

New Zealand Search and Rescue Council

NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Rapu Whakarauora Aotearoa



2021 Awards



INTRODUCTION



Kia ora koutou

The opportunity to explore our forests, mountains, skies and seas is one of the great gifts to be enjoyed by New Zealanders and visitors to our nation.

When we venture into nature, we do so with the intent of returning home. However, the most well-prepared individuals can encounter difficulties and the environment can throw up unpredictable challenges.

It is hugely reassuring to know that when people get lost or injured, or find themselves in life-threatening situations, New Zealand search and rescue personnel will do their best to locate them and return them to safety.

The complexity of search and rescue operations is indicated by the range of agencies represented in this year's NZ Search and Rescue awards.

My sincere congratulations to all those who are receiving awards. Thank you for what you have done to prevent injury and save lives. New Zealanders are deeply grateful for your expertise, commitment and bravery.

The Rt Hon Dame Cindy Kiro, DNZM, QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand



A footprint on a high alpine ridge, a discarded chocolate bar wrapper, or a chilly-bin floating in the sea: each clue tells a story about how a fun day out can quickly turn into a scary and life-threatening situation. But it's in those situations that New Zealand's search and rescue sector shines.

There are over 11,000 people involved in search and rescue in New Zealand. Around 91 percent of them are volunteers, who along with those in paid roles, have devoted years to honing their skills and developing their knowledge. These are the people who can be called away from family dinners, birthday parties and workplaces at a moment's notice. Together, they provide an exemplary service to the lost, missing and injured.

Some of this year's Award recipients are being recognised for their specialist skills such as operating a helicopter winch, managing searches, or providing life-saving medical care. Others are receiving awards for their tenacity and determination in treacherous terrain. Some are being honoured for their work bringing people together, upskilling volunteers or securing vital funding. Each of their efforts are equally important and contribute to a cohesive, high-functioning search and rescue system.

It is a privilege to serve as Chair for a sector that does their best, every day of the year, to reunite people with their loved ones.

Peter Mersi
Chair
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY



Gold Award

The NZSAR 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 2021.

West Coast Police SAR Squad

Christchurch Police SAR Squad

South Westland LandSAR

Hokitika LandSAR

Methven LandSAR

Aoraki/Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team

The Helicopter Line - Mount Cook

Precision Helicopters

GCH Aviation Rescue Helicopter

**For the rescue of a tramper near Mungo Pass on
23-27 February 2021.**

On 23 February 2021, Police were informed that a tramper crossing the Main Divide had missed a planned pickup.



The tramper was not carrying a personal locator beacon, but Police search and rescue staff assessed that he was experienced, fit and well-prepared for his intended route, so held off commencing a search.

When he still had not emerged on 26 February, an initial search of his planned route was conducted via helicopter, with nothing found. A full-scale multi-agency search was launched on 27 February. Due to the scale of the terrain, two simultaneous search operations were carried out by local helicopter operators and search teams on either side of the Main Divide.

LandSAR search teams deployed by helicopter were tasked to search huts and routes that the tramper may have taken. Other LandSAR teams, deployed in 4WD vehicles, were tasked to cover the braided valleys within the Canterbury search area.

The very steep upper reaches of the Gibson Valley, near Mungo Pass, required specialist alpine capabilities. The Helicopter Line – Mount Cook and the Department of Conservation Aoraki/Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team were deployed for this task.

With deteriorating weather and limited helicopter fuel remaining, they spotted the tramper and recovered him to Unknown Hut using a long-line setup. The tramper was treated at the hut for significant injuries and hypothermia – the result of a 100-metre fall six days earlier.

The tramper was taken to hospital and is continuing to recover from his injuries.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY



Gold Award

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

Alan Doy

Taranaki LandSAR

For his service and commitment to search and rescue and Taranaki LandSAR.



During more than 30 years' service to Taranaki LandSAR, Alan Doy has performed a range of operational and support duties to an exceptionally high level.

