



Connecting the search and rescue sector

Link is a quarterly publication of
New Zealand Search and Rescue



2020 NZ Search and Rescue Awards

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Link is the quarterly publication of New Zealand Search and Rescue. If you have any feedback on this publication, please let us know.

info@nzsar.govt.nz | nzsar.govt.nz

Websites

nzsar.govt.nz

Search and rescue sector resources and information, including a PDF of this newsletter

adventuresmart.nz

Safety information and tips for people planning outdoor activities

adventuresmart.nz/distress-beacons

Example of our latest SAR prevention work - promoting the carriage of beacons

beacons.org.nz

Information about 406 beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon

nzsar.govt.nz/sardonix/index.html

Interactive dashboards using groups of records from SARdonyx, our joint search and rescue operational information system

nzsar.govt.nz/nzs-sar-guidelines/nzs-sar-guidelines-overview

New Zealand's Search and Rescue Guidelines

tpp.ac.nz/study-options/search-and-rescue

SAR multi-agency training

landsar.org.nz

Land Search & Rescue

mountainsafety.org.nz

New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

coastguard.nz

Coastguard New Zealand

surflifesaving.org.nz

Surf Life Saving New Zealand

maritimenz.govt.nz

Maritime New Zealand

watersafety.org.nz

Water Safety New Zealand

saferwalking.nz

Safer Walking NZ

Cover image: Photographer Mark Coote

Queen's Birthday Honours

Among the 170 people receiving Queen's Birthday Honours this year were two New Zealanders acknowledged for their contributions to search and rescue. Congratulations Andy and Grant!

Sergeant Andy Brooke of Palmerston North received the Queen's Service Medal for services to search and rescue. Andy is currently the officer in charge of the Manawātū Police SAR Squad and is also chairman of the Palmerston North Search and Rescue Group. Since 2007 he has been a tutor in the Emergency Management programme at Tai Poutini Polytechnic.

Grant Conaghan of Whangarei also received the Queen's Service Medal for services to search and rescue. He has been involved with Northland LandSAR for over 50 years across many roles including field team member, group chair and training officer. He has also invested significant time and effort into fundraising for, and promoting, the WanderSearch programme in Northland.



Service, commitment, and operational excellence honoured at NZ Search and Rescue Awards

Photographer Mark Coote

“Behind each recipient there is a story of courage, a focus on safety and the conscious decision to place the wellbeing of others above your own. No matter what the conditions, you don’t hesitate to say ‘yes, I’ll go.’ Because of you, families are reunited and loved ones are returned home.”

With these simple but heartfelt words Hon Michael Wood, Minister for Transport, welcomed the wider SAR community to the NZSAR Awards at the Grand Hall in Parliament in May.

After last year’s ceremony had to be moved to the regions because of COVID-19, this year’s ceremony was a welcome return to normality and a chance to connect with colleagues and friends across the sector.

As well as presenting two Gold Awards and seven Certificates of Achievement, the Minister paid tribute to the team members, employers, and families behind each recipient.

“I acknowledge all those people whose support and personal sacrifice allows their partners, loved ones and colleagues to perform this vital service for the New Zealand community. I acknowledge the family dinners missed, the work deadlines that can’t be met and the personal commitments that are put to one side whenever a call comes in.”

Awards given in the Operations category recognise significant rescue operations that took place between 1 January and 31 December 2020. Awards given in the support category recognise the contributions of individuals to search and rescue in New Zealand.

One Gold Award and up to four Certificates of Achievement are awarded in each category. Twenty-nine nominations were received for 2020, with two Gold Awards and seven Certificates of Achievement being awarded at this year’s ceremony.

“We were very impressed by the calibre of this year’s Award winners,” says NZSAR Secretariat Manager Duncan Ferner.

“Some of these individuals have worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure that people in distress have a higher probability of being found. Others have headed out into atrocious weather conditions to rescue people at risk.”

