



# ◉ Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

## news

### Partnership Established to Promote Prevention Messages

NZSAR has signed a partnership agreement with Coastguard New Zealand, the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council and Water Safety New Zealand to promote the three Safety Codes (boating, outdoor and water) plus the AdventureSmart website: [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

This cross-sector collaboration will see the four organisations work closely with each other; taking opportunities to share information, cross-promote and distribute brochures and safety information. The objective is to ensure consistent safety messages are readily available to the public in order to avoid the often tragic consequences of things going wrong.

To date, thousands of brochures in all shapes and sizes promoting AdventureSmart and the Safety Codes have been distributed around the country. The Mountain Safety Council, under contract to NZSAR, has done a wonderful job of updating and maintaining [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz). There has also been some useful media coverage, with the promise of more to come under this new agreement.

Changing the public's behaviours and ensuring they keep themselves safe while enjoying the wide variety of recreational activities on offer is a long-term, complex project. It requires buy-in from the whole of the SAR sector as well as other sectors and organisations with an interest in preventing search and rescue, injury or death. NZSAR has been encouraged by the number of agencies committed to promoting this safety information. If you are able to display or distribute brochures or information please get in touch with the appropriate partner organisation.

**Coastguard:** [christine.harur@nzcoastguard.org.nz](mailto:christine.harur@nzcoastguard.org.nz)

**Mountain Safety Council:** [marketing@mountainsafety.org.nz](mailto:marketing@mountainsafety.org.nz)

**Water Safety New Zealand:** [chris@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:chris@watersafety.org.nz)



All agencies, including NZSAR, can provide brochures and information for [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

## news continued

### Coastguard Welcomes its Royal Patron



Drizzling rain and cloudy skies were no deterrent to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, who arrived by boat at Coastguard Northern Region's Headquarters, during his visit to New Zealand in November.

Prince Charles is Patron of Coastguard New Zealand – a role he says he is very proud of.

Patrick Holmes, Chief Executive of Coastguard New Zealand, says as a former RAF Search and Rescue Pilot Prince Charles understands the SAR discipline, but hadn't realised the extensive role our volunteers play until his visit.

"He was fascinated by the number of volunteers we have and the fact they offer 350,000 hours of time every year. He was very impressed by their work."

Prince Charles travelled from Devonport across the harbour aboard Howick Rescue One to the Auckland Marine Rescue Centre at Mechanics Bay, the hub of Coastguard Northern Region's Communication Centre.

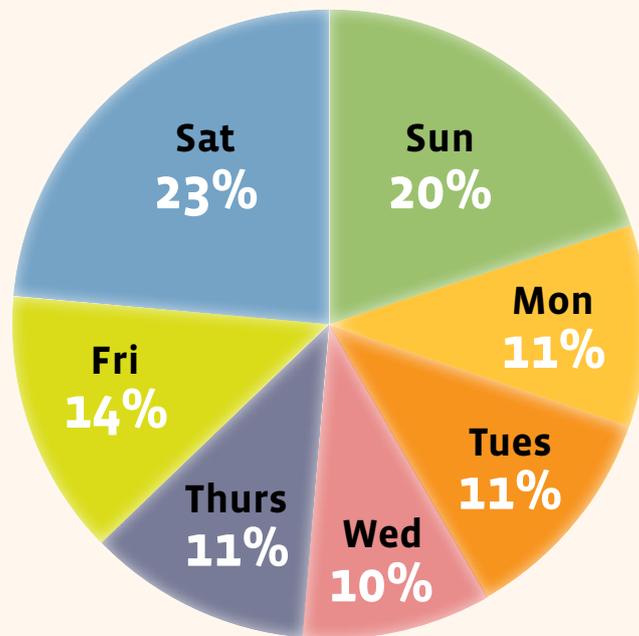
"He drove the boat for a while; I think he felt very much at home." Patrick says they took the opportunity to show the Prince how TracPlus and Nowcasting work – two Kiwi inventions.

But the visit focussed on celebrating Coastguard's Volunteers: 17 of them, from all over New Zealand, were selected to meet Prince Charles and be recognised for the tireless role they play in helping keep Kiwis safe at sea.