From his first search in 1989, his natural aptitude meant he quickly became a field team leader. His experience grew over many operations and exercises and his contribution eventually shifted to Incident Management Team roles.

Alan's background as a surveyor complemented his search and rescue experience. With a near-photographic memory of the Taranaki backcountry, he was able to provide key local knowledge, enabling efficient deployment of search and rescue resources.

Likewise, his professional skills in Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) facilitated the recording and presentation of complex data during searches and when developing readiness plans.

His expertise is also recognised beyond the Taranaki region. Alan has been invited on several occasions to provide GIS support for other complicated operations, such as the 2006 Erceg Helicopter search. He was also asked to provide expert advice for the high-profile 2021 search for a father and his three children who disappeared near Marokopa in the Waitomo district.

Alan has made a significant contribution to the governance of Taranaki LandSAR, with 17 years on the committee and four years as Chairperson.

Alan is highly respected within the Taranaki SAR community, as a humble yet exceptionally valuable member of any operation, exercise, or training activity.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY



Certificate of Achievement

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 2021.

Christchurch Alpine Cliff Rescue Team

GCH Aviation Greymouth Rescue Helicopter

Christchurch Police SAR Squad

Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand

For the rescue of two climbers from Kaimatau / Mount Rolleston on 22-23 October 2021.

Around 8.45pm on 22 October 2021, two cold and exhausted climbers phoned their emergency contact for rescue from the summit. At the same time, they activated their personal locator beacon, which alerted the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.

The Greymouth Rescue Helicopter was tasked, however the intermittent cloud cover meant that even with the aid of night vision goggles, they were unable to reach the stricken climbers, or drop equipment to them.



The Christchurch Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) Team was tasked at 1.30am, arriving in Arthur's Pass before dawn, with the Christchurch Police SAR Squad. They took off in the Greymouth Rescue Helicopter around 6.30am and began a reconnaissance of the conditions on the mountain.

Unable to access the climbers due to cloud, rain and strong winds, the helicopter crew performed an extremely challenging 20-metre winch to deploy the rescue team to the nearby Crow Glacier.

In dangerous climbing conditions and considerable avalanche hazard, the ACR Team carefully ascended the 2,275m summit, where they found the climbers soaking wet and hypothermic after a night in an improvised snow shelter.

The ACR Team lowered the climbers to the glacier in a whiteout, before a small break in the weather allowed the helicopter to extract the climbers by winch.

Faced with a forecast of five more days of stormy weather, and the likelihood that the helicopter would be unable to retrieve them, the team prepared to begin the hazardous journey to traverse the summit and egress via the Rome Ridge.

Fortunately, another small break in the weather allowed the helicopter to make a challenging hover load, aided by the ACR Team creating a visual reference using leftover coffee grounds.

The climbers and rescuers were flown to Arthur's Pass for debriefing.

Certificate of Achievement

Karekare Surf Life Saving Club

For the rescue of an adult and two children from Karekare Beach on 21 November 2021.

On 21 November 2021, an off-duty lifeguard spotted an adult and two children swimming in the mouth of a notorious rip. The beach was unpatrolled, and although they did not currently appear in distress, she realised the seriousness of the situation. She immediately called for backup and then entered the water to assist.



With three rescue tubes, she swam through the surf, first providing one tube to a 16-year-old boy. Quickly she prioritised the adult, who was in serious trouble, floating face down and unconscious.

Meanwhile, an inflatable rescue boat deployed through challenging surf conditions to assist. As a team, they extracted the adult and returned to shore. The initial rescuer then attended to the 14-year-old boy until the rescue boat could return.

On the beach, members of the Karekare Surf Life Saving Club worked in perfect unison to coordinate the rescue and response: simultaneously providing CPR to the adult, reassuring distressed members of the public, establishing two helicopter landing zones and coordinating the additional responding and supporting agencies (Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust, St John, Police, and Fire and Emergency New Zealand).

CPR was continued for 26 minutes until the rescue helicopter arrived and paramedics took over patient care.

Nine days later, the adult swimmer was discharged from hospital and was expected to recover fully.

