

# Exercise Evaluation Report

## NORTHLAND DISTRICT SAREX 2024

**Location:** Paihia, Northland

**Date:** 18th to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024

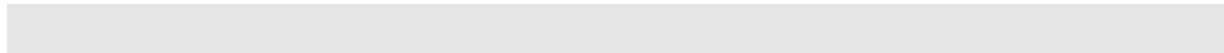
**Report version:** *DRAFT*

**Evaluator(s):** Vince Ranger, Contract Evaluator

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## Executive Summary



The Northland District SAREX for 2024 was held at Opuia on the weekend of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

It was attended by all the Northland Landstar and Police squads and included also the surf lifesaving and coastguard units.

The exercise was made up of 3 relatively small and basic scenarios with one of the primary objectives being to expose the more junior IMT personnel to the IMT functions. Many of these personnel had little training on the IMT roles. However, during the exercise these IMT were mentored by senior SAR manager practitioners.

The exercise exposed the Northland SAR community to work together, both in the field and in the IMT. The exercise demonstrated the need for the SAR agencies to train together to gain a better understanding of each of their strengths, capabilities and limitations.

RCCNZ senior SAR officers also attended this exercise. They also mentored the IMT staff from their experience and point of view, this added depth to the mentoring the IMT staff received.

The RCCNZ also delivered a presentation to the SAREX to outline the roles and responsibilities of RCCNZ and how that impacts on SAR operations locally and what RCCNZ can do to assist them.

The SAREX was completed after a presentation from Brian PAPESCH. Brian was a survivor of the Wahine disaster. His presentation brought to light the impact of disasters and SAR operations on the victims and survivors.

This was a successful District SAREX with all the SAREX objectives achieved.

The highlight was the demonstration of overall skills within the SAR community in the Northland Police District.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

That the SAREX Planners use the NZSAR SAREX guidelines planning template and refer to NZSAR SAREX objectives to plan and document the exercise to create National consistency with SAREX Planning.

See exercise Aim.

### Recommendation 2

That the SAR agency individuals who are identified as prospective IMT staff be enrolled in and attend the initial search management courses, including the Managing the Initial response, marine SAR technical and managing the marine response courses. Followed by a period of time to imbed that training through exposure to IMT in operations and exercises.

See findings and conclusions for each scenario

### Recommendation 3

That the Northland District Fatigue Management Template be disseminated and utilized nationally.

See findings Scenario 1.

### Recommendation 4

To develop and maintain consistent inter-agency training between the three key SAR agencies, Police, coastguard and surf-lifesaving

See findings for each scenario.

## Introduction

The Northland SAEREX of 2024 was held in Paihia during the weekend of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The exercise was based on three scenarios around the Opua- Paihia area. 2 of the scenarios were strictly land based scenarios, with a third also being land based, but along a shoreline which required multiple agencies to be involved.

The first of the scenarios was based in the Waitangi Mountain bike park and involved an overdue rider, who when located, was injured and required a stretcher carry.

This scenario began with the SAR callout at 1600 hrs. on the Friday and went until 2130 hrs.

The second scenario was based in the bush block adjacent to and included the Mountain Bike Park and was also part of the Te Araroia Trail.

This scenario began with the initial notification at 0800 hrs. on the Saturday and continued through until 1500 hrs. with the two Northland Based landsar groups and included the Surf lifesaving club based in Whangarei.

The third scenario started at around 11.30 hrs. on the Saturday and ran at the same time as the second scenario. In effect creating a conflict of resource requirements between the two scenarios. This conflict needed to be managed by the two Incident management teams for each of the scenarios.

The third scenario was based at Tapeke Point, and for the purpose of the scenario was an island. Access by water only. This required the inclusion of the Bay of Islands Coastguard unit.

All of the scenarios were completed by 1630 hrs. with demobilisation and debrief.

The Saturday evening was a social get together in the form of a quiz night.