"Without our network of committed, dedicated and passionate volunteers, Coastguard could not exist. We wanted to recognise that on behalf of all New Zealanders," says Patrick. ●

## stats attack

### When Does Marine SAR Occur?



This graph looks at over 4,500 Category 1 (coordinated by NZ Police) marine SAR incidents from 2006 to 2012. There is no surprise that the two busiest days of the week for marine SAR are Saturday and Sunday – the weekend. However, it is important to note that over half of marine SAR incidents occur during the working week – Monday to Friday – when most volunteers are in paid employment. ●

### NZSAR Awards

Do you know of an organisation, group or individual who should to be acknowledged by their search and rescue peers?

What about someone who has dedicated hours of their time to your organisation or those involved in a courageous rescue or difficult search – do they deserve national recognition?

The NZSAR Awards celebrate the success and effort of people who work or volunteer their time and skills in the field of search and rescue in New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region.

#### There are two awards:

1. The NZSAR Gold Award honours the person, group or organisation that has made the most significant contribution to search and rescue.
2. The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement are awarded for an important contribution. More than one NZSAR Certificate can be awarded each year.

These awards are valuable not only for the contribution they acknowledge but also for raising community awareness about the efforts SAR people go to in this often complex and difficult work.

Go to [www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz). You will find more information about the awards along with details on the simple nominations process. Nominations for the 2012 awards close on 31 January 2013.

## SAR in action

### Eliminating the 'What? Factor'

'Skills fade' is one of the many challenges volunteers across the SAR sector face, as opportunities to put into practice the knowledge they learn in courses can be few and far between.

To offset this issue, and to refresh memories, Coastguard Southern Region has introduced a day-long desktop exercise, which they hold a month before a full-scale exercise.



"It's a great way to dust off the cobwebs and get the grey matter working hard – so that when we hold the SAREX, people have really got the theory stuck in their heads and are ready to go," says Coastguard Canterbury's SAR Manager, Rachel McKenzie, who has been running these desktop exercises throughout the Southern Region for about 18 months.

Rachel a Coastguard volunteer, says they started these exercises to eliminate the 'what? factor'. She describes this as countering the 'skills fade' and the lack of understanding individuals have of the 'big picture'. "So, alongside the 'what is the reason behind initiating a grid search in a particular area' type question, people are also unsure of roles and responsibilities, how they fit, and how the IMT (Incident Management Team) run an incident. It really shows the on-water crew why the IMT needs up to date information from on the water to calculate search areas, and why information takes time to get out to search teams."

The desktop day is planned around the IMT, but it is a session for everyone, as well as being multi-agency, meaning that SAR people from LandSAR, Surf Lifesaving, Dunedin Marine SAR, RCCNZ, and Police are all involved.

"We divide the day in two, spending the morning in a 'plotting and planning' session – essentially a revision session – going over managing an incident, the CIMS structure, search theory (using real time info from on the water), figuring out search patterns, and reviewing search team roles – what everybody does," says Rachel.

The afternoon is spent resolving a desktop SAR scenario that Rachel has designed. "We run the full CIMS structure, beginning with managing the response and moving onto managing the full incident. We have people in outer rooms with radios and we provide the IMT



with limited information, as happens quite often in reality. We also throw in a bit of role playing and a few curve balls, called 'exercise injects', along the way to keep people on their toes. Getting used to filling out relevant paperwork is a significant part of the exercise as well, and is particularly important in a real situation."

Judging from the evaluations to date, these days are highly valued. Rachel ran one of these desktop days recently in Twizel where Dene Madden, President of the Coastguard MacKenzie Lakes unit, attended. He says that eliminating the 'what? factor' was a highlight.

"The biggest thing that strikes those of us out on the water during an incident is what appears to be confusion back at incident control. You don't appreciate the intelligence, the logistics, all of the work going on in the background. You don't know how the IMT is coming to its conclusions. Having been involved in this desktop day we now have an excellent insight into what is happening onshore; the whole process, what everybody is doing, the tensions, why decisions take time. It has helped immensely," says Dene.

Dene and Rachel both agree another positive spinoff is building stronger relationships across the agencies.

