



Connecting the search and rescue sector

Link is a quarterly publication of
New Zealand Search and Rescue

Alpine search and rescue



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Link magazine is published quarterly by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat. Editors: Tania Seward and Daniel Clearwater

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Duncan's desk

Kia ora koutou

In this issue we reflect on Exercise Whakarauora Tangata, highlighting the efforts of so many from our sector to better prepare us for a Nationally Significant SAR event. We have incorporated the learnings from all the activities into our Nationally Significant SAR Framework, which we intend to share widely once it has final approval. Hundreds of people from across the SAR and other sectors have taken part in this exercise series – thank you.

At the end of May, the Government announced more than \$86 million over four years in additional funding for the sector. Of that, over \$63 million was allocated to support frontline safety and prevention services delivered by Coastguard and Surf Life Saving NZ. The remainder is to help our sector to be more resilient and better prepared when we are asked to provide our services during civil emergencies. This announcement is very welcome news to us all, and will certainly deliver immense benefit to the sector and the people of New Zealand as we deal with a changing climate.

We're not the only ones considering the context of search and rescue within a warming climate. The International Maritime Rescue Federation has published a report giving clear strategies and action plans to adapt and overcome the challenges we're facing. The NZSAR Secretariat contributed to this project, which you can read more about on page seven.

In July, the Maritime New Zealand Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) marked 20 years of service. Coordinating search and rescue operations in our 30 million square kilometre search and rescue region, their dedicated team responded to over 1,300 SAR incidents in the year leading up to their anniversary. Congratulations to RCCNZ, and thanks to everyone who has contributed to the team's excellent life saving work over the years.

As the days get longer, climbers and alpinists are starting to make their way to our highest peaks in the Southern Alps. While traditionally summer was the busiest period for alpine climbing, the effects of climate change have meant that spring usually offers better conditions. The Department of Conservation SAR team, based at Aoraki / Mount Cook village, are gearing up for another busy season and you can read more about them on page three.

Many organisations within the sector have been incorporating aspects of Te Ao Māori, the Māori world view into more of their day-to-day functions. This issue looks at Taonga Tuku Iho, The Land Search and Rescue Rapa Taiwhenua cultural capability framework as one example. We also take a glimpse at the work Coastguard Tautiaki Moana is doing to engage with Māori, Pasifika and Asian communities to deliver education and safety resources in a way that best supports those communities.

Stay safe,
Duncan Ferner
Director
NZSAR Secretariat

Nominations for the 2024 NZSAR Awards are open

All the information about the awards and nominations are available at: nzsar.govt.nz/awards

Nominations close 31 January 2025, but early nominations are appreciated. If you are unsure about the process, or require help drafting the supporting text, assistance is available from the NZSAR Secretariat. Contact info@nzsar.govt.nz

COVER IMAGE

SAR operation on Mt Sefton, Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park. Courtesy Department of Conservation Search and Rescue team

Department of Conservation Search and Rescue

Providing full-time alpine SAR capability in the central Southern Alps.

Based at Aoraki / Mt Cook Village, a team of up to seven Department of Conservation staff provide alpine rescue capability for the high terrain between Arthur's Pass and Haast Pass. Although Police and the NZSAR Council contribute funding for the capability, the bulk comes from the Department of Conservation. This provides for four full-time staff, supplemented by three fixed term staff over the October to February peak visitor season.

"Staff members generally remain in the team around three to five years and have the opportunity to focus solely on alpine rescue at work," says George Loomes, Supervisor Search and Rescue at Aoraki / Mt Cook.

"At the end of their tenure, full-time team members often move on to other paid or voluntary roles within the sector. Having that depth of experience continually being spread across the country provides a significant ongoing benefit. This adds even more return on the investment in the team's capability."

Complementing the on-mountain team are trained local Department staff who perform the Incident Management Team (IMT) roles. "Usually, we have two local staff at the IMT, supporting a remote Incident Controller from Timaru Police, or the Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre," says George. "If incidents grow, we can bring in other Department staff and volunteers from Mackenzie Land Search and Rescue."

In recent years, the team averages 40 to 50 operations a year. Deployments peak around the optimum mountaineering season in November, however changing visitor patterns mean operations are becoming more evenly spread than in the past. "We're getting lots of ski touring groups in the winter," says George. "The scarcity of booking spaces in Great Walk huts means that more pressure has come on other hut facilities. We're seeing tourists regularly going up to Mueller Hut right through until June."

A deployment usually begins with a thorough briefing at the village SAR base. Next, two to three rescuers deploy in a helicopter to conduct a reconnaissance of the scene, the weather and conditions before determining the best course of action. Usually the helicopter lands at a safe forward point nearby, to be reconfigured for the job. "Perhaps we'll rig up the Human External Cargo (HEC) long-line to be flown to a tricky spot," says George. "Or maybe the



Department of Conservation Search and Rescue Team

helicopter will get us as close as possible and we climb or ski the last bit." If there are serious enough injuries, the team might fly towards a hospital and conduct a patient transfer with an emergency medical services helicopter along the way.

The team works with The Helicopter Line, operating 'Squirrel' Helicopters and long-lines, as well as GCH Aviation and Helicopters Otago who operate the larger BK-117 / EC145 machines with night vision goggles and a rescue hoist. "We work with the coordinating authorities and helicopter operators to make the best choice of machine for each situation," says George.

Outside of operations, the team has a busy schedule. Technical training includes rope rescue, helicopter deployment and medical skills. Operational procedures, safety management systems and budgets are regularly reviewed and refined. Members are generally New Zealand Mountain Guides Association-qualified guides and maintain currency through regular climbing and skiing training in the local region.