Congratulations to all our Award winners for 2020

Nominations for the 2021 Awards are now open – forms and guidelines can be found on our website: nzsar.govt.nz/awards



Gold Award – Operational



Bernie Pepper, Mike Beausoleil and Hannah Latta – Life Flight

For the rescue of an adult and child swept out to sea near Wainuiomata on 15 November 2020

On Sunday 15 November, the Life Flight rescue helicopter was deployed from their Wellington base to the coast off Wainuiomata. An 11-year-old boy had been swept off his feet by a wave while playing in knee-deep water, and a member of the public had jumped in the water to assist. Both had made it to a rocky outcrop 180 metres offshore before the young boy was again swept away by a wave.

When pilot Bernie Pepper, crewman Mike Beausoleil and paramedic Hannah Latta arrived on scene, a 30-knot northerly wind was blowing, creating severe turbulence and a choppy sea.

Standing at the door of the chopper, Mike scanned the water for anything out of the ordinary. Three hundred metres off the coast, he spotted the boy's red shoes.

Hannah was winched down to retrieve the boy. While he had remembered his water safety training from school and

was in the 'pencil float' position, he was only just keeping his head above the water. He was hypothermic, barely conscious, and his body temperature just 26 degrees.

After bringing the boy back to shore to be treated by a waiting ambulance crew, Bernie, Mike and Hannah flew out to retrieve the member of the public who was still on the rocky outcrop. It was deemed too dangerous to deploy Hannah into the water a second time, so Bernie hovered the helicopter only a metre above the rock, in turbulent flying conditions. Hannah and Mike between them managed to get the man inside the helicopter.

While Bernie is a very experienced pilot, this was his first ever water rescue in Wellington, having only joined Life Flight a few weeks earlier.

Both the young boy, and the member of the public who went to his aid, made a full recovery.



Gold Award – Support



Tim Hogan

For his commitment to search and rescue through the creation and ongoing maintenance of the Mobile Locate software service

Technical consultant Tim Hogan is the creator of Mobile Locate, a web-based software service used by emergency services staff to help locate people in distress. Since its launch in 2013, Mobile Locate has been used thousands of times.

Mobile Locate works when a person is within a cellphone coverage area, has at least five percent battery on their device, and can access mobile data. These low barriers to entry mean it is easily accessed by most outdoor users when needed.

The combination of cellphone coverage across land and marine environments in New Zealand, plus the ease of using the service, means that a lost person’s location can be established within seconds. This allows the right resources to be deployed and prevents lives from being lost.

Mobile Locate is now so common that it has become a verb and a noun within emergency services call centres. Examples include “Comms, have you done a Mobile Locate?” and “Hang on, I will Mobile Locate them.”

Tim is described by police staff as a humble man who has never sought recognition for his work developing a world-leading product that saves lives every week.

He has over 40 years’ experience in telecommunications and IT. He draws upon this experience, and invests his own time and resources, to continually upgrade Mobile Locate so that it meets the needs of the search and rescue sector in New Zealand.

Snapshots from the 2020 NZSAR Awards celebration





Certificate of Achievement – Support



Max Corboy

For his service and commitment to Surf Life Saving New Zealand and the Otago Emergency Call Out Squad

Max Corboy caught the Surf Life Saving bug early on, obtaining his lifeguard award at 14. His search and rescue involvement started in 2010 when he joined his local callout team.

As a member of one of the busiest Emergency Call Out Squads in New Zealand, Max has been involved in many challenging callouts, including night operations, swift water rescues, body recoveries and helicopter operations.

In his leadership role with the local SAR team, Max has created a high-performing team structure based around introducing new members, rotating current members and the establishment of a training group. This has resulted in team members taking their SAR experience back to their local clubs, enhancing the development of skills across the region.

Max's depth and breadth of experience resulted in his appointment on the Surf Life Saving National SAR Working Group, where he works with other SAR group leaders on developing policy and best practice for Emergency Call Out Squads across the country.

Max's keen interest and professional background in radio communications has led to the establishment of the Otago Digital Radio Network, which has allowed the Dunedin clubs and Emergency Call Out Squads to take their radio comms fully digital.

Sergeant Vincent Ranger

For his service and commitment to search and rescue

After leaving school, Vince joined the New Zealand Forest Service as a labourer before qualifying to be a forest ranger. His time spent in bush environments provided him with an excellent base for his later career in search and rescue.

