

## Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

### news

#### NZSAR Integrated Training Framework

Government provides funds for NZSAR training.

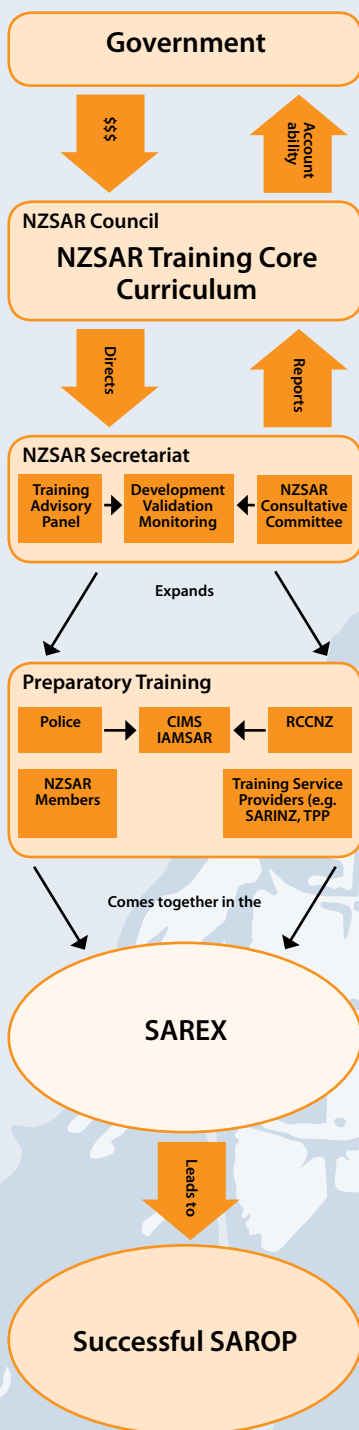
The NZSAR Council provides governance and leadership for the NZSAR Sector and 'owns' the NZSAR Training Core Curriculum.

The NZSAR Secretariat oversees the strategic implementation and coordination of the NZSAR Training Core Curriculum, assisted by the NZSAR Consultative Committee and Training Advisory Panel. All feedback is provided to this level.

Organisational level implementation of training. NZ Police & RCCNZ support training in CIMS/IAMSAR and Incident Management. Training Service Providers supply specialised training courses. NZSAR members have their own training programmes. This training prepares the individual and NZSAR organisations for SAR work.

Interagency implementation of NZSAR training comes together in the SAREX. This training emphasises interagency collaboration and cohesion. The SAREX provides experiential training that puts into practice the previous level of preparatory training.

**Outcome**  
Implementation of the NZSAR Integrated Training Framework will lead to an increase in interagency collaboration and cohesion to improve SAROPs.



#### Comprehensive training structure for New Zealand's SAR Sector

NZSAR is to implement a thorough and wide-ranging training framework that will help individuals and organisations build greater connections, particularly during search and rescue operations (SAROPs).

The framework is one of the core recommendations in the recently completed NZSAR Council commissioned report, 'Improving Search and Rescue Outcomes Through Interagency Collaboration and Training'. It found that Search and Rescue (SAR) in New Zealand would benefit significantly if sector organisations and individuals were able to share their expertise and resources, plan, train and commit to working together with goodwill and better communication.

Historically, New Zealand's SAR sector has operated as a community of independent organisations, albeit with some well-formed partnerships and arrangements. With the establishment of the NZSAR Council, Consultative Committee and Secretariat, the SAR community now has an "organisational umbrella" which has access to links, information, ideas and strategies that could benefit the collective SAR effort.

#### NZSAR Training Core Curriculum

At the heart of the NZSAR integrated training framework will be the NZSAR Training Core Curriculum, which will be developed under the auspices of the NZSAR Council. There are already many courses and other training activities offered throughout the SAR community. Every organisation has its own approach to promoting competence and development amongst its staff and members, and there are many 'public' courses designed to increase operational skills.

The Training Core Curriculum will not interfere with any of that, rather it will bring together the essence of several existing courses, adding a strategic level that overarches what is on offer already.