Team members frequently travel around the country, to deliver training to volunteer Alpine Cliff Rescue teams, as well as collaborating on best practice and standardisation of techniques and equipment. Recently, the team organised and led the Alpine SAR training day at the Southern Hemisphere Alpine Conference in Wānaka.

Exercise Whakarauora Tangata

Reflecting on more than two years of planning, preparation and exercising.



The Wellington SAREX in June 2024 was the last field activity of Exercise Whakarauora Tangata, the Nationally Significant SAREX series. The final activity, involving the Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security, is proposed for March 2025.

The purpose of Exercise Whakarauora Tangata was to evaluate and identify opportunities to improve current cross-agency policies, procedures, capabilities and capacity, to ensure that New Zealand is adequately prepared for a large-scale Nationally Significant SAR incident.

Detailed planning began in late 2022, with tabletop incident management team exercises and functional SAR exercises conducted between July 2023 and June 2024 around New Zealand. The scenario used for Exercise Whakarauora Tangata was a fictional boutique cruise ship, the Silver Pacific II, experiencing an incident that ultimately required the evacuation of all passengers and crew. The geography, weather and circumstances were tailored for each exercise in the Bay of Plenty, Eastern, Wellington and Southern Police Districts.

Social media and news broadcast videos were played as scenario injects, to aid realism during the exercises. Local iwi were involved with the news interview videos. This emphasised the importance of not only consulting and communicating with mana whenua and community groups, but also acknowledging and utilising the capabilities they can offer to a response.

Exercise Whakarauora Tangata provided a valuable opportunity for participants to operate in a large-scale multiagency environment.

In addition to the core SAR sector agencies, central Government and local Government agencies were involved. These agencies included Customs, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment, Health New Zealand, local Civil Defence and Emergency Management, plus District Health organisations. Together, they used the exercise to test their planning and processes that would be utilised during a nationally significant incident, in particular, the subsequent challenges once the SAR operation had recovered people to an initial point of safety.

For some participants, it was the first time that they had experienced operating outside their usual response environment and operational framework. At the tactical level, SAR units are highly skilled and current in their SAR roles. However, at operational and strategic levels, observations and debriefs indicated there is work to do to improve understanding and coordination mechanisms. Feedback throughout the exercise was positive with all participants looking forward to further opportunities to continue to develop, particularly in a multiagency integrated environment.



IMAGES From Southern District functional SAREX.



Duncan Ferner, NZSAR Secretariat Director said the exercise series successfully met its objectives; “Exercise Whakarauroa Tangata provided a realistic and complex simulation to test inter-agency cooperation and coordination. We’ve demonstrated our strengths and identified opportunities to improve our higher-level procedures. New Zealand is now better prepared to respond to a Nationally Significant SAR incident because of this work.”



Stress-testing our capability at the largest functional SAREX of the series

The functional SAREXs aimed to validate the plans developed in the incident management team exercise, including the deployment of SAR units on the ground. The Southern District functional SAREX was the largest field activity in Exercise Whakarauroa Tangata. Held on Lake Manapouri and Lake Te Anau on 18 November 2023, more than 200 people from over 16 Government agencies and non-Government organisations took part.

Front-line responders deployed in Coastguard rescue vessels, Surf Life Saving New Zealand inflatable rescue boats, civilian and military helicopters as well as on-foot. In a coordinated and systematic effort, they searched the two lakes’ waters and shorelines for “passengers”, represented by actors, mannequins and floating soccer balls. Some were brought to a point of safety at Manapouri aerodrome, whilst others with severe medical needs were prepared for transport to a regional hospital.

Incident management teams coordinated the delivery of immediate medical and welfare needs for the survivors. At the same time, management worked to reconcile the whereabouts of everyone on board, most of whom were foreign nationals.

Tactical procedures and equipment were stress-tested, experienced individuals were able to mentor newer people and relationships among agencies were strengthened. Throughout the exercise, evaluators captured lessons for inclusion in future readiness systems.

The exercise also drew media attention, with TV1’s Seven Sharp programme producing a five-minute video that aired on 21 November 2023.



Safety above the snow line

Record numbers from the alpine community gathered at the Southern Hemisphere Alpine Conference.

The Southern Hemisphere Alpine Conference (SHAC) is NZ Mountain Safety Council's biennial conference for the snow, alpine and mountain community. Held over 12 and 13 June in Wānaka, this event is the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. Funding from the NZSAR Secretariat, plus a range of event partners and sponsors provided the financial support to make the conference a reality.

SHAC provides a unique opportunity for the alpine community to engage in a series of workshops and presentations to extend their professional skills, knowledge and experience. This engagement and cross-sector relationship building directly contributes to a safer alpine community and SAR prevention. The combination of SHAC with several important pre- and post-conference events drew more than 220 people from the local region and around the country.

The day prior, the Department of Conservation Search and Rescue team delivered an alpine rescue workshop. Over 170 attendees from 53 organisations spent the day building relationships as they observed new equipment, techniques and technology for rescue in the alpine environment.

During the conference itself, more than 20 speakers gave in-depth presentations covering a wide range of topics that included snow stability and avalanche forecasting, medical preparedness, climate research, psychology and avalanche management with explosives. Five international guest speakers

provided a wider perspective, with insights from North America, Europe and Australia. A rare meeting of all the heads of ski-patrol from the ski industry was another valuable benefit for bringing so many representatives to one location.