Vince has been a serving police officer for 42 years, with 22 of those years involving search and rescue. He joined the New Zealand Police in 1978 and was a member of the Palmerston North search and rescue squad until 1981 when he was sent to Tokoroa and then Te Awamutu. In 1992 he was promoted to Sergeant and posted to Hamilton. A posting to Whangamatā in 2001 was the start of 14 years' involvement in marine search and rescue.

In his current role as the police search and rescue coordinator for the Waikato district, Vince has overseen the rescue and recovery of hundreds of lost people, some of which have been high-profile, weeks-long search and rescue operations.

At a national level, Vince was recently called upon to assist with a recovery mission into the Pike River Mine to assist with evidence gathering. He was also part of the DVI team who worked on both the Christchurch mosque attacks and the Whakaari / White Island eruption.



Dr Charmaine Tate

For her service and commitment to search and rescue

Dr Charmaine Tate is regularly called upon by both the New Zealand Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand at critical points during search and rescue operations.

A Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and a former Regimental Medical Doctor for the 1NZSAS Regiment, Charmaine provides advice about the likelihood of survival during extended search and rescue operations.

Charmaine is considered New Zealand's leading authority on ascertaining how long a person might be able to survive in the land or marine environment given the clothing, equipment, and weather conditions at the time the person goes missing.

It is always a difficult decision, not made lightly, for an Incident Controller or Search Mission Coordinator to suspend search operations. This decision is made easier with Charmaine's advice and counsel. There would be very few incidents where a search operation has been suspended without her advice being sought.

Much of Charmaine's medical training has been undertaken at her own cost, outside of the New Zealand Defence Force. She provides her advice and expertise to New Zealand's search and rescue agencies free of charge.



Sam Milligan

For his service and commitment to LandSAR and WanderSearch in the Wairarapa region

Sam Milligan's first taste of search and rescue was 56 years ago, when a group of Scouts got into trouble crossing a river near Carkeek Hut in the Tararua Ranges.

Half a century later, Sam is still involved in search and rescue, and is considered a mainstay of LandSAR in the Wairarapa. In recent years Sam has turned his focus to the WanderSearch programme, supporting the search for people with dementia and other cognitive impairments who go missing in the community.

He acts as the conduit between the aged care and disability sectors and LandSAR. He has networked the Wairarapa rest home communities and publicised the value of WanderSearch.

Sam is responsible for maintaining the WanderSearch records and ensures that information about a missing person is readily shared with the police as the need arises.

Searching for a missing person with a WanderSearch device takes a special skill set and requires in-depth knowledge of how to use receivers and aerials. Sam has dedicated countless hours to training local volunteers and providing opportunities for them to practise their new-found skills.

Sam has built up a special rapport with many of the elderly and cognitively impaired in the Wairarapa region, through many years of visiting them in their homes to issue WanderSearch devices.



Certificate of Achievement – Operational



Aoraki Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team, Aoraki Mt Cook Incident Management Team, Otago Rescue Helicopter, Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand

For the rescue of two climbers near Copland Pass on 10 January 2020

On the evening of January 10, two climbers attempting the Copland Pass found themselves stuck on a small ledge at 2060m. Unprepared for a night out, they activated their distress beacon at 11pm.

A significant weather front was imminent with gale force winds, rain and snow expected at high elevation.

The Otago Rescue Helicopter located the climbers at 1am, with the aid of night vision goggles. The plan was to undertake a winch rescue, but severe turbulence made this impossible.

The helicopter returned to the search base, where a plan was created to fly the Alpine Cliff Rescue team to the nearby Copland Shelter.

After being dropped at the Copland Shelter at 3am, four members of the Alpine Cliff Rescue team began climbing across 30-degree snow slopes, establishing anchors and fixed ropes as they went. The two climbers were put into harnesses and then moved through the fixed rope system back to Copland Shelter.

Shortly after 6am, with a weather window of less than 20 minutes remaining, the helicopter crew executed two return trips to Copland Shelter. Upon arrival back at Mount Cook village one of the climbers was sent to hospital for further medical treatment but made a full recovery.