The Sunday included a presentation to the groups by RCCNZ personnel, Sam MILDON and Chris HENSHAW, who were present throughout the SAREX. Sam and Chris included their expertise and advice during the scenarios.

The SAREX concluded with a presentation from Brian PAPICH a survivor of the Wahine disaster.

## Background

The SAREX was for the Northland Police district Landsar groups, together with the Surf lifesaving and coastguard units in that district

### Background to the Exercise

The SAREX was primarily around and in the vicinity of the Waitangi Mountain bike Park. This park has recently been developed and has become a popular place for mountain biking in the area. It covers approximately 60 kilometers of bike trails and has been the subject of rescues in the past. It was identified as a need to exercise in and become familiar with this area.

Part of this area is an adjacent bush area that includes the Te Araroa trail. Again, this has become more popular for hikers and day walkers. This also is an area where the Search and Rescue community need to familiarize themselves with.

It was identified that there was a need to practice cliff rescues using the landsar Cliff rescue teams.

All this along with the need to include the key SAR agencies, Police, Landsar, surf lifesaving and coastguard in multi-agency roles.

This was the first for coastguard in inserting rescue teams onto a shoreline and the first for the surf lifesaving crew members is searching upper harbour environments.

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

The SAREX was based at Opuia, Paihia.

The ICP and search base was at the Bay Of Islands Yacht club.

Accommodation was at the Waitangi Holiday Park.

### Participating organisations

The agencies involved included

Police

RCCNZ

LandSAR

Surf Lifesaving

Coastguard

Waitangi Mountain bike Park Staff

### Exercise aim

No specific exercise Aim was documented within the SAREX plan, however the objectives leaned towards an aim of familiarization of the areas and testing searching skills while exposing the junior SAR managers in IMT roles.

## Exercise objectives

No overall objectives were set for this SAREX, instead, each of the three scenarios included objectives for those individual scenarios.

No objectives were documented in relation to the presentations by RCCNZ or the presentation by Brian PAPICH about his involvement with the Wahine disaster

## Exercise Scenario

### 1. VENUE SITES and SCENARIOS:

Site for: Day 1 (Friday)

Waitangi Mountain Bike Park

33 Bayley Road, Waitangi

Contact: Tiffany HOLLAND (Project Manager) – 021 0504350







## Waitangi Mountain Bike Park (WMBP)

### Objectives

- Familiarisation of WMBP. There is approximately 60km of bike tracks.
- Establish SAR base and IMT team – IMT staff to be assessed (utilising members who have not been in this role before)
- Fatigue management.

### SCENARIO

18<sup>th</sup> October 11am, Gemma Parkin who is a LANDSAR member, arrives in Waitangi for the SAREX early and decides to take bike and head to WMBP. She sends a text to her husband saying she will be out by 3pm at the latest to meet for an early dinner before the SAREX begins.

She registers at WMBP car park and has a conversation with Paihia Bikes guide. He recommends that she heads over to Zone 5. As she bikes down 'He Whakaputanga 1835' track, she misses a corner and goes over the edge.

Ian arrives at campground approx 4pm and sees Gemma's vehicle parked. No sign of Gemma. Ian tries calling her but no answer. At 4:30pm, Ian gets a call from Gemma's Husband saying he has had no contact and she should be out by now. At 5pm, Ian rings 111 and informs SAR that Gemma is missing and a search needs to be started.

Intel then need to figure out where to start the search, that will mean contact husband, WMBP employees and interview person who last saw Gemma. This should then give them the clue she is possibly in Zone 5. A repeater will need to be set up and search commenced.

If teams are not close by 7:30pm then intel will be told to search 'He Whakaputanga 1835' track.

At 8pm Gemma will become conscious and start responding to whistles and will call out. If time allows it will be a stretcher carry out, otherwise she will walk out. I want all teams back to base by 8:45 pm for a debrief.