More information about SHAC 2024 is available at: mountainsafety.org.nz/shac

SAR responders encouraged to engage with the New Zealand Avalanche Advisory

The NZ Avalanche Advisory is an important alpine safety resource provided by the NZ Mountain Safety Council and funded by the NZSAR Council. The advisories and educational resources are publicly available at avalanche.net.nz

NZ Mountain Safety Council is urging members of the SAR sector to share their observations of snow conditions and avalanche activity via the NZ Avalanche Advisory Public Observations tool. Whether you're on a personal trip or a SAR training activity, these observations contribute to avalanche safety for the entire alpine community. They're actively used by NZ Avalanche Advisory forecasters, and anyone can check them when planning a backcountry alpine trip. Visit avalanche.net.nz/observations to view or submit an observation.



Southern Hemisphere Alpine Conference attendees gather at the Lake Wānaka Centre. Courtesy NZ Mountain Safety Council



Climate change is rapidly altering the operational context for SAR organisations, requiring a new approach to rescue platform design and construction. For example, these Shannon-class rescue vessels under construction for United Kingdom's Royal National Lifeboat Institute have far stronger hulls than previous designs. This enables rescues in rougher seas and provides greater resistance to debris, which is often present in the water after large weather events. Courtesy RNLI / Nathan Williams

#futureSAR: adapting to climate change

An international perspective on adaptive strategies for maritime SAR in a changing climate.

The International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) is a non-governmental organisation that was founded in 1924. Today, the federation has nearly 130 members from more than 50 countries. Coastguard Tautiaki Moana, the Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre, Surf Life Saving New Zealand and Water Safety New Zealand are all members of the IMRF.

One of the IMRF's objectives is to improve maritime SAR capability through international cooperation. Their #futureSAR project is the first of its kind to identify key challenges to maritime SAR from a changing climate and to provide guidance on how to adapt.

In March 2024, the IMRF delivered its first #futureSAR report, detailing 85 identified impacts climate change may have on maritime SAR services globally.

They traverse themes such as geo-political and social instability, future thinking design of vessels and aircraft, increased thermal and salinity stresses on equipment, operational personnel training and wellbeing, operational tempo, and changing locations.

To cope with the rapidly changing SAR context, there are 303 checklist items for agencies to support adaptive strategies.

NZSAR Secretariat Director Duncan Ferner is a member of the #futureSAR working group which developed the report.

"Alongside the NZSAR Environmental Scan, the #futureSAR report gives us a framework to shape our thinking and actions, as the sector catches its breath from the recent severe weather responses," says Duncan. "The report reminds us that as we recover from yesterday, we need to be concurrently working on implementing strategies to be ready for the decades to come."

The full report and spreadsheet of checklist actions is available at <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/futuresar>
The NZSAR Environmental Scan is available at <https://bit.ly/nzsarenvironmentalscan>

Two trapped near Tarn Ridge

At 2:29pm on Sunday 12 November 2023, the Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre received an alert from a personal locator beacon in the Tararua Range, near Wellington. Enquiries established the party was a group of two, on a multi-day “Northern Crossing” tramp from Levin to Masterton.

The beacon’s GPS position indicated the party were in a steep gully, approximately 500 metres east of Tarn Ridge Hut. Winds of 80-100 kilometres per hour battered the range and light rain fell from the thick layer of cloud obscuring the tops. The missing party’s exposed position combined with the severe weather would prove extremely challenging for both airborne and land-based rescuers. Over the next 29 hours, multiple agencies worked together to safely bring the two trampers home.

The following timeline is drawn from the Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) mission log.

Sunday 12 November

2:31pm

Using the beacon’s registration information, RCCNZ unsuccessfully attempts to phone the beacon owner. Next, they phone the listed emergency contact, who shares the group’s intentions.

2:39pm

RCCNZ calls Masterton-based operator Amalgamated Helicopters. They are unavailable for the task and say the wind on the mountain tops is “probably over 100 km/h at present.”

2:45pm

The Grassroots Trust Rescue Helicopter (operated by Search and Rescue Services Ltd - Palmerston North) is contacted with the situation and weather information. They conduct a risk analysis then accept the task with a BK117 Helicopter.

2:46pm

Police are contacted and the Wellington Police SAR coordinator is informed. The coordinator contacts Land Search and Rescue groups in the region to check for volunteer availability.

3:30pm

The BK117 pilot reports that clouds are preventing them from reaching the beacon location from the Levin side. They fly north to look for a clearance, to attempt access from the east side of the range. The cloud wouldn’t rule out the deployment of field teams at lower elevations in the vicinity of the beacon location. However, severe winds and associated downdrafts could prevent that deployment.

4:45pm

RCCNZ contacts Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand and discusses the use of an Air Force NH90 Helicopter. A formal request and approval process follows to task the helicopter.

4:46pm

MetService provides a detailed Search and Rescue Forecast for the Tararua Forest Park. “Today, patches of drizzle are developing. Winds at ridgetop level are forecast to increase to 95 kilometres per hour by midnight, with ambient air temperatures dropping to 4 degrees Celsius. The outlook for the next few days is poor.”

5:34pm

Wellington Police SAR coordinator confirms a field team of four volunteers from Wairarapa plus one reserve. Also, three volunteers on standby in Wellington. RCCNZ discusses three possible plans:



Land Search and Rescue field team boards the NH90 Helicopter during the operation. Courtesy Land Search and Rescue

A: deploy as close to beacon position as possible. B: deploy close to Tarn Ridge Hut, walk to hut and reassess. C: deploy to Mitre Flats Hut, then fly or walk to beacon position the next morning. Amateur Radio Emergency Communications volunteers are deployed to support field communications.