Coastguard Nelson, Nelson Police SAR Squad, Tasman District Harbourmaster Team, Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand

For the rescue of six people from *SV Ocean Gem* near Rangitoto ki te Tonga/D'Urville Island on 18-19 March 2020

On Saturday 14 March, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand was alerted to sailing vessel *SV Ocean Gem*, who was crossing the Tasman Sea when it sustained damage to its steering and rigging. The crew were able to proceed towards Picton as originally planned, using an emergency steering system.

Four days later, the vessel lost their emergency steering system in the Cook Strait, with winds gusting between 20 and 25 knots. Coastguard Nelson and the Nelson Police SAR Squad were tasked to respond to the vessel which had begun drifting towards Rangitoto ki te Tonga/D'Urville Island.

Coastguard Nelson left base at 4am, locating the vessel three hours later in four-metre swells and 27 knot winds.

A tow was initiated but after an hour they had only covered three of the 51 nautical miles required to get back to base. Several more towing attempts were made, but it was only when the *SV Ocean Gem* started running their engine at a low speed that significant progress was made.

Partway back to Nelson, the Tasman District Harbourmaster Team met the Coastguard rescue vessel to refuel and relieve several seasick Coastguard crew members.

The winds eased as the two boats got closer to Nelson, finally berthing at 6.30pm.

Snapshots from the 2020 NZSAR Awards celebration



LandSAR Turangi, Ruapehu Alpine Rescue Organisation, Taupō Police SAR Squad, National Park Police SAR Squad, Tukino Ski Patrol

For the rescue of nine climbers from the Whangaehu Glacier on Mt Ruapehu on 26-27 September 2020

On Saturday 26 September, police were notified that a climber had fallen 200 vertical metres into the Whangaehu Glacier on Mt Ruapehu.

The weather conditions were deteriorating rapidly, and the injured climber's eight companions were not able to rescue her or themselves. The local rescue helicopter was unable to fly due to the strong winds at the accident site. The Ruapehu Alpine Rescue Organisation, LandSAR Turangi and Tukino Ski Patrol were mobilised for a ground rescue.

Over the next 7.5 hours, five rescue teams – comprising 22 people – worked to bring the injured climber and her companions off the mountain in rapidly deteriorating weather.

The injured woman was placed in a stretcher which was carried out of the glacier using ropes and belay system. Rescue teams worked together to pre-rig sections of the descent so that the rescue could be expedited as quickly as possible.

A search and rescue base was set up at a ski lodge in Tukino Village by the National Park and Taupō Police SAR squads. The rescue teams arrived with the injured woman at 1am, and her companions shortly afterwards. The woman's injuries were unsurvivable and she sadly died during the descent.





Positive feedback on SAR training courses

A recent survey of SAR training courses confirms that most participants are finding the training worthwhile.

Every year, NZSAR commissions a survey of people attending SAR training courses. The most recent survey was run between December 2020 and February 2021 and relates to courses undertaken in 2020.

The 2020 course survey had 251 respondents – a smaller sample size than usual, due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, but still yielding valuable data. The survey covered the fees-free courses run by LandSAR and Tai Poutini Polytechnic, which are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission's Adult Community Education Fund.

The survey results are collated into a Net Promoter Score (NPS), which gauges how likely someone is to recommend a course to someone else. It's the number of detractors subtracted from the number of promoters.

NZSAR Training Coordinator Alita Bigwood says this year's NPS score is the highest yet.

"Our NPS increased from +51 in 2018 to +61 in 2020, which is a strong indication that the training offered is hitting the mark," she says. "We recognise that many course participants need to use annual leave or weekends to attend courses, so it's heartening to see that SAR people are finding the training worthwhile."

Over 90 percent of respondents agreed that teamwork was encouraged, assessments were fair, and they had confidence they could use their new skills in a SAR operation. Timing of courses and suitability of venues were perceived as very good.

Tutors also rated highly in the survey, with over 90 percent of respondents rating their course tutor as good or excellent. Tutors were described as easy to understand and giving clear guidance.

"In a year that saw many courses cancelled or changed because of COVID-19, it's great to see good feedback coming from SAR people," says Duncan Ferner, NZSAR Secretariat Manager.

Several areas for improvement were identified, mainly relating to the suitability of course material and late cancellation of courses.

Alita says that while the 2020 feedback is trending in the right direction, there is still more work to be done.