## Site for Day 2, Saturday (First Scenario)

Te Araroa Trail, 238/239km



### Objectives:

- Establish SAR base and IMT team – IMT staff to be assessed
- Investigate information and terrain
- Radio comms will require a repeater set up
- Transport requirement considerations

### SCENARIO

#### Waitangi Forest scenario.

At approx. 0800hrs Police report a call from a Te Araroa trail walker that she has become separated from her 3 companions. She is reported as being on the trail between Kerikeri and Waitangi somewhere near Diesel road.

Scenario as occurred – 4 people in a group are walking the Te Araroa trail between Kerikeri and Paihia. On the Friday night they buy alcohol from Kerikeri and decide to camp in the forest. After much drinking on Friday night they all get into a argument and head off in different directions leaving 1 person at the campsite.

At 7am a jogger passes a drunk/wobbly person fitting the description of one of the walkers on the pedestrian bridge on the Haururu falls track. They call this information into police about 08:30. This person then ends up hidden in the mangroves.

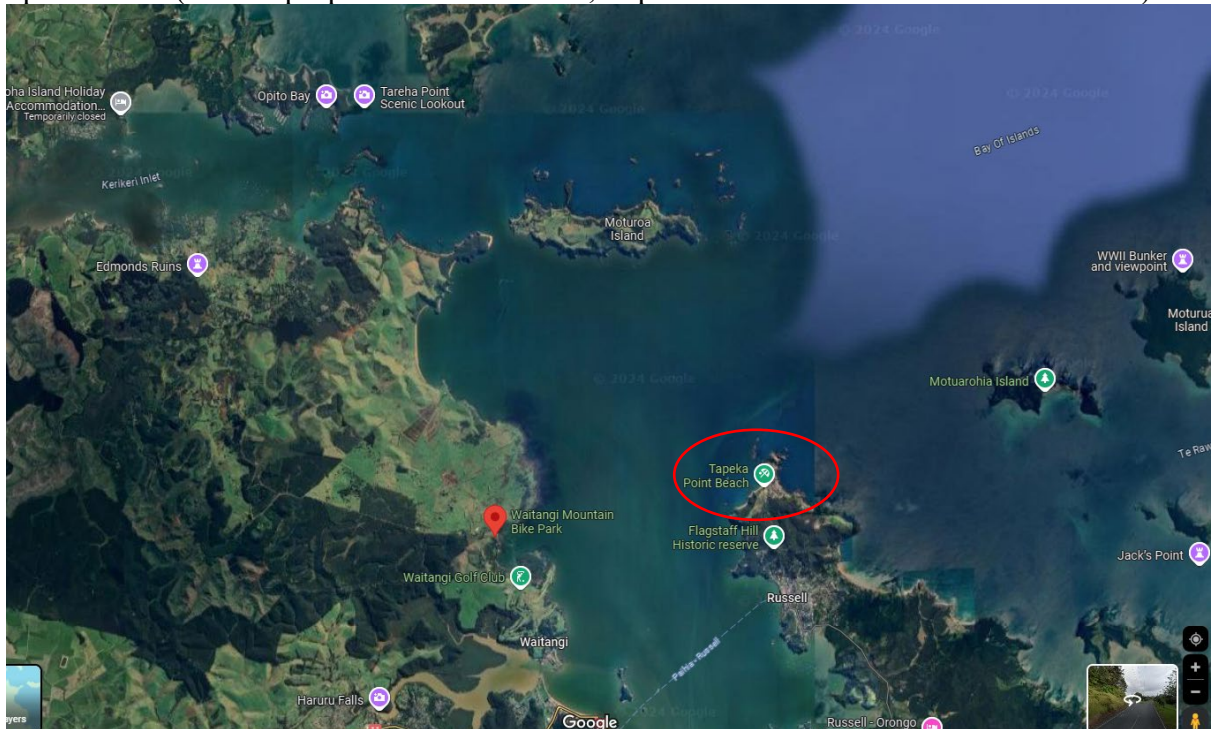
The other two LP's head off in different directions from the campsite and can't make it back to the campsite.