7:11pm

Wairarapa field team has been briefed and is ready for deployment from the Masterton Aerodrome.

7:17pm

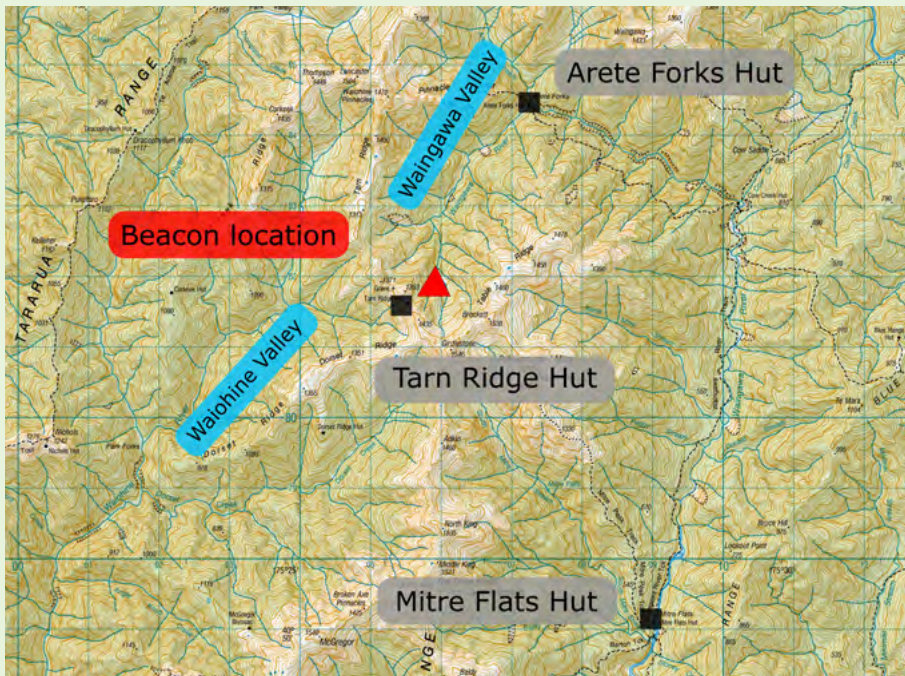
NH90 Helicopter departs Ohakea and attempts unsuccessfully to reach the beacon location. They uplift the Wairarapa field team from Masterton Aerodrome but are unable to get close enough to the tops. They deploy the field team to Arete Forks Hut, which is closer to the beacon location than Mitre Flats Hut.

8:34pm

Field team intends to get some rest before departing at 5am. They plan to ascend an unmarked track up to spot height 1478m, before heading southwest along Table Ridge, then dropping down to the beacon location, arriving around 9am. If the missing party can move, they will escort them to Tarn Ridge Hut and wait.

8:52pm

RCCNZ checks in again with the missing party’s family, keeping them updated with progress of the operation. This is one of many check-ins conducted over the course of the operation.



Operational area map. Contains data sourced from the LINZ Data Service licensed for reuse under CC BY 4.0

Monday 13 November

08:15am

The field team has reached the ridge, but are struggling to make progress in severe wind, low visibility and rain. They retreat to Arete Forks Hut for their own safety and prepare to approach the beacon location via the Waingawa River.

RCCNZ and Police spend the rest of the morning discussing the options. There are field teams available from Levin and Wellington, which could approach from different valley systems. Weather is continually reassessed, with advice from the Masterton SAR Base, reports from the field team, local helicopter operators and MetService.

12:24pm

The Levin field team is assembled with the intention of deploying via NH90 helicopter to Tarn Ridge Hut, or nearby in the upper Waiohine Valley.

12:42pm

Sergeant Tony Matheson is appointed On Scene Coordinator. He coordinates field teams from Masterton Aerodrome, whilst RCCNZ continues to coordinate helicopter assets.

1:03pm

After a request from RCCNZ, the Grassroots Trust Rescue Helicopter makes another attempt to access the beacon, but the conditions prevent them from reaching that location.

2:21pm

A position report from the beacon indicates the lost party is moving towards the Wairarapa field team in the Waingawa Valley. The field team switches on their radio direction finding equipment.

4:35pm

The field team begins to receive the beacon's 121.5MHz homing signal.

5:35pm

Voice contact is made with the missing party, who are beside a creek but separated from the field team by a waterfall. By 5:49pm searchers reach the two trampers, who are uninjured, but cold, wet and very tired. The weather has improved slightly, and the field team reports they are about 200 metres below the cloud base.

6:38pm

The NH90 Helicopter reaches the missing party and field team. All six people are extracted via a challenging winch recovery and then returned to the Levin showgrounds, where the operation concludes.

Insights:

Responder safety was paramount.

Throughout the operation, responders showed a willingness to endure very difficult weather conditions, but before the situation exceeded safe limits, they retreated and alternative plans were made.

Operational flexibility was maintained.

Several courses of action were developed by incident managers and team leaders, contingent on weather and resource constraints. When opportunities such as breaks in the weather presented themselves, helicopter assets were able to deploy teams closer to the beacon location, and eventually the missing party.

Weather was assessed continuously and comprehensively.

The weather was the key factor affecting the rescue. Incident managers took advice from the Masterton SAR Base, reports from the field team, local helicopter operators and specifically generated forecasts from MetService to look for opportunities in the weather situation.

Helicopters are constrained by clouds and adverse winds.