The core curriculum (which will be facilitated by the NZSAR Secretariat) will produce a platform that supports the development (or redevelopment) of providers' courses in a cohesive, integrated way.

#### Training Advisory Panel

Another part of the framework is a Training Advisory Panel. This is not intended to be a permanent fixture but rather a list of experienced

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and respected SAR specialists from across the sector – from academic, trainer, management or practitioner sources. These nominated panel members would be available to undertake advisory roles for organisations, to mentor decision makers, to be SAREX advisers and analysts, to be ambassadors and use their international links and to bring information and insights to issues or future directions for SAR.

The principle driving the Training Advisory Panel is that the knowledge, expertise and influence held by highly regarded people should be accessible to those who want to benefit from that knowledge. It also recognises that training is not just a matter of courses and exercises matched to trainees' needs, but that on-the-job learning can come via a single comment or a planned discussion from an adviser or mentor as well.

### Summary

The purpose of these two initiatives is to enhance training and arrangements that already exist and to address identified training gaps so that a college of progressive thinking about SAR, backed up by a core curriculum of courses, can provide the sector's leaders with a platform of expertise and good practice that they can use as they wish in their organisations.

The report acknowledges the pressure placed on the volunteers, who make up approximately 90% of New Zealand's SAR sector. It says the challenge to address the various levels of motivation and aspiration amongst our SAR people and to grow the communication, collaboration and cooperation throughout the SAR community, lies with the leadership in SAR organisations.

Ultimately, though, it is the goodwill and contribution of the thousands of staff and volunteers who 'bring them home'. Organisations must do all they can to support that effort and well-targeted training activities make a significant contribution to that support. The full training review is available at: [www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)

## Deadline Past – 406 Beacon now the lifeline

Time has run out. Only 406 MHz beacons are now detected by the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system. This affects all maritime beacons (EPIRBs), all aviation beacons (ELTs) and all personal beacons (PLBs).

The old 121.5 MHz and 243 MHz distress beacons no longer generate an alert or give a location. The satellite system that supports these old beacons has ceased to operate.

The NZSAR Secretariat ran a four-year campaign promoting the switch to 406 beacons. The February figures show over 13 thousand people have made the switch and registered their beacon. The NZSAR Council and Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the many people who contributed to this campaign, including those who encouraged people, informed people, filled out surveys, gave

advice and talked to the media. A good example of the value of getting the message out there comes from this recent rescue in Fiordland:



"An initial alert for a New Zealand registered beacon was received with one position in Fiordland and the other in the mid Tasman. The owners were contacted and confirmed that the beacon was a hire beacon, which had been hired to a lone trumper whose intention was to tramp in the Dusky Sound area. The helicopter crew eventually located the man partially suspended in a narrow rock chimney where he had fallen. It was impossible for him to get out unassisted, due to the depth of the rock chimney. A member of the helicopter crew was suspended on a long line to rescue the trapped man. Rescue helicopter pilot, Richard Hayes, described this as the worst position that he has ever rescued a living person from." Keith Allen – RCCNZ

The story of this rescue was widely reported in the media. The trumper, Scott Pauley, repeatedly told reporters of the benefit of his hired locator beacon. Here's the lead paragraph from the Southland Times story: "A Southern Institute of Technology nursing graduate, who fell 20 metres down the side of a mountain, said he owed his life to a locator beacon and those who responded to its signal."

***How many trampers read or heard this and thought ...mm... a 406 beacon – it could save my life .... Congratulations to all who helped in the switch to 406 beacons!***

## SAR in action

### The Helicopter

We all know the familiar sound of the helicopter's rotor blades as it comes to assist in a search and rescue (SAR) operation. They play a vital role, but interestingly, SAR is a very small proportion of a helicopter's work. In New Zealand SAR all the helicopters used are operated by different organisations; some of which are private businesses who turn their hands to SAR when required as part of their community service; others of which are charitable trusts established for the purpose of emergency response. In the last year, RCCNZ and Police called on dozens of helicopters around the country to assist in various SAR operations.