"For instance, we know that the availability of training courses can be a stumbling block for SAR people to progress through the system," she says. "We are actively recruiting new trainers, and upskilling our current trainers, to ensure that we can run as many courses as possible in late 2021 and 2022."

Welcome Daryl

Improving the user experience in SARdonyx is a key focus for Daryl Bloomfield, who has recently joined the NZSAR Secretariat as Senior Information Analyst.



Photographer Andrew Turner

Based with the Secretariat in Wellington, Daryl is responsible for the ongoing operation and development of SARdonyx, the SAR sector's joint information system. He will also be coordinating some upcoming research into outdoor users' expectations of search and rescue.

A self-confessed "data geek," Daryl has enjoyed getting familiar with the structure of SARdonyx and is now planning how the user experience and training materials can be improved.

"Data is one of the fundamental building blocks of the NZSAR Secretariat," he says. "It helps us identify trends in search and rescue in everything from training courses to beacon activations."

Daryl's work with SARdonyx has already delivered one startling statistic: between 1 December 2020 and 31 January 2021, one in three land-based SAR operations was the result of a beacon activation – a figure that has doubled in the last five years. Insights like this help guide the work of the NZSAR Secretariat.

Prior to joining the Secretariat, Daryl spent over 20 years working in analyst roles for a variety of Government agencies and financial services companies, most recently at Utilities Disputes. However, he's also established a "parallel career" in organising grassroots sporting events, including the iconic Waterfront 5k series in Wellington.

Outside the office, Daryl is a keen triathlete and is on a quest to find Wellington's best sausage roll.

Contact details: d.bloomfield@nzsar.govt.nz : 022 016 2550

Farewell Carl

After nearly 13 years in the NZSAR Secretariat, Carl van der Meulen has accepted a policy role within the Ministry of Transport. His first task was to implement the Service Level Agreements that set out the Crown funding for the volunteer-run SAR agencies.



Photographer Mark Coote

Carl says it's been a fantastic journey over the last 13 years, watching and helping the SAR sector in New Zealand grow into a strong and sustainable system of organisations with the common goal of helping people in distress. Alongside this have been the efforts and focus on our volunteers to keep them engaged, appropriately trained, safe, and supported.

"One of my first projects was a volunteer study for the Council," says Carl. "This was our first attempt to get a collective understanding of our voluntary sector: the demographics of the volunteer base, the desire to join, training and administrative burdens, and retention. Now 12 years later we have a volunteer strategy for the sector, as well as volunteer and health and safety managers in the large voluntary organisations."

The highlight of Carl's time at NZSAR has been the opportunity to travel around the country meeting so many members of the SAR community at exercises, workshops, meetings, and conferences.

"It's the right time for me to leave," says Carl. "The sector has developed so much over the last 13 years, and with the increase in Crown funding this year it is time for someone else to help Duncan and the NZSAR team continue leading the sector onward."

"I'd like to wish everyone involved in the sector all the best and to thank Duncan for this amazing work opportunity."

NZSAR are currently recruiting for a new Senior Advisor to replace Carl. In the meantime, any queries about his areas of work can be directed to Andy Greig at a.greig@nzsar.govt.nz



Fostering radio capability in the field

AREC volunteers Soren Low, Graeme McKay, Steve Davis, Dave Hadler and Paul Rennie at Dip Flat.

The National Search and Rescue course held in Marlborough provided volunteer radio operators an excellent opportunity to hone their skills.

The National SAR course, organised by Police, is held annually at the RNZAF training facility in Dip Flat, Marlborough. Run as a 12-day immersion course, the training aims to equip Police SAR squad members with the skills they need to participate in SAR operations, with support from the Department of Conservation, LandSAR, NZSAR and AREC.

Volunteers from Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) play a pivotal role in supporting the course. AREC Christchurch Branch 05 coordinates AREC's involvement which includes providing advice about radio setups, making radio operators available during the course, and logging messages for the Incident Management Team (IMT).

Soren Low, Deputy Manager for AREC Auckland, says one of the highlights of the course was the three-day SAR exercise, which pulls together everything learnt in the week prior.

