

Titiro whakamuri, kōkiri whakamua

Look back and reflect so you can move forward

SAR Lessons Implementation Framework

June 2021

Search and Rescue operations typically involve more than one operational agency in their response. Ongoing reflection of operational capability and performance supports achieving an aligned coherent and cohesive SAR sector. The ability to capture and share lessons is integral to supporting this outcome.

1. The NZSAR Operational Framework states: ‘SAR case studies or reviews will be conducted on a regular basis, even when no problems are apparent. There is almost always room for improvement, especially in large or complex SAR incidents. Early detection and correction of apparently small problems or potential problems will prevent them from growing into serious deficiencies later’.

Overview

2. Learning lessons leads to improved operational effectiveness, reduced operational risk and increased cost efficiency.
3. A lessons framework can facilitate learning and improvement resulting in more efficient and effective practices, improved safety, and improved sharing of knowledge.
4. The goal of collecting, analysing, disseminating and applying learning experiences from events, exercises, programmes and reviews, including those that should be sustained and those that need to improve, is ongoing improvement.
5. The search and rescue sector has multiple players. The ability to share information from each other ensures a lessons culture that supports the collection, analysis, distribution and sharing of lessons in a way that can effect change.
6. Lessons can be derived from any activity. They can be a product of events, exercises, training, experiments or day-to-day work. The challenge facing any organisation is to build a culture within which everyone feels comfortable and motivated to share their knowledge in a productive way.

Just Culture for Lessons

7. A non-judgmental just culture encourages learning and maximises the potential for ongoing improvement. A just culture is about balancing demands for accountability regarding failures with an ability to collect enough information to make sense of the situation to contribute to learning and safety improvement. A non-judgemental just culture encourages learning and maximises the potential for ongoing improvement.

8. If stakeholders do not feel safe to speak up without fear of ridicule or blame, or if others declaring a contrary view challenge them, they can be discouraged from sharing their experiences.

9. The SAR sector supports a culture of continuous improvement by:

- Encouraging the sector to share lessons, both positive actions to sustain and areas for improvement
- Encouraging learning
- Focussing on systems performance, rather than the performance of individuals
- Recognising that identifying and implementing sustainable solutions takes time resources and commitment.

The Lessons Process

10. A lesson may be positive (recognising a good practice) or negative (an opportunity to improve). Successes and failures are both considered sources of lessons. Lessons learned embodies two interrelated concepts: the identification of the lesson (lesson identified), and the learning (lesson learned), or change that results.

11. *Identifying a lesson* does not automatically mean it will be learned. A lesson identified articulates a positive or negative experience and a clear course of action based on analysis. A *lesson learned* articulates how a lesson identified has been learned through a demonstrated change in behaviour.

Observation – Insight – Lesson Identified – Lesson Learned (OILL)

12. The development of lessons learned is based on the OILL process:

Observation

Observation comes from the record of a noteworthy fact or occurrence heard, seen, noticed or experienced as an opportunity for improvement or an example of good practice.

Insight

Insight is a deduction drawn from the evidence collected (observations), which needs to be further considered. Insights can be positive or negative, and can contribute to reinforcing positive behaviour or changing practices. An insight defines the issue, not the solution. Insights are typically based on multiple observations.

Lesson Identified

Lesson is knowledge or understanding gained by experience (NATO JALLC 2011). The experience may be positive (a good practice) or negative (a gap in performance or doctrine).

Lesson Learned

Lesson identified is a conclusion with a determined root cause based on the analysis of one or more insights and a viable course of action that can either sustain a positive action or address an area for improvement.

Lesson learned is only learned once the approved change is implemented and embedded in the organisation.

Observations - Collection

13. All people involved in SAR activities have a responsibility to identify and learn lessons from their own actions and omissions.

14. Observations for the purpose of identifying lessons come from a range of activities, and via a range of mechanisms both formal and informal, including:

Activity (observation source)	Observation gathering via:				
	Personal reflection	Hot debrief	Cold / formal debrief	Evaluation / Review	Statutory inquiries / other
Intra agency activities	✓	✓			
IMTEX	✓	✓	✓	✓	
SAREX	✓	✓	✓	✓	
SAROP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
H&S Reports	✓	✓	✓		✓

15. Debriefs provide a valuable opportunity for gathering observations and insights from an operation or exercise. These need to be undertaken within a just culture to be fully effective.