Two such organisations are: The Helicopter Line at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, a private business doing tourism flights to the glaciers and charter work such as servicing DOC huts and transporting climbers, heli skiers and hunters; and the Charitable Trust, Life Flight, whose Westpac Rescue helicopter responds to emergencies 24/7.

The Helicopter Line has a core of four pilots directly involved with rescues with another five crew who have a variety of authorisations ranging from air observations to medivacs to Timaru Hospital. Lead pilot with The Helicopter Line at Mount Cook is Tony Delaney and his job is to coordinate and authorise all flights as well as liaise with Police and the DOC Alpine Rescue Team.

*"We look after Mount Cook National Park and surrounding district where required. If the Mount Cook DOC rescue team is involved, we normally are too. Our main SAR work is searching for or retrieval of injured or dead climbers. Occasionally we supply two helicopters if there has been a major climbing accident in the park; one to retrieve the dead and injured to a staging area and one to ferry personnel to the staging area, and normally evacuate victims back to the DOC emergency services building in the Mt Cook Village."*



Tony says the impact of SAR on their business is not great, as they typically only spend 5% of their time on SAR, but they do invest heavily in training and safety. "It is really about managing risk from an aviation point of view, so we use the most experienced personnel available for each mission according to whatever the situation is. Occasionally we are faced with taking an aircraft off tourist work for a SAR mission

if there is an accident during normal operations. The revenue generated from tourist flying is higher than the rate charged to Police for SAR. Normally though, climbing accidents happen at either end of the day so the impact on day to day operations is manageable. We are to a certain extent providing a community service and in this commercial sector of the industry most people are paid for their work, unlike some areas where all but the helicopter time is voluntary".

The Life Flight Trust has a different focus, its mission is to save lives and reduce the effects of injury and illness by providing air rescue and air ambulance services. Whilst Life Flight does receive some government contracts, such as ACC, it relies on the community for 40% of its income to support the operation.

Life Flight operates a BK117 helicopter which holds up to five crew and a stretcher. It spends an average of 20% of its time on SAR operations annually and carries specific SAR equipment, such as the FLIR infra red unit, a nite sun spotlight, NVGs and flight tracking software.



Life Flight Operations Manager, Dave Greenberg, ensures there is a team available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to provide quick response times. "We get the call from Police or RCCNZ and we can be up in the air in less than 8 minutes."

Safety and communication are the platform on which helicopter rescue work is built. RCCNZ and Police run an annual air observers course, and different helicopter operations run different programmes, but they all lead to the same outcome: safe practices and knowledge of the SAR resources and skills in their area. Life Flight runs its own extensive training programmes for the crew. **Dave estimates for every 2 hours spent on a SAR operation another 10 are spent in training.**

"All of the Life Flight crew have undergone intensive training before they commence a mission with us. All winch operators also undergo continuous development and training at least every 3 months."

Pretty much every flight a helicopter does is a search flight. Dave Greenberg says, "I don't know any of the crew that don't keep an eye out and we are always talking about things we see whilst in flight, especially going to Blenheim across the strait, you're always checking to ensure you are there to respond if necessary."

"There was one instance where we were returning from a mission in Blenheim and the pilot noticed a boat overturned in Cook Strait. Life Flight responded appropriately, dropping vital equipment to the boat, alerting the authorities and completing the rescue."

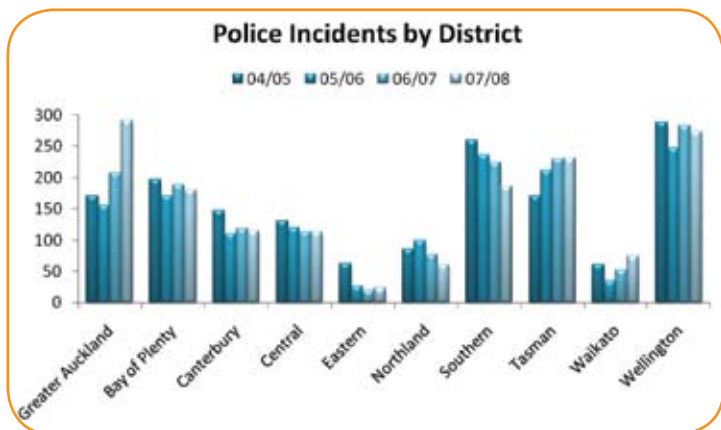
When faced with a number of conflicting emergencies at the same time Life Flight operates a considered and careful system. "We assess the seriousness of the different situations and work with other helicopter providers to assist where necessary. Once you are committed to an incident, you stay committed, so if there is another emergency out there Life Flight will work with others to ensure there is an appropriate response unit sent. None of us work in isolation; it is a big team effort."