“One of the first jobs was for Police to deploy the portable repeaters. There were three repeaters used – two standard and one linking – delivered to pre-determined locations by the RNZAF NH-90 helicopter and crew. Field teams were then deployed with standard Police VHF hand-held radios and POLSAR HF radios.”

After the teams were deployed, volunteers from AREC started logging messages between the IMT, the helicopter and the field teams using SARTrack software. Two vehicles were brought on site to act as command points for the AREC teams.

“It was an opportunity to connect with fellow AREC members and learn how they do things in their own areas. It was also valuable to spend time with Police and get a better understanding of how search and rescue is supported and executed.” Soren Low



Graeme and Paul operate the HF radio stations from the Marlborough Emergency Management truck.

The Christchurch branch supplied their Nissan Civilian bus, which was set up for VHF radio comms. The Marlborough Emergency Management Communications Unit truck was parked in a nearby paddock and set up for HF radio comms.

“Both vehicles are very well equipped with radios and antennas covering most bands,” explains Soren. “Having two vehicles enabled us to keep radio chatter out of the IMT, but the three locations were joined using wifi which enabled us to use SARTrack.”

Towards the end of the first day of the SAREX, a simulated failure of the VHF radio system occurred. This forced teams to use HF radio for their evening check-in. AREC volunteers manned the HF system, including sending an outbound message that had to be received, understood, and acknowledged – a challenge with wildly varying signal quality!



The Marlborough Emergency Management truck and the Christchurch branch's Nissan Civilian.



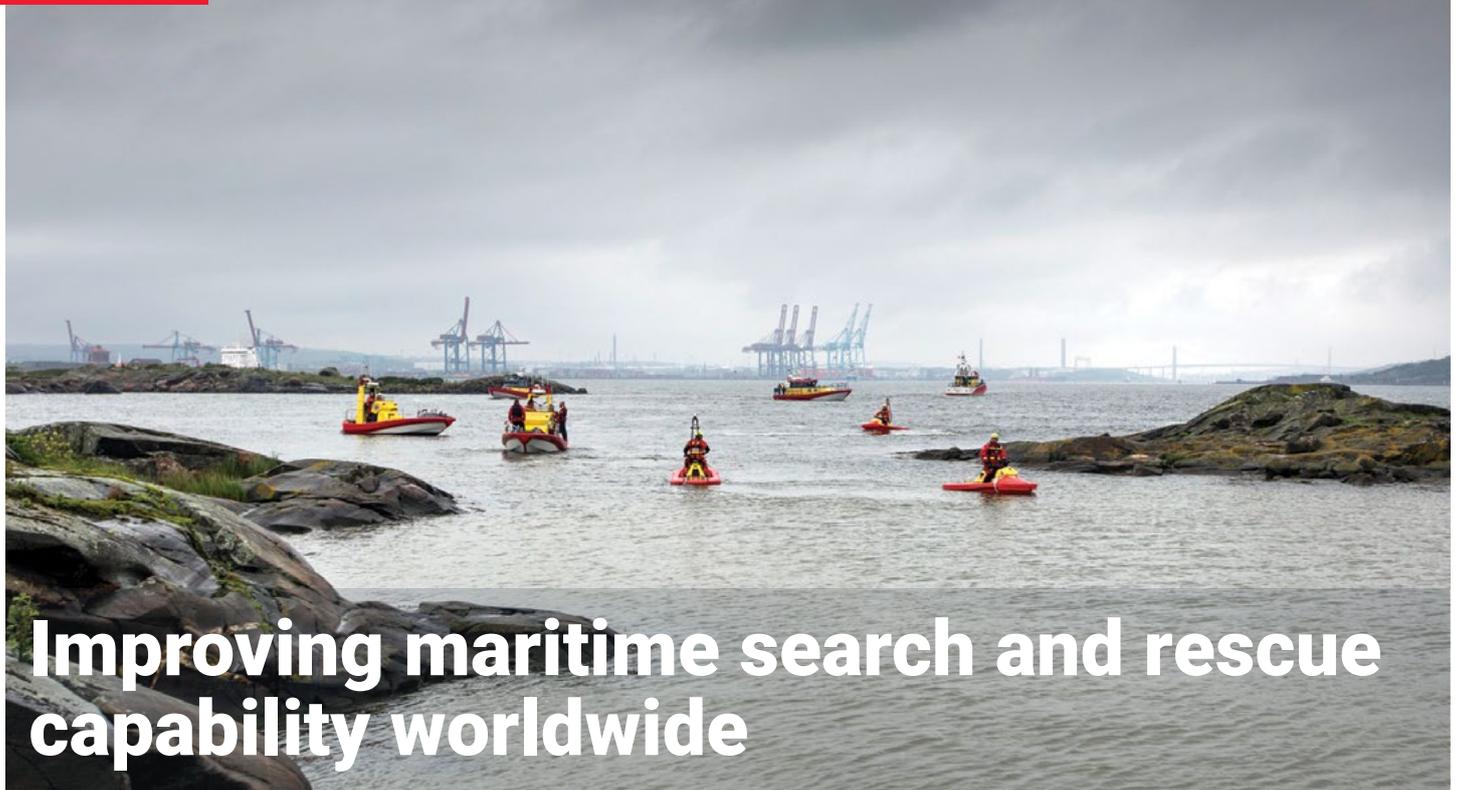
Helicopter winching was one of the skills taught at Dip Flat.