To reach a position where people can be transferred between the helicopter and the ground, the crew must be able to see the terrain. Cloud or heavy precipitation reduces visibility to nearly zero. In the lee of terrain, strong winds can create turbulence and severe downdrafts. These air movements can impact control of the helicopter to a point where it is not safe to continue.

Close coordination is required for complex rescues.

This SAR operation demonstrated the value of collaboration between coordinating authorities. Local coordination of search efforts through the New Zealand Police with the support of RCCNZ in planning, provision, and tasking of assets (such as aviation) positively impacted the outcome of this operation.

RCCNZ marks 20 years

The Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) has responded to almost 20,000 incidents since its establishment in 2004.

RCCNZ is the coordinating authority for Category II search and rescue operations, located in Avalon, Wellington. On 4 July 2024, they celebrated of 20 years of service.

By coordinating the deployment of SAR resources, organising communications and providing expert guidance, RCCNZ plays a vital role in responding to emergency situations. They are responsible for an area extending from the mid-Tasman Sea, halfway to Chile, and from the South Pole, almost up to the Equator.

New Zealand's 30 million square kilometre search and rescue region is one of the largest in the world and includes some of the most remote parts of the planet. During one incident in February 2022, the closest humans to the crew of a yacht in distress were onboard the International Space Station.

Distress beacons are one of the main ways that RCCNZ is alerted to an incident, via the COSPAS-SARSAT system. This is an international satellite-aided search and rescue system organised as a treaty-based collaboration of 45 nations and agencies.

Over the last 20 years, the technology behind this system has developed, with recent improvements including upgraded satellite receiving stations based in New Zealand. Distress beacons themselves have improved, with features like Autonomous Distress Tracking for aircraft beacons, and the Return Link Service which indicates to the user that their signal has been received by the system. Rates of beacon ownership and use during emergencies have also grown considerably. Today, New Zealand has the highest per-capita rate of beacon ownership in the world.

Number of registered distress beacons in New Zealand RCCNZ

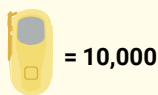
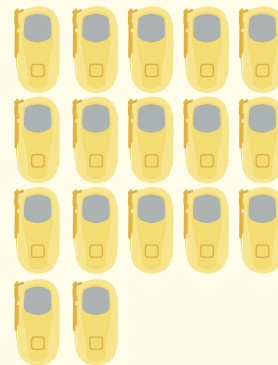
10th Anniversary (2014):

46,000



20th Anniversary (2024):

170,000



Whatever the developments and challenges to come in the next 20 years, there's no doubt RCCNZ will rise to the occasion. Thank you to RCCNZ for your service.

[Register your beacon for free at beacons.nz](https://beacons.nz)

An update on the Recreational Safety and SAR Review

The Ministry of Transport began the Recreational Safety and Search and Rescue Review (the Review) in September 2021. Its purpose was to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of New Zealand's recreational safety and search and rescue systems.

The Review was completed in August 2023, and proposed a range of recommendations, including the implementation of new governance arrangements for the recreational safety and search and rescue system.

The Ministry of Transport has now reconsidered these high-level recommendations of the Review in light of the Government's priorities and in consultation with the NZSAR Council.

The Ministry of Transport's view, supported by the NZSAR Council, is that the significant investment needed to implement the Review's recommendations for new governance arrangements is not justified at this time.

Instead, the NZSAR Council has initiated work to ensure that it is resetting its purpose and refreshing its current strategic plan. This work is timely given that the current strategic plan is for the three-year period of 2021-2024. The Council is intending to engage with the sector on this work.

Other Review recommendations covering people supporting people and assets are still being advanced.

The Ministry of Transport wishes to thank everyone from the recreational safety and search and rescue sectors who gave their time and expertise to the Review team.

Taonga Tuku Iho

The Land Search and Rescue Rapa Taiwhenua cultural competency framework.

Perhaps the most consistent theme in search and rescue is the importance of meaningful relationships. When conditions are difficult and people are at risk, knowing and trusting the team around you and those who are supporting you is crucial to being able to do the job and come home safely.

Land Search and Rescue identified many reasons why improved relationships with Māori would be beneficial for the organisation, its people and their activities. The cornerstone of any solid relationship is understanding the other party, not just in a superficial way, but all aspects of their culture including history, beliefs, traditions and values.

Their new cultural capability framework Taonga Tuku Iho grew from this desire for meaningful relationships founded on solid understanding. The name describes caring for the treasures handed down from our ancestors. Rather than a series of topics in a syllabus to complete, the framework is multi-faceted and dynamic to support continual learning. The goal is to help both the individuals and the organisation develop and apply a deeper understanding of Te Ao Māori: the complete Māori worldview.

One example of the framework in action is the organisation's ingoa Māori. "Rapa Taiwhenua" isn't intended to be a direct translation of Land Search and Rescue, but instead the way that Māori would express all the activities that the organisation does. Knowing history and context is important in Te Ao Māori, as it helps maintain the mauri or life-force of the taonga. Dr Ruakere Hond, a renowned cultural expert from Taranaki, was consulted on the name which was gifted to the organisation in 2019.

Karakia or incantations help promote safety within Te Ao Māori, by focusing a group's thoughts on the gravity of a situation

in a solemn and respectful manner. Karakia usually emphasise the unity of the group. In the SAR context it is the common goal of safely assisting the lost, missing and injured.

A special karakia for Land Search and Rescue was composed by Matua Miru Mclean (Ngai Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Tāwhaki) in 2023. Operationally, Land Search and Rescue personnel can say the karakia before deploying to the field, and when concluding operations to assist with closure.