As Operations Manager, Dave knows that if it wasn't for his dedicated highly skilled crew, people would not survive loss and injury. However, he is also fully aware that Life Flight does not work alone:

*"I would like to thank our SAR colleagues and apologise that sometimes we get the credit when you're the ones who've been up for two nights out in the bush. Often we go in and winch the person that you found and then the media give us the credit. Life Flight knows the immense effort that you put in, which is often unrecognised by the media and the general public, but it is certainly recognised by us."*



## stats attack



This graph shows the total response by NZ Police to SAR incidents (all modes) over the last four years, broken down by police districts (note that the various Auckland police districts have been collated together as 'Greater Auckland'). There has been a dramatic rise in police coordination of SAR incidents in the Greater Auckland Region over the last two years.

The busiest districts for NZ Police include the major population centres of Auckland and Wellington, and the two large geographic districts of Southern and Tasman, which attract high numbers of outdoor recreationists.

## calendar

- NZSAR Awards Ceremony – 13 May**
- Combined NZSAR Council and Consultative Committee Meeting – 13 May**
- National Air Observers course Police College/ Paraparaumu Airport – 3 May**
- National SAR Course Dip Flat, Nelson Lakes – 4 - 15 May**
- Air Observers Course 2 Police College – 11 & 12 May**
- Air Observers one Day refresher, Police College – 13 May**
- Air Observers Police College – 14 & 15 May**
- Air Observers Police College – 3 & 4 June**

## 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 the website
- [www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz) – 406 beacon information & online registration
- [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) – Department of Conservation
- [www.kordia.co.nz](http://www.kordia.co.nz) – Maritime Operations Centre
- [www.sarinz.com](http://www.sarinz.com) – Search and Rescue Institute of NZ
- [www.nss.gc.ca/site/index\\_e.asp](http://www.nss.gc.ca/site/index_e.asp) – Canada's SARSCENE Magazine

## from Duncan's desk

From where I sit, the start of 2009 looks quite different to the start of 2008. The additional funding has made all the difference. The interim two year funding provided by the Government has meant we've been able to roll out a number of long desired projects.



In particular, the service level agreements with voluntary search and rescue agencies have enabled them to plan with a much greater degree of confidence. This in turn gives the two coordinating authorities, NZ Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre, greater confidence that the assets and people they require will be trained, ready and able to conduct search and rescue operations when the need arises.

Long awaited air observer courses, including refresher training, and on scene coordinators courses will also run this year. As well as this, the sector-wide search and rescue training review has recommended a wide ranging training framework (see the news article in this Link) and a study into SAR volunteering is now underway. We look forward to seeing the positive effects of these developments as they flow through all levels of search and rescue in New Zealand. Now that this work is well underway, a number of new initiatives are planned, which are particularly aimed at getting our expert organisations to work together more regularly and more effectively.

Unfortunately the summer search and rescue statistics are pretty grim. There's been a significant number of people who have got themselves into serious trouble. While a number have paid with their lives, many more have been found and rescued by search and rescue people. While no formal analysis of the summer has taken place, it appears that more people than usual are going out poorly prepared and without much thought of the possible risks. Educating the public about these issues is not easy and, as I am sure you know, a huge amount of safety material for people already exists. However, we will continue to explore the best ways to get this material into the hands of the people who need to see it – before they set out.

Lastly, the "switch to 406MHz" distress beacons campaign is nearly complete. February 1, 2009 is now behind us and the satellites no longer listen for the old style distress beacons. To the many people who have helped with this campaign, thank you for your support. And if anyone knows of any 121.5MHz beacons out there – please tell its owner to take its battery out and dispose of it correctly.

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