As the SAREX progressed, taskings were passed from the IMT to the AREC volunteers, who then delivered them to the field teams and helicopter crew by HF and VHF radio.

Soren says the course was an enjoyable way of connecting with other SAR people.

“It was an opportunity to connect with fellow AREC members and learn how they do things in their own areas. It was also valuable to spend time with Police and get a better understanding of how search and rescue is supported and executed.”

“What impressed me most was the great can-do attitude shown by everyone who was there. For the course trainers and participants, there were no days off and the programme was full-on every day.”



Improving maritime search and rescue capability worldwide

Swedish Sea Rescue Society.

In this guest article, the International Maritime Rescue Federation introduce us to their work supporting search and rescue.

The International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) is the international non-governmental organisation working to develop and improve maritime search and rescue capacity and capability around the world.

It was established in 1924 and today is the only maritime SAR non-governmental organisation (NGO) with consultative status at the United Nations' International Maritime Organization (IMO), providing an international voice for its members all around the world.

The IMRF's membership primarily consists of maritime SAR organisations of all types, but membership is also open to other bodies and organisations with an interest in maritime SAR operations or the promotion of water safety. They come together to share knowledge, experience, expertise and innovations and they cooperate freely with one another to achieve the common humanitarian aim of saving lives in the world's waters.

The IMRF organise an annual Lifeboat Crew Exchange programme, which enables crews from different countries to trade places to learn from each other in different situations and with different resources. There are also regular conferences, including the popular series of Mass Rescue Operations conferences and the World Maritime Rescue Congress which is held every four years.

The IMRF also runs a programme of webinars and podcasts on specific SAR topics. The Future Technology Panel shares information and research on new SAR

technologies and innovations, while the Fundraising and Communications 'skill-share' Panel shares best practice and experience addressing common industry challenges in that area. IMRF are in the process of setting up an Aeronautical SAR Panel for members who either provide, or work with aeronautical SAR assets.

The IMRF's members also collaborate on projects of interest to the whole SAR sector, such as the recently published Pandemic Response Guidance for Maritime Search and Rescue Organisations. The manual has been developed based on members' experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be used as the basis for planning and delivering maritime SAR services in future pandemics or major health emergencies.

In 2019, the IMRF also launched its Women in SAR initiative, aiming to increase the representation of women in the maritime sector generally and to provide support for, and raise the profile of, women in the maritime SAR sector specifically. So far, the IMRF has launched the IMRF Women in SAR Award, held its first all-women maritime SAR training in Morocco, and conducted the first ever research project to assess gender balance and the position of women across the maritime SAR sector.

To find out more about IMRF and to explore the IMRF's free online SAR resources, visit: <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/>



10 questions with ... Soren Low, AREC

Also known as ZL1SKL, Soren Low is a familiar voice to many on the airwaves. Based in Auckland, he shares a little about what drew him to volunteer with Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC).

What's your current role in AREC?

I am the Deputy District Manager for Auckland and the newsletter editor.

What made you get involved in AREC?