Mark Pirikahu (Te Atiawa, Ngārauru, Te Ati Haunui-a-pāpārangi, Ngā Wairiki-Ngāti Apa) is the first Kaihautū Māori (Māori Cultural Lead) employed by Land Search and Rescue to facilitate cultural competency for staff and volunteers. "I'm proud to be an access point for the people of Rapa Taiwhenua to ask questions and help develop their knowledge of Te Ao Māori. I'm also very glad to help facilitate and improve relationships with iwi."

Just like anyone knows their own backyard the best, tangata whenua (local iwi) have detailed knowledge of the land that can assist during SAR exercises and operations. Good relationships can also open doors and encourage logistical cooperation, such as invitations to marae to share food or accommodation.

In addition, Mark has been leading weekly wānanga kōrero, which are online presentations and discussions explaining the many aspects of Te Ao Māori and how they are relevant to the organisation. These sessions are recorded for members to follow at a time that suits them.

These are just a handful of examples of benefits to the individuals and the organisation from deeper understanding and better relationships through Te Ao Māori.

Karakia Rapa Taiwhenua

Tākina mai te mauri ki Ranginui

Tākina mai te mauri ki Papatūānuku

Kia tau te mauri ki ngā tangata o Rapa Taiwhenua

Kia haumarū ngā hoa, kia haumarū ngā kaimahi

Hei āwhina hei marutau i a ahau i tēnei mahi
whakahirahira

Tūturu whakamaua

Kia tina, TINA! Hui e ! TĀIKI E!

I say this karakia in the presence of the sky father above

I say this karakia in the presence of the mother earth below

With protection and support for the people of Land Search
and Rescue

To keep our friends safe, to keep our colleagues safe

And to help me stay safe in this important work.

Let this be our commitment to all

To join! Gather together! In unity!

Significant sector investment in Budget 2024

The Government announces more than \$86 million in additional funding for the sector.

At the end of May, the Government announced two separate packages of additional funding for organisations in the search and rescue sector.

An additional \$63.644 million over four years was allocated between Surf Life Saving New Zealand and Coastguard Tautiaki Moana, more than doubling the previous per annum investment in frontline safety and prevention services overall.

Transport Minister Simeon Brown and Associate Transport Minister Matt Doocey said that the funding will contribute to training, volunteer protective equipment, critical marine communications equipment and safety initiatives plus maintenance and upgrade of base buildings.

Acknowledging the increasing role that SAR agencies play during civil emergencies, Budget 2024 included an additional \$23.142 million for non-Government SAR organisations. Coastguard Tautiaki Moana and Surf Life Saving New Zealand will receive funding in the 2024/25 financial year to replace assets destroyed or damaged in the North Island weather events. The remainder of the funds will go to Surf Life Saving New Zealand, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications and Land Search and Rescue in the coming years for targeted training, personal protective equipment, and regional equipment caches to improve response to future severe weather or emergency events.

Duncan Ferner, NZSAR Secretariat Director said "Compiling the bids for these increases in funding required a significant amount of

time and energy from our colleagues in the SAR non-government organisations, as well as staff from the NZSAR Secretariat. The Government announcement is very welcome news to us all and will provide immense benefit to the sector and to the people of New Zealand overall."



Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Minister for Transport Hon Simeon Brown and Associate Minister Hon Matt Doocey with members of Coastguard Howick at a funding announcement.

Excellent public confidence in our sector

National reputation survey ranks search and rescue second out of 58 agencies.

In May, the research agency Verian released the findings of its 2024 Public Sector Reputation Index survey. For the first time, New Zealand Search and Rescue was included, and came second place behind Fire and Emergency New Zealand. Callaghan Innovation, Customs and the National Emergency Management Agency rounded out the top five.

The survey asked over 3,500 New Zealanders to assess 58 public service agencies across 16 distinct attributes. These attributes were categorised under the pillars of trust, social responsibility, leadership, and fairness.

Duncan Ferner, Director of the NZSAR Secretariat, was delighted with the result.

"This ranking underscores the substantial trust and confidence that New Zealanders place in our search and rescue system, as well as in the dedicated over 11,300 individuals comprising our search and rescue sector – 88 percent of whom are volunteers."

Search 'Verian PSRI' or visit veriangroup.com/insights/thought-leadership/public-sector-reputation-index-nz to view the report

The new Water Safety Code

Keeping key public safety and SAR prevention messaging up to date.

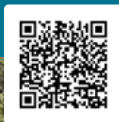
Following the launch of the Outdoor (now Land) Safety Code in 2009, and the Boating Safety Code in 2010, the original Water Safety Code was launched in 2011. These codes aim to provide simple guidance to help people stay safe. They also enable a consistent message from all stakeholders involved in public safety and SAR prevention initiatives.

In 2021, the sector identified that the existing code wasn't specific enough, and consequently wasn't being used as it was originally intended. Representatives from Water Safety New Zealand, Drowning Prevention Auckland, Surf Life Saving New Zealand, the NZSAR Secretariat and Wai Ora Leaders worked together over three years to produce a refreshed code that was endorsed by the Wai Ora Leaders group in April 2024.

The code reflects international good practice for drowning prevention messaging. "Know how to float" is the first message in the list; international evidence supports that personal floating ability is the largest common factor in the survivors of water incidents.

