



New Zealand Search and Rescue

COORDINATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITIES

Definitions

The following definitions have been agreed for search and rescue activities within New Zealand's search and rescue region:

- **Coordinating Authority.** The Coordinating Authority is the agency or body responsible for the overall conduct of the Search and Rescue Operation. The Coordinating Authority will lead and manage the operation. The New Zealand Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand are the recognised Coordinating Authorities in New Zealand.
- **Search and Rescue Operation.** A Search and Rescue Operation (SAROP) is an operation undertaken by a Coordinating Authority to locate and retrieve persons missing or in distress. The intention of the operation is to save lives, prevent or minimise injuries and remove persons from situations of peril by locating the persons, providing for initial medical care or other needs and then delivering them to a place of safety.
- **Body Recovery.** New Zealand Police have the legal responsibility for all body recovery activities in accordance with the Coroners Act 2006. During a Category I SAROP New Zealand Police is the Coordinating Authority and will handle body recovery as part of the SAROP. During a Category II SAROP the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand is the Coordinating Authority and will manage all SAROP activity but, where practicable, will defer all matters relating to any subsequent body recovery activity to New Zealand Police.
- **Category I SAROP.** A SAROP coordinated at the local level; including land operations, subterranean operations, river, lake and inland waterway operations and close-to-shore¹ marine operations².
- **Category II SAROP.** A SAROP coordinated at the national level; including, operations associated with missing aircraft or aircraft in distress and off-shore marine operations within the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region³.

Responsibilities

For any SAROP there can only be one Coordinating Authority who is responsible for the management and coordination of the operation. The current responsibilities are as follows:

¹ The nature of 'close-to-shore' will vary according to the availability of local resources and the need to task national assets. Typically such operations will be within NZ Territorial Waters (12 nautical miles).

² Category I SAROPs typically require the use of local personnel and resources and can be carried out efficiently and effectively at the local level.

³ Category II SAROPs typically require the use of national or international resources and may involve coordination with other States.

- New Zealand Police are the Coordinating Authority for all Category I SAROPs.
- The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand is the Coordinating Authority for all Category II SAROPs.

Transfer of Responsibility

With the agreement of both Coordinating Authorities any SAROP may be re-categorised at any time and responsibility passed in either direction.⁴

Responsibility for the SAROP must be formally transferred in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures.

Initial Actions

The Coordinating Authority to receive initial notification of an incident that may require a SAROP will undertake the initial classification of the SAROP and assume responsibility until any formal transfer required is agreed.

Information Exchange

Established protocols provide for information to be exchanged between New Zealand Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand to ensure close cooperation, effective communication and appropriate response.

SAROP Conclusion and Suspension

Coordinating authorities will conclude or suspend a SAROP in accordance with established protocols. Where responsibility has been transferred between authorities, the initiating authority will be advised that the SAROP has been concluded or suspended.

Cost of SAROP

The cost of a SAROP is met by the respective Coordinating Authority. Where a SAROP is transferred between Coordinating Authorities, the responsibility for meeting costs also transfers from the point onward.

Statistics

The Coordinating Authority who possesses coordinating responsibility at the conclusion or suspension of a SAROP is responsible for all statistical reporting in relation to the SAROP.

⁴ Typically such re-categorisation would happen no more than once in any SAR operation.