles. The initial intention to get SAREX Evaluators involved early is not common knowledge or practice, but the use of a Planner and an Evaluator could likely improve outcomes going forward. It has in this case as evidenced by the learnings from all IC's and the involvement of the SAR-CO in a role other than the person responsible for the whole event.

5.8 Continue to conclude the SAREX

This exercise should be continued and completed within the next 12 months to capitalize on the learnings and the effort that has gone into the planning of the event.

5.9 Maintain adequate supply or marine charts

Consideration should be given to developing and maintaining current charts for the marine environment that is likely to be covered in marine search or rescue. Skills and techniques differ from the use of maps during land SARs so the need for regular familiarization of marine charts could be an advantage. This will also mean they are available on short notice in the real event.

6. Conclusions

The exercise was successful in that it identified learning and growth opportunities. The first objective was to test and measure how the IMT utilised and adhered to the response plan. It quickly became obvious there was no response plan available. As a result, a recommendation has been made for the development of such plan/s.

Overall, the relevant agencies participated regardless of the abandonment of the in-field component. This offered the IMT perspective to many whom, otherwise, may not have been exposed to the IMT aspect. This produced a great learning opportunity. This also lends itself to a “phased approach” where, now that the IMT has been exercised, the opportunity to test the in-field assets still exists. This will no doubt produce a deeper learning from the IMT perspective and the inter-agency cohesiveness.

The early notification of the DCC was discussed. While initial taskings of resources is a requirement in the interests of efficiency, the ongoing support of an operation is a major consideration. Early notification of the DCC or operations manager can result in the provision of victim support, executive overwatch and support, media, long term planning support, and helps prepare management for other resulting enquiries through media or OIA.

One key relationship regarding water/marine based resources, skills and knowledge has been identified as a result of Op Myanmar and this exercise. Eastland Port have a wide range of skills and equipment that can be called on when the circumstances require it.

Currently the relationship sits with one, perhaps two key people. In order to take this forward in a meaningful way, an MOU or MOA could be established. This would include, but not be limited to call-out procedures, cost and billing protocol, communication, and collaboration etc.

The demand placed on the Police IC is at times enormous. The gap between training and taking charge of an IMT can be significant. Add to this a high tempo in BAU duties and a “currency” gap can be noticed.

The CIMS model requires specific and accurate execution of process, procedure, and documentation. If this is not comprehensively practiced regularly by the IC, important aspects can be missed that could result in harm to individuals and damage to organisations.

The exercise was well planned and very well executed under the circumstances. Further benefits can be anticipated at a later date when the in-field component is carried out.

7. Appendix