Like the other codes, the new Water Safety Code has been translated by the Department of Internal Affairs into 19 languages. The AdventureSmart website and brochures featuring the safety codes have been updated with a new design incorporating the updated code.

adventuresmart.nz/water/the-water-safety-code



www.adventuresmart.nz



The Water Safety Code

5 simple rules to help you stay safe



1. Know how to float

If you get into trouble, float on your back with your ears in the water – this will increase your chances of survival. Relax and breathe normally. If you don't know how to float, get some lessons and practice before you enter the water.



2. Find the safest place

Take a moment to assess the conditions and look for dangers like strong currents. Find the safest place to get in and out of the water. Places with lifeguards on duty are safest. Listen to the lifeguards and pay attention to warning signs and flags.



3. If in doubt, stay out

Check the weather before leaving home. If you're unsure about your skill level, the weather, or the water conditions, it's better to wait for another day. The weather and water conditions can change quickly.



4. Take care of yourself and others

Always go with a buddy and tell someone your plans. When wearing a lifejacket, make sure it fits properly. When children are in or near the water, a responsible adult should be within arm's reach and watching them carefully.



5. Know how to get help

If you get into trouble, raise your arm and call out for help. If you see someone who needs help, call 111 and ask for Police.

Te Anga Whakamua o Tautiaki Moana

Coastguard's first Māori and Pasifika Strategy aims to address the inequities highlighted by drowning statistics, to help everyone enjoy New Zealand's waters safely and with confidence.



Te Anga Whakamua o Tautiaki Moana was launched in 2022, and initiatives under this strategy have already led to a number of successful outcomes and programmes.

The strategy's six pou (pillars) were developed by Te Pūhara Mana Iwi, Coastguard Tautiaki Moana's Māori, Pasifika and Asian advisory group. The initiative forms part of the Coastguard's commitment to Wai Ora 2025, New Zealand's Water Safety Sector Strategy.

Boating Education

Coastguard received Tangata Moana funding from Maritime New Zealand and the NZSAR Council for boating education. This allowed Coastguard to offer their tailored courses to underserved Māori, Pasifika, and Asian communities for free. Covering Day Skipper, In Water Survival, Bar Crossing Safety and Maritime radio courses, they were taught on marae, in churches and community centres. Up to 300 participants per syllabus have attended so far, with 16 Māori and Pacific participants in training to become tutors. Demand for these culturally relevant and accessible courses continues to grow within these communities.

Tongan Boat Safety Challenge

Funded by Foundation North, the challenge used a Tongan worldview to understand and improve the boating practices of Tongan men. This initiative led to seven key insights and three recommendations, which have been implemented in the safety programmes for the Tongan community.

Ngā Hue o Hinemoa

This initiative set up lifejacket hubs in Māori and Pasifika communities. The lifejackets were distributed through Tangata Moana tutors to various cohorts. In Hokianga, a whānau lifejacket hub was set up with 44 lifejackets, including 13 funded by Te Hapu o Ngati Wheke. Raglan hubs were evaluated, resulting in the provision of 65 new lifejackets funded by Waikato Regional Council. Additionally, the Vavau Volunteer Maritime Rescue Association in Tonga received 40 foam lifejackets for their lifejacket loan system.

The Northland Project

A collaboration between Water Safety New Zealand, Surf Life Saving Northern Region, Coastguard, and Northland Māori water safety leaders resulted in three hui being held in Opononi, Whangārei, and Kaitiāia. Championed by local community leader Rosina Wikaira, the project identified key challenges and developed actions to address them. It successfully delivered Day Skipper and Boatmaster courses and established a whānau lifejacket hub to enhance water safety in the region. A Hokianga bar seminar is planned for November 7 in Paihia.

Coastguard Tautiaki Moana

In April 2024, Coastguard unveiled its new organisational identity. Tautiaki Moana is the ingoa Māori (name) gifted to Coastguard in 2021 by Ngāti Whakauae, a major hapū of the Te Arawa iwi. The name and new logo were launched alongside a promo campaign to show the public that their role is safety and support, as research showed that many thought Coastguard was there to enforce maritime rules or check on fishing activities. The new identity reminds the public that "Coastguard are for everyone, whatever your waka."

Learn more at coastguard.nz/about-us/our-journey



Ngā Hue o Hinemoa lifejackets presented to Tonga Voyaging Society in Tauranga to deliver to Vava'u Volunteer Maritime Rescue Association, Vava'u, Tonga via a Hinemoana II, double-hulled, ocean-going sailing waka. Courtesy Nātia Tucker

Searching for people with cognitive impairment

Last year, nearly all search and rescue incidents for people with cognitive impairment were resolved within five hours.

Brain injuries, neurological illness, dementia and intellectual disability are all examples of cognitive impairment. Around a quarter of all land-based search and rescue operations last year were for people with cognitive impairment.

Previously, we have used the term 'wanderer' to describe people with cognitive impairment who go missing. However, this term does not recognise that many people with cognitive impairment travel purposefully, rather than wandering aimlessly.

The number of people at risk of going missing due to cognitive impairment is predicted to increase significantly over the next few decades. The New Zealand Dementia Foundation estimates that over 70,000 people in New Zealand are currently living with dementia, and this number is expected to triple by 2050. Six out of ten people with dementia will go missing at least once.

For the year ending 30 June 2024, there were 346 instances where Police were notified that a person with cognitive impairment had gone missing. Of those, 152 required a search and rescue operation to find the missing person.