Dene says it was great for his Coastguard unit to have the opportunity to spend the day with people from LandSAR and Police SAR. "We've been encouraged into working collectively and the benefits are wide-ranging. In fact we are just about to build a combined shed on Police property with LandSAR – winners all-round!"

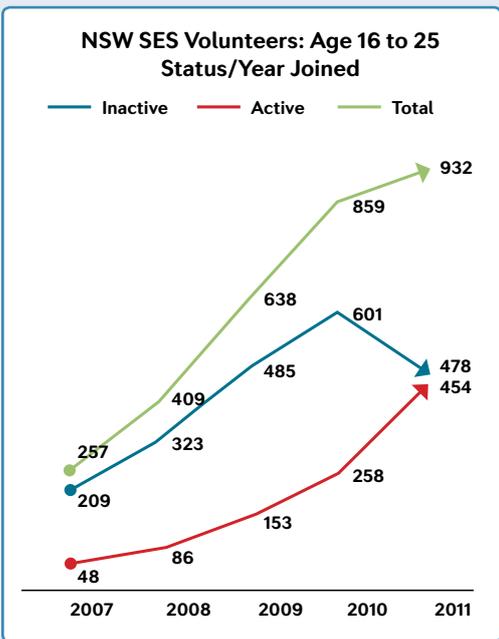
Rachel says this multi-agency cooperation comes down to people taking up the opportunities offered to them. "I was really pleased to welcome one of our volunteers from the Waihi Beach unit to our Canterbury desktop exercise; he joined in and took away a lot of food for thought. This is all about supporting and learning from each other. I've learnt something at every exercise I've run. Our SAR people have got the knowledge. These exercises are just helping them get that knowledge out, shared and cemented. It is all about the knowledge and what you do with it." ●

## international observation

NZSAR's Training Coordinator Phil Burgess attended the National Emergency Services Training Officers Conference (NESTOC) in October.

It is a collaborative conference run by Australia's NESTOC committee and co-presented with EMQUAL New Zealand. Some initiatives of interest to the NZSAR sector include:

**Future Boosting:** The NSW State Emergency Services (SES) is addressing the issue of aging volunteers by working on strategies to engage youth. Called Future Boosting, it focusses on attracting, engaging, retaining and developing young people in emergency services. They run a SES youth forum to give young people a voice. Listening and consulting are key elements which have led to some changes in emergency service culture. One example is the change in policy to allow 16 and 17 year olds to go on overnight stays. They have put in place a number of initiatives, such as a scholarship and awards programme. They are already seeing positive results; in particular, stats showing that youth participation is rising steadily.



**E-learning:** The NSW Fire Brigades and NSW Rural Fire Service are embracing e-learning. To address the rising costs of bringing people together from vast distances they are now developing interactive and innovative training tools that can be accessed either from their home or workplace computer. The online training is set to be a series of modules, teaching health and safety compliance right through to refresher training and acquiring practical skills.

Carl van der Meulen, NZSAR's Senior Advisor, attended the Annual Australian National Search and Rescue Council (NATSAR) meeting in October.

The focus of the Council meeting was on technology in SAR. A number of points of interest to New Zealand SAR organisations were discussed:

**Mobile Locating Services:** Telstra Australia is able to assist searches by providing locating services for mobile phones. This includes their development of 'People Finder', which is a portable GSM phone tower that can be deployed from a motor vehicle or helicopter. It's been used six times during operations, with two successful locations provided. (It can only work if the mobile phone is switched on and has a good battery.)

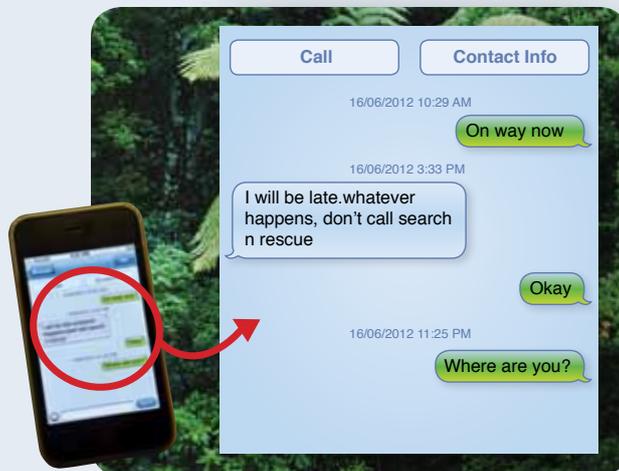
**Rock Fisherman Safety:** NSW is responding to the number of rock fishing fatalities. It very likely their response will include legislating for the compulsory wearing of personal flotation devices if people are rock fishing.