Certificate of Achievement

Senior Constable Mark Lendrum

**For the rescue of four adults near Kaiaua
on 6 February 2021.**

At 5:50pm on 6 February 2021, Police received a call from the occupants of a sinking boat near Kaiaua, in the Firth of Thames. The occupants reported that they did not have lifejackets.



The Police Air Support Unit (Eagle) helicopter was deployed, with Senior Constable Mark Lendrum as a crew member. Drawing on his considerable search and rescue experience, Mark prepared the helicopter and equipment to conduct a 'hover-exit' response.

At the scene, Mark spotted some flotsam, and subsequently the four people in the water, all of whom were hanging onto a single seat cushion. Two people were struggling to remain afloat, and Mark quickly assessed the seriousness of the situation. He chose to take the Eagle's four water-rescue devices with him as he hover-exited the helicopter. Mark then fitted and activated the devices, first to the people who needed them most. Realising additional floatation was required, he gave away his own survival floatation vest.

The Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust then arrived on scene to winch the people from the water. Mark ensured they were lifted in order of medical priority, then volunteered to remain in the water so the patients could be quickly transported to hospital.

Mark remained in the water until he was retrieved by the Coastguard vessel *Lion Foundation Rescue* and then returned to base, where he continued the remainder of his shift.

Certificate of Achievement

Whangārei Police SAR Squad

Northland LandSAR

Far North LandSAR

Whangārei Coastguard

Ruakākā Surf Life Saving Club

Skywork Helicopters

Whangārei Fire Brigade

**For the rescue of a person from Mount Parihaka
on 8-11 July 2021.**

On 8 July 2021, Police were notified that a man with dementia had left his home in Whangārei sometime the previous evening and had not returned.



Weather conditions were poor, with widespread rain and cold temperatures. Over the next four days, more than 120 people from LandSAR, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving, Police and members of the public searched for the missing man, with support from Skywork Helicopters and the Whangārei Fire Brigade.

The incident management team provided outstanding coordination and tasking of the many search teams. Each was able to bring a wealth of experience and specialist skills to the operation, which was conducted in coastal, urban, and bush environments.

On the fourth day of the search, following clues from CCTV footage of the area, teams were re-deployed to search the bush, creeks and tracks surrounding the Parihaka monument. The terrain in the area is extremely difficult, with numerous waterfalls, steep bush, windfalls and slips.

The man was located by a search team in a creek bed, having sustained significant injuries from a fall, and was hypothermic from exposure to the elements. He went into cardiac arrest shortly after being found. Despite the search team members conducting CPR for an extended period of time until further assistance arrived, the man sadly died at the scene.

Through a coordinated effort, all involved contributed to the return of the man to his family.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY



Certificate of Achievement

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.

Phoebe Havill

Surf Life Saving New Zealand

For her service and commitment to Surf Life Saving New Zealand and the Wāhine on Water programme.

Phoebe Havill joined the Onemana Surf Life Saving Club when she was five years old, becoming a qualified lifeguard at age 14. Her passion for surf life saving continued to grow, as did the responsibilities she took on as a club captain, committee member and instructor.



In 2018, Phoebe attended Surf Life Saving New Zealand's 'BP Leaders for Life Programme', which aims to enhance the abilities of leading lifeguards through practical projects.

Phoebe and three of her fellow participants noticed a lack of females with Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) qualifications, which are essential to gain senior lifeguarding qualifications and unlocking leadership opportunities within Surf Life Saving New Zealand, including search and rescue.

At the time Phoebe was going through the leadership programme, just 28 percent of IRB drivers were female. Phoebe quickly realised this was an area that she could influence, and Wāhine on Water was born. This programme consists of female-only IRB training days, which aim to support, grow and retain the talents and contributions of the female volunteers.

Since April 2019, there have been 17 Wāhine on Water training days, which encourage upskilling and networking, as well as providing an opportunity to engage with female role models.

