

Exceptional achievements and dedication honoured at the NZ Search and Rescue Awards

Embargoed until 6pm Tuesday 6 May 2025

A surf lifeguard diving under an upturned boat, forcing open the cabin hatch and pulling a trapped man free.

Two decades of developing and improving a device for people with cognitive impairments, significantly increasing the chances of a successful search and rescue operation.

These are just two examples of the exceptional skill and dedication being celebrated at this year's New Zealand's Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Awards.

These awards are presented annually in recognition of outstanding achievements within New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region, which covers 30 million square kilometres.

This evening (Tuesday 6 May 2025) the Hon James Meager, Associate Minister for Transport will present two Gold Awards and seven Certificates of Achievement at this year's ceremony, being held at Parliament.

The Awards are determined by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council.

"The tales of determination and commitment to search and rescue are truly inspiring," says Acting Council Chair Ruth Fairhall. "Each of these recipients have gone above and beyond to help reunite the lost, missing and injured with their friends and whānau."

"On behalf of all New Zealand, we congratulate the Award recipients. Your contributions to our society are incredibly important, and we are very grateful for your exceptional dedication and service."

Awards given in the Operations category recognise significant rescue operations that took place between 1 January and 31 December 2024.

Awards given in the Support category recognise the contributions of individuals to search and rescue in New Zealand.

Those receiving awards are:

Gold Award – Operational Activity

The Gold Award for Operational Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2024.

Raglan Surf Lifesaving Club

For the rescue of three people from a boat overturned on the Raglan Bar.

On 1 December 2024, Police were informed that a small fishing boat carrying a family of three had capsized crossing the Raglan Bar. Although the son had been thrown clear and the mother was able to get out of the boat, the father remained trapped in the upturned hull, breathing from a small air pocket.

Members of the Raglan Surf Life Saving Club were training nearby with Inflatable Rescue Boats (IRB). They responded immediately and pulled the mother and son from the water. Unable to locate the father, a Surf Lifeguard entered the water to check the boat, cutting his way through tangled fishing line. After banging on the hull and hearing a response from the forward cabin, the Surf Lifeguard forced open the cabin hatch and pull the trapped man free. These swift actions almost certainly saved the man's life.

Gold Award – Support Activity

The Gold Award for Support Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.

Ian Trethowen

For the development and ongoing support of WanderSearch.

A WanderSearch device is a small, radio frequency transmitter that can be worn by individuals with cognitive impairment who are at risk of going missing or becoming lost. Ian developed and manufactured the first devices, which were issued in Nelson in 2006 and quickly showed their value. Over the years, Ian has made significant improvements to the wearable devices and the tracking equipment. His ongoing dedication and commitment to improving the technology has profoundly improved the safety and well-being of many vulnerable individuals and the effectiveness of search and rescue for people with cognitive impairment.

Certificates of Achievement – Operational Activity

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Operational Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2024.

Coastguard South Taranaki

For the search for a missing diver near Pātea Bar, South Taranaki.

Zack Armstrong and Hernan Holliday, GCH Aviation – Greymouth team members.

For the rescue of a tramper trapped between boulders in the Taipo River.

Far North Surf Rescue

For the rescue of fishermen swept from rocks near Tapotupotu Bay.

Certificates of Achievement – Support Activity

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Support Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.

Bart Kindt

For the development of SARTrack Incident Management Software.

Graeme Hill

For his service and commitment to New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Dogs and Search and Rescue in the Waikato region.

Don Robertson

For his service and commitment to Amateur Radio Emergency Communication (AREC).

Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro – Tūwharetoa

For Iwi support to Police Search and Rescue in the Central North Island and Bay of Plenty.

Event details

Date: Tuesday 6 May 2025

Time: Doors open 5.30pm. Formalities begin at 6.00pm

Venue: Grand Hall, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

Media access

Attendance:

- If you wish to attend the ceremony, RSVP online <https://twelve.eventsair.com/nzsar-2024/guests> no later than 29 April 2025.
- Normal Parliament access and security protocols will apply.

Interviews:

- The Award recipients will be available for questions and photos from 5pm at the venue.
- To arrange interviews with recipients prior to the ceremony, contact Rachel Roberts.

Imagery:

- On request, official images from the ceremony can be supplied from approximately 9pm on the night of the ceremony. Please contact Rachel Roberts to arrange this before Monday May 5th.
- Under embargo, a selection of images and the commemorative booklet [are available for download](#).

Media contact

Rachel Roberts
Lead Facilitator, NZSAR Awards
0274 151 896
rachel@outlookmedia.co.nz

Notes to editors:

The New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Council was established in 2003 to provide strategic leadership to the New Zealand search and rescue sector. We help improve the overall co-ordination, cohesion, capability and leadership of search and rescue by working alongside the key organisations and individuals providing search and rescue services throughout New Zealand. For more information see nzsar.govt.nz

Search and rescue operations are coordinated by either the New Zealand Police, or Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre, using resources from a range of government, non-government and private organisations and agencies.

NZSAR is a separate agency to New Zealand Land Search and Rescue, who provide volunteers for land-based search and rescue operations throughout New Zealand.

Search and rescue statistics

For the year ending 31 December 2024, there were 3,472 search and rescue (SAR) incidents, where authorities believe a person was a risk and in need of SAR services. Within these incidents, there were:

138 Lives saved, where if SAR agencies had not intervened, lives would definitely have been lost.

777 people rescued, where SAR agencies locate and rescue people at risk, and return them to a safe location.

928 people assisted, where SAR agencies aid people at low risk but who, if left, would be at risk.

63,211 people hours.

2,683 operational asset hours.

ENDS