**Meteorological Services:** The Marine Weather Services division of Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has a national model of forecasting for Australia. The BOM can provide increased resolution weather maps and forecasts for SAR operations if required.

## SAR Challenges

SAR people face many challenges when they are involved in a search and rescue operation – both physically and mentally. Below shows a text conversation between a person who went missing and a family member. It gives those searching an insight into this missing person's reasoning. It also illustrates the complexities SAR teams must tackle, such as information and clues that must be gathered.

Underlying the ability to search for and then rescue this missing person is years of experience, a huge amount of training, knowledge, hours of volunteer time, piles of research, and a commitment to working better together and continually improve. NZSAR works with the SAR sector – providing strategic leadership and direction in many of these areas – helping them to help save lives.



This missing person was found by a SAR team four days after he sent this text.

## SAR insight

### Searching for Missing Hunters

A lack of preparation and, in some cases, over-confidence by hunters can make searching for them a difficult task.

In addition to this, the term 'hunters' covers a broad range of activities – pig and deer hunters are quite different in the way they operate for instance. Some recent cases have illustrated how hunter behaviours pose their own set of challenges for SAR teams.

In one example, a pig hunter went missing within metres of where his car was parked. The forestry roads he was on had changed; he took the wrong track. Once he realised this he walked to the top of a hill, became disorientated, but kept on walking. He wasn't carrying a whistle, map, GPS, radio or emergency beacon and he had no supplies. He didn't think he would need these things as it was just an afternoon hunt.

Dunedin's Police SAR coordinator, Senior Sergeant Brian Benn, says this is often the case, particularly with pig hunters, "as they normally only go out for a day. In this incident the hunter was missing for nearly 30 hours – but he didn't think he was. The point being, we are not to know if he got caught in a river or is lying injured somewhere. This guy missed the opportunity to alert the police car as it drove by, didn't see the helicopter and kept his dogs quiet. He walked (in the wrong direction), then he slept, then he walked (further in the wrong direction) and then he slept. Basically he didn't do anything to help searchers find him. Otherwise we would have found him much earlier."

Brian says interpreting the lost person behaviour plays a vital role.

It also means that planning and intelligence gathering is a key aspect in the search adds Dave Comber, the Search Manager at Taupo LandSAR. He says resourcing the "planning and intel cell" appropriately, and ensuring you stick to procedures consistently, gives you a better chance of success.

*"Casting a net is how I often refer to the initial phase of the search. It is reactive; gathering information that can support or discount possible scenarios – even finding nothing is significant. In a high majority of cases this phase finds the missing party. In the past we have underestimated the importance of this function to the detriment of good search management."*

Brian Benn points out that as these operations, which often happen on long weekends, can take time to resolve it is important that you have neighbouring SAR organisations that are able to come in and "hit the ground searching".

"This search ran for three shifts and involved calling in personnel from the Catlins. They have an excellent computer search management system (IMAN), and once we got the hang of that it worked extremely well. It underlined to us the need for common SAR management systems between neighbouring SAR groups.

While Dave embraces the use of technology in searching for hunters, he cautions against relying too heavily on 'experts'.



"Various hunters have various devices they use. These can be very helpful tools but, as we found out during a recent search, you need to ensure the person you use for advice fully understands how the device works and how it can help the search.

Over-confidence from friends and family is another trap to avoid, warns Dave.

"Friends and family will often tell you the hunter is 'very experienced'. Treat this with a grain of salt and tease out what actual experience and skills the subject possesses. Avoid the temptation to go off on a tangent because a 'mate' says he will 'definitely do xyz'. They want to give advice and be involved – the challenge is to manage them in a way that they feel they are contributing, but are not detracting from the efficiency of the trained SAR people."