A 500-member Facebook group connects female lifeguards across New Zealand, whilst off-shoot Female Leadership Evenings and weekly Wāhine Swim Squads build on the momentum of the programme.

Phoebe is highly regarded as a dedicated volunteer, gifted leader, and role model by her Surf Life Saving colleagues and her community.

Certificate of Achievement

Peter Kara

Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki Moana Aotearoa

For his service and commitment to search and rescue and Coastguard Nelson.

Peter Kara joined Coastguard Nelson in 2006. As a keen fisherman and diver, he wanted to give back to his community.



Drawing on past leadership experience from the military and working for the United Nations, Peter took on the role of President and developed a vision to grow the capabilities of the small Coastguard Nelson unit.

His leadership style has the welfare of volunteers and their families at its core. He is committed to ensuring volunteers are supported following a significant or complex rescue, during hard times at home, or even when celebrating family milestones.

A centerpiece of his Coastguard career was his significant contribution to the fundraising, building, and launching of *Hohapata – Sealord Rescue*. This state-of-the-art rescue vessel was the culmination of 14 years' fundraising and volunteer project work.

Peter ensured strong relationships with local community groups and businesses were built, so they understood the contribution the new vessel would make to the region. Those strong relationships paid off, with Nelson-based business Sealord donating a generous \$215,000 to help the new vessel over the line when the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project.

Peter is a humble and inspirational leader, who is highly regarded by his peers, the local community and iwi alike.

Certificate of Achievement

Richard Craig

Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki Moana Aotearoa

For his service and commitment to search and rescue and Coastguard Kaikoura.

Richard Craig has dedicated nearly 35 years' service to Coastguard Kaikoura. He is now their longest-serving volunteer with experience in all aspects of a Coastguard unit including rescues, maintenance, training, fundraising, and governance.



Richard played an integral part in the planning and fundraising of over \$700,000 for the commissioning of a purpose-built vessel. *Kaikoura Rescue*, launched in 2006, enabled the unit to operate further from shore and in marginal conditions. With this capability, Coastguard Kaikoura was able to successfully rescue two injured sailors from the yacht *Marguerite* in 2010 after it collided with a whale.

Richard was recognised for his part as crew during that rescue, performed more than 30 kilometres offshore, with five-metre swells and 120 kilometre per hour winds.

He has served many years as unit President, as well as on the Coastguard Southern Regional Board and National board, where he contributed to the national rebranding of Coastguard in 2004.

Richard's exceptional skills and knowledge are only matched by his sheer enthusiasm to help. He is always around, whether the task is small or huge, rescue or routine maintenance.

He is a well-respected member of the team, and his dedication to his unit and the Coastguard mission is without peer.

Certificate of Achievement

Ray Harkness

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

For his service and commitment to search and rescue and WanderSearch.

Ray Harkness has contributed more than 20 years' service to search and rescue, through his involvement with Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) and LandSAR.



Ray is a valuable member of any search and rescue operation requiring radio communications in the Wellington region, whether deploying, operating or maintaining the equipment needed. Beyond the pure communication tasks, Ray is quick to volunteer for general jobs whenever and wherever he can help.

With his years of experience, Ray is a highly regarded expert, providing critical advice when complex terrain demands elegant communication solutions. Likewise, for insight on the ground itself, he draws on years of experience in exploring the region to help search teams understand what they are about to encounter during their tasks.

Ray is generous with his skills and experience and enjoys training and mentoring members new to LandSAR and AREC.

His strategic vision to support the community led to him establishing the Trust that funds the WanderSearch programme in the Wellington region. Ray currently administers the Trust as well as performing many of the day-to-day tasks required to successfully provide the WanderSearch programme for clients and rescuers in Wellington.

Ray is a valued and respected member of the Wellington search and rescue community.



NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE REGION

Do you know an organisation, group or individual who you think should be acknowledged for their contribution to search and rescue?

There are two categories – operational activity and support activity. More information about each category, the NZSAR Awards and the nomination process can be found at nzsar.govt.nz/awards.

The 2022 Award nominations close on 31 January 2023.