16. Information to support debriefs is provided in the [Operational Debriefing Guideline](#).

17. NZSAR undertakes system-level operational reviews each year. Observations and recommendations from these reviews are used to identify system level lessons.

18. NZ Police and RCCNZ have internal processes and requirements for debriefs of operations and managing insights and lessons.

19. SAR NGO agencies have a responsibility as part of their SLA to 'identify and share with the NZSAR Secretariat any 'lessons' identified ...as a result of SAROPs, training or SAREXs...'

Insights to Lessons

20. People with responsibility for capturing and collating observations undertake an analysis of the observations to form insights (where relevant), from which lessons can be identified.

21. The capture and sharing of insights and lessons supports updates and changes to:

- NZ's SAR Guidelines
- Response Guidelines
- SAR Forms
- Readiness Plans
- Training and course materials
- SOPs

Sharing Insights and Lessons

22. Sharing insights and lessons within and between organisations ensures everyone benefits from the knowledge gained. Sharing lessons can reduce risk, improve efficiency and increase the effectiveness of processes and operations.

Observations <i>come from</i>	Insights <i>recorded by</i>	Lessons		Lessons Learned <i>incorporated in</i>
		<i>identified by</i>	<i>shared via</i>	
SAROPs SAREXs IMTEXs Training Exercises Health & Safety Incident Reports	Debriefs Evaluations Reviews Coronial Inquest Individual Observations	NZSAR	Reports, Workshops, <i>Link</i> magazine	Training SOPs Guidelines Forms Readiness Plans
		Police	Intranet, case studies, training	
		RCCNZ	Internal systems; MNZ publications	
		SAR agency	Training, internal processes, AGM	
		Other agency	Publications, workshops	

23. Agencies will share insights and lessons across the sector and to NZSAR. Information shared within and/or between organisations is to be applied within an organisation as appropriate. Sharing of system level insights and lessons will be prioritised.

24. Agencies will identify a designated point of contact within SAR organisations to enable effective receipt and application of lessons from other organisations.

Lessons Implementation

25. Individual agencies have a responsibility to manage and implement lessons internally.

26. All agencies will work to monitor and review insights and lessons over time, with a focus on identifying themes or patterns. These will be conveyed to NZSAR to support national monitoring, particularly for aspects relevant at the systems level.

Lessons Forgotten

27. A lesson forgotten is a lesson identified that has not been implemented as a lesson learned, or has been previously implemented as a lesson learned but has since been 'forgotten'. This may come about through changes in the way people work, culture, behaviour or workforce cycles.

28. The ability to look back at lessons identified / lessons learned, and track these across time is required to avoid lessons being 'forgotten'.

References:

Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection 2019: Lessons Management (<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/lessons-management-handbook/>)

NATO JALLC – NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (<http://www.jallc.nato.int>)

Definitions

Lessons management:

the management of a continuous learning cycle where capturing, analysing and implementing lessons, occurs without barriers, and results in measurable behaviour modification. (Jackson, 2014; adapted from Attorney-General's Department, 2013; NATO JALLC, 2011; Milton, 2014)

Observation:

a record of a noteworthy fact or occurrence that someone has heard, seen, noticed or experienced as an opportunity for improvement or an example of good practice. (Adapted from Attorney General's Department, 2013; NATO JALLC, 2011; Milton, 2014)

Insight:

a learning opportunity based on trends or an area for further analysis identified through a number of similarly themed observations or a single high risk observation. (Jackson, 2014; adapted from Attorney General's Department, 2013; Milton, 2014)

Lesson identified:

a viable course of action based on the analysis of one or more insights or observations that can either sustain a positive action or address an area for improvement. (Attorney-General's Department, 2013, p. 7)

Lesson learned:

a lesson learned is a change in personal or organisational behaviour, as a result of learning from experience. (Milton, 2010, p. 16)

Lesson forgotten:

the loss of a lesson identified that has not been implemented, or of a lesson learned.

Debriefing:

the overarching and generic term used to describe facilitation of a process where personnel are able to communicate their experiences so insights may be gained and lessons can be identified. (Civil Defence & Emergency Management Ministry, New Zealand, 2011)

Just/fair:

a culture where personnel are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them which are commensurate with their experience and training, but where gross negligence, wilful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated (Attorney-General's Department, 2013, p. 84).