AREC provided an opportunity to use my radio interests to help the community – through providing communications for planned events like bike races and car rallies, and unplanned events such as Civil Defence or LandSAR callouts.

How many people are involved in AREC?

We have about 350 members nationally.

Can you tell us about a memorable SAROP or SAR training that you have been involved in?

For me it would have to be a Dip Flat experience recently (see page 12). It was excellent to see the various agencies including Police, the Air Force and the Army working together with such passion and professionalism.

Under what circumstances are AREC called out?

AREC partner with various organisations at a local level (including Civil Defence in some areas) and with LandSAR nationally. Depending on their requirements, they may call us out to set up and run their communications so they can get on with what they are specialists at.

What equipment do you use as an AREC volunteer?

It depends on the activity. Typically, when we work with organisations such as Police, LandSAR and Civil Defence, we will use their equipment. For other tasks such as a

car rally we will often bring our own gear. These can be an interesting challenge as you are given a spot to go to, and then you have to work out what to use and how to deploy it to get your signal back to base.

What would you say to someone who was considering volunteering with AREC?

AREC provides the opportunity to mix technical, procedural and people skills in a challenging and rewarding way. We are always looking at new ways of doing things – and how can we embrace new technologies but still make it simple for the end-user to get their message through.

What is your day job?

I work at KiwiRail where I am in the business transformation space. This includes getting amongst various operational projects as well as working with people to solve problems and look for opportunities to improve safety and service.

How do you relax?

I really enjoy photography, tramping and going on adventures with my seven- and nine-year-old children (there's not a lot of relaxing when they are around!)

What's one key thing you'd like to pass on to others?

Volunteering in the search and rescue sector has really opened my eyes to what a talented and dedicated group of people work in this area. I would really encourage anyone to get involved – there is such comradery and it is very rewarding.



Photographer Rebekah Wilson



Duncan's desk

Kia ora koutou

Well, that was fast! We're halfway through 2021 already. But with snow on the Tararua Ranges, I've got hopes of a good ski season ahead.

The Mountain Safety Council recently held their biennial Southern Hemisphere Alpine Conference in Wanaka. NZ Search and Rescue sponsored a SAR-focussed workshop held the day prior, where avalanche forecasters and alpine cliff rescue teams came together to upskill and share knowledge gained since the last conference. By all accounts it was a successful day.

The New Zealand Search and Rescue Awards for 2020 were held at Parliament on 18 May (see pages 3 to 9). Last year's formal awards ceremony was transformed into multiple smaller Awards functions across the country because of COVID-19, so it was great to once again return to Parliament to honour the dedication, commitment and heroism of SAR people.

Sadly, we've farewelled Carl van der Meulen from the Secretariat after nearly thirteen years service. Carl has taken up a new policy role within the Ministry of Transport. The Secretariat doubled in size when Carl joined me back in 2008 to monitor the then brand-new SAR Service Level Agreements, valued at around \$2.79m per year. By way of comparison, the current ones are around \$30m per year. Many people and agencies across the sector have benefited from Carl's expertise, willingness to help and ability to solve problems in a practical way. Carl – thank you for all your hard work and friendship, and we wish you well.

We've also welcomed Daryl Bloomfield as Senior Information Analyst, replacing Jeff Lean. Daryl's main area of work will be improving the user experience in SARdonyx. Many of you have provided feedback on the system's usability over the last few months, and you'll see some changes start to roll out shortly.

In the past month we restarted the Rauora exercise series with an excellent day in the Southern Police District. We have reset the exercise to focus on the most likely SAR risks and hazards within each District. It takes us around two years to get around all the Districts, but the effort is well worthwhile. Over the past few weeks (and in the coming month), we have been engaging at the CEO and Board level with our major non-Governmental SAR partners. This type of engagement is increasingly important as we seek to maximise the Government's investment into the sector through enhanced collaboration.

As we come to the end of the financial year, our focus turns to investment planning meetings with the organisations we support financially. The 2020-2021 year was a watershed moment for the sector with an unprecedented level of Government investment. The sector has made some huge strides in the last 12 months in volunteerism, recruitment, governance, and training and this will continue into 2022. Thank you for leaning into this work.

Stay safe
Duncan Ferner
NZSAR Secretariat Manager