For the purpose of this exercise SurfLife are to search the river and mangroves using their RIB's.

POLSAR and LandSAR teams are to search Waitangi forest and Haruru falls track. NB At some point the Ropes rescue team members will need to be extracted because of the Tapeka point scenario.

### Site for Day 2, Saturday (Second Scenario)

Tapeka Point (For the purpose of this exercise, Tapeka Point will be considered an Island)



### Objectives:

- Establish IMT and set up (PolSAR, LSAR, Coast Guard, Surf?)
- Test interagency operability both in IMT and Comms
- Establish separate comms and repeater network (two scenarios operating at the same time)
- Test interagency operationally in the field
- Test rescue techniques in a coastal environment

At approx. 1000hrs Police receive information that 2 x Kayakers are overdue between Russell and Oneroa Bay. Informant is a friend who is waiting at Oneroa Bay where he was to pick them up at 0900hrs. The kayakers are inexperienced but keen to give it a go. The intention was to Kayak from Russell around TaPeka point then down to Oneroa bay to be picked up.

Scenario as occurred – Two kayakers get to TaPeka point and decide they have had enough after tipping out numerous times, drowning their cell phones and beach the kayaks. Then decide to climb to the top and walk back to Oneroa beach. On attempting to climb out 1 x person slips and falls onto rocks sustaining fractures to their legs, pelvis and possible spinal injuries. The other person climbs to raise the alarm and gets stuck on the cliff (visible from the water) – Rescue to both persons required including first aid treatment.

Note: This information will not be available to the IMT until, I assume the CG boat locates the person on the cliff and may be able to communicate with the person.

For the purposes of the exercise the only access to the search area is via water (no ferries, roads etc). No helicopter available, All persons rescued will have to be taken from shore to the CG boat e.g swum out on a stretcher. Any land assets like cliff rescue team and equipment will have to be transported to and from the location by boat. Repeater Comms will be required.

## Evaluation Methodology

The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

It was agreed that the evaluator remain at the Search headquarters at the Bay of Islands Yacht club and to evaluate the exercise primarily from a search management point of view. Any comments made by the evaluator of field team activities will come from comments made during team debriefs observed or the overall exercise debrief.

Evaluation scope

No field team activities were directly observed

Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

The evaluator observed the IMT activities only. No field team activities were observed. Any comments in this report in regard to field teams have come from debriefings.

The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

The evaluator was engaged early in the planning process. Some advice was given in respect to preparing the SAREX plan and formulating the objectives.

It was agreed that the draft report will be sent to the SAREX Planner and the Northland District SAR Coordinator.,

Other information

No observations were made of field team activities.

## Findings

### SCENARIO 1

The less experienced Police and LandSAR IMT Members were assigned to the functions. Basic knowledge only existed with the IM T members; however, they were mentored by 2 senior IMT members from the SAR groups in the district.

The IMT established and set up the SAR base at the Bay of Islands Yacht Club.

Teams were deployed through to the Waitangi Mountain Bike Park in response to the scenario delivered to the Incident Management Team.

Local knowledge was sought from the Mountain Bike Park office

Field teams gained knowledge of this area.

The IMT did not utilize large Template Forms that existed in their equipment trailer, in particular the Information collection plan, Field team deployments, Clue boards and found item register.

Initial actions were undertaken but mentoring was needed to maintain the focus of the IMT on those initial actions. Guidance was required to develop the action plan and to identify objectives to achieve their goal.

Only one of the IMT had completed the MTIR course.

Fatigue Management was not fully tested as this was a relatively short scenario, however the IMT assigned a fatigue manager who maintained a record of all staff deployed for this scenario, including their wakefulness periods.

This was recorded of the Northland developed template.

### Scenario 2

Again, the less experienced Police and LandSAR teams were utilized in the IMT roles and as in Scenario 12, this IMT was mentored by a senior Police Squad member and a senior LandSAR IMT member.