Brain agrees: "In this latest incident his mates described him as very experienced in the bush, but new to hunting. He said he had several years' experience in Sea Cadets – and that made him 'experienced'!"

#### INSIGHTS:

- **SAROPs often happen on long weekends – our regular volunteer searchers may be unavailable so each SAR group needs to have robust callout systems and agreements with their neighbouring SAR groups.**
- **Working with your neighbours on SAR operations requires training with your neighbours and having common management systems.**
- **Searching for a mobile subject is challenging – containment points are important and searching areas several times can be necessary.**
- **Establish a planning and intel cell early on in the search – resource the cell adequately and expand as the search develops.**
- **Do not underestimate the potential value to be gained from subject matter experts properly questioned for their applicable knowledge.**
- **Ensure the person advising on a specialist technological tool actually has the knowledge necessary to advise and is the best available.**



## Duncan's desk



The last three months of the year are always a bit hectic. This is especially true for SAR people as we prepare for the inevitably busy summer period of more search and rescue operations. There is a lot of work going on now preparing SAR groups, units and teams. New Zealand Search and Rescue helps out by making money available to support SAREXs around the country.

This funding is aimed specifically at the analysis, preparation, monitoring and debriefing of SAREXs. Our Training coordinator, Phil Burgess, has attended a large number of these exercises on behalf of NZSAR over the past nine months, and it is encouraging to hear about the variety and quality of the training conducted.

In October, we published the NZSAR Annual Report for the 2011–2012 year. This report provides a summary of our sector over the past year and is available to view and download at [www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz). I think the headline numbers are always impressive: we have over 12,000 trained SAR people; 94% of our sector are volunteers; there were over 2,300 SAR incidents during the year; more than \$18 million was spent by the Government on search and rescue; our benefit / cost ratio is 27:1; nearly 1,700 people were rescued or assisted; and, 150 lives were saved (where, had SAR agencies not intervened, these lives would definitely been lost). If you haven't already read this annual report I hope you can put a few minutes aside to take a look at it.

The Secretariat has also been busy attending sector conferences, both here in NZ and overseas. The commitment, dedication and passion of our SAR people is extraordinary and these conferences are a great time for people to get together and plan for the future. As an isolated country, it is also worth taking the time to engage with SAR people from around the world to exchange ideas and challenge our way of thinking (see some observations on page four). It is very helpful to examine how others tackle similar issues to those we face in New Zealand.

Over the coming months we will focus our efforts on completing the mass rescue policy and supporting the development of mass rescue plans. We will continue to support the development of health and safety policies and procedures, and establish a nationwide plan for wander SAR. We will also build upon the recently established collaborative prevention partnership between NZSAR, Mountain Safety Council, Water Safety NZ and Coastguard (see story on page one). This partnership is all about providing consistent, quality safety information to Kiwis and people visiting NZ, using the three Safety Codes and AdventureSmart. Great progress has been made so far and hopefully you will see and hear more about it in the future.

*Duncan Ferner  
NZSAR Secretariat Manager  
[d.ferner@transport.govt.nz](mailto:d.ferner@transport.govt.nz)*

**NZSAR**

## useful website links

[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz) – New Zealand Search and Rescue Council. This newsletter is available as a PDF on this website.

[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz) – Safety information and tips for the public planning outdoor activities as well as links to organisations with specific safety information about their chosen pursuit.

[www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz) – Information about 406 Beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon

[www.metservice.com](http://www.metservice.com) – Comprehensive weather reports

[www.coastguard.co.nz](http://www.coastguard.co.nz) – Coastguard New Zealand

[www.findabeach.co.nz](http://www.findabeach.co.nz) – beach safety information

[www.aomevents.com/NESTOC](http://www.aomevents.com/NESTOC) – Speaker presentations from NESTOC 2012

## calendar

For SAREXs and SAR training dates – see <http://www.nzsar.org.nz/nzsar-calendar>

- Thursday 31 January – Nominations for NZSAR Awards close
- Tuesday 12 February – NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting
- Tuesday 26 February – NZSAR Council meeting