The base was set up in the Bay of Islands Yacht Club. Guidance and mentoring was required to develop the objectives and strategies.

Field teams were deployed, and transport of the field teams was managed to a point. Consideration needed to be made of the impact of field teams being deployed in their own vehicles and how that impacts on limiting the use of transport vehicles, and on how to demobilize teams from different locations to where their vehicles were left.

Radio comms was considered, and a repeater set up early to maintain comms throughout the search area.

AREC were not considered, however that comms experience exists within the LandSAR groups.

The IMT considered the Search area Terrain and enquiry requirements.

No reference was made to an Information Collection Plan, or other documents other than the Action Plan.

On both scenarios there was very little reference made to the Lost person behavior reference material.

There was no search area development made.

The only mapping used was that withing SARtrack.

There were no statistical data developed.

There was very little effort made in developing scenarios.

### Scenario 3

An IMT was established utilizing Police, landfSAR, Surf lifesaving and Coastguard. This team combined well and demonstrated a commitment of all agencies to operate collaboratively.

Comms did create some issues between landSAR and coastguard units, as they got out of range between the two groups.

The field teams and coastguard units developed processes during the exercise so that each could operate effectively with combined agency tasks, in particular the rescue tasks between the LandSAR and Coastguard.

The weather and a Coastguard callout restricted the time available to fully work on this exercise.

## Conclusions

Scenario one.

Objective Familiarization of Waitangi Mountain Bike PARK.

Objective MET

The Mountain bike park contains over 60 kilometers of track. This exercise was restricted to a small part of the whole park, however achieved the objective with the development of the relationship with the Mountain Bike Park personnel.

Establish SAR base and IMT team.

Objective MET

Police and landSAR staff with limited experience in IMT roles, exposed to their respective functions under mentorship of senior Police and landSAR staff.

Fatigue Management

Objective MET

The Northland District Fatigue Management is the first developed within New Zealand and needs to be disseminated, endorsed and used by all Districts.

Scenario 2

Establish SDAR base and IMT team

Objective MET

As in scenario 1, staff from both Police and LandSAR with limited training and experience exposed to the IMT functions under mentorship

Investigate information and Terrain,

Objective partly MET

Investigations were carried out by the Intel Function, however no information collection plan was made, despite a large style Information Collection Plan template being available.



The Terrain was analyzed through SARtrack only. There was no development of a search area, no consideration of the statistical data and very limited scenario development.

Radio Comms

Objective MET

Comms and repeaters were set up using knowledge within the landSAR community. AREC are not considered in the Northland SAR district.

Transport requirement Considered.

Objective Met

Transport was arranged for some teams. Other teams took their own transport, however the IMT learned that at times this could create issues at time of demobilization.

Scenario 3

Establish and IMT

Objective MET

The IMT was established with personnel from LandSAR, Police, Coastguard and Surf Lifesaving.

Inter-agency operability

The IMT worked well together with each agency committed to the IMT functions and good processes followed.

While the weather and an actual callout for coastguard did limit this scenario, good learnings were gained.

Many of the IMT had not been in these positions prior to this exercise, but again they were mentored throughout by senior staff.

Comms were an issue in some places, but managed and good learnings came from testing those comms.

Test Interagency operationally in the field.

Objective MET

While not observed by the evaluator, field teams and units were given tasks that while within their capabilities they had had little training previously. Such as surf lifesaving searching in upper harbour areas, coastguard unit deploying landSAR teams onto a coastline and recovering those teams and lost parties, and finally the LandSAR teams being deployed by seas.

Testing Rescue techniques

Objective Partly MET

The weather limited the opportunity to test this objective, however the Coastguard unit was required to recover teams and the lost parties from the coastal area.

## Appendix

*<Specifically include evidence to substantiate Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations.  
Number the Appendices in order, title or caption each piece of information.>*