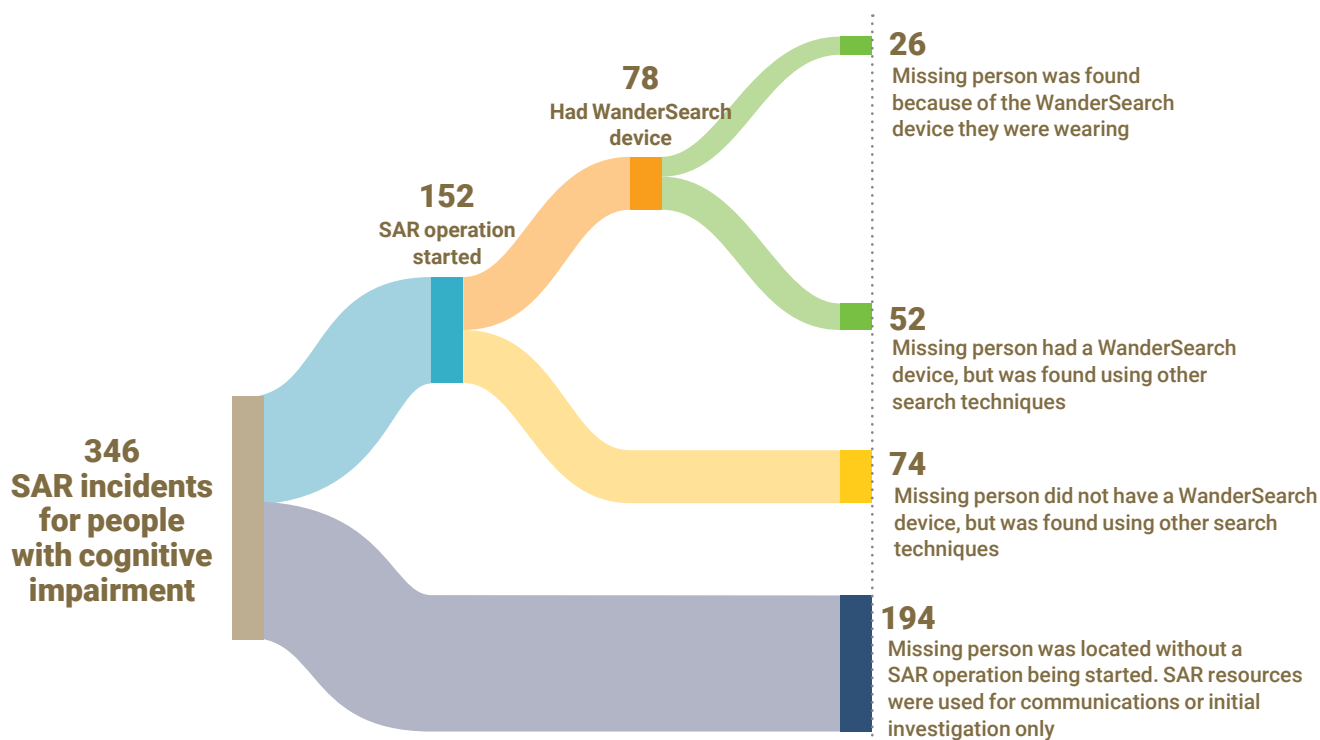
There were 26 search and rescue operations that were resolved because the person was wearing a WanderSearch pendant. These pendants contain a small radio frequency transmitter, which can be picked up by search teams using specialist equipment.

The Safer Walking website has strategies and tools to support people with cognitive impairment who may be at risk of going missing.

Location last seen	Proportion of all incidents	Time to resolve 90 percent of incidents
 HOME	53%	5 hours
 CARE FACILITY e.g rest home	30%	4 hours
 PUBLIC PLACE e.g shops, workplace, hospital	12%	4 hours 55 minutes
NOT STATED	5%	2 hours
TOTAL	100%	5 hours*

Source: SARdonyx, between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024

* Weighted average of 90 percent of all SAR incidents





10 questions with ...

Matchil du Plessis

Matchil is a volunteer for Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Southland.

Tell us a bit about your background.

My parents run a dairy farm in Southland as Sharemilkers. I was home-schooled for several years, then began working on the farm full-time when I got older.

How did you get into radios?

Computers and technology really interested me. It was good to have an indoor hobby to balance the time outdoors on the farm. I was after a bit more social interaction, so I began looking for technology-based groups or clubs in Invercargill and saw the Amateur Radio Club. I didn't know much about radio technology, but it was technology, and I was keen to learn something new. I joined the club, learnt a bunch and gained my radio operator's licence.

What is special about radio, compared to other types of technology?

Radio is really raw, with analogue transmissions and interference to deal with. Even though the theory behind it is well understood, there's still quite an art to it all. Interpreting weak signals, choosing a repeater location that will work in complex terrain, plus the human aspect of communicating effectively with other people. It's easy to get hands on with the hardware as well. With some help from club members, I was picking up international signals using an antenna built from a few metres of spare fencing wire from the farm.

What drew you to joining AREC?

The passionate people! Daniel Erickson is the Southland AREC deputy group leader, and he sold it to me really well. The opportunity to get out into new, remote areas, interact with high performing teams, work with technology and help save people's lives. Oh, and the chance to fly in a helicopter!

Can you tell us about your first SAR operation?

I had no idea what to expect as it was before I'd done any specific AREC training. One minute I was finishing up work on the farm, the next it was game on. Arriving in the dark to a busy staging point with Police, field teams getting ready to deploy and helicopters overhead felt like jumping in the deep end. Daniel took me under his wing though and was supporting me the whole time. It was like a crash-course in everything I needed to know, and I loved it!

What was particularly memorable about that operation?

The search was for two missing children at Mavora Lakes, and at the start I was really optimistic. It was quite cold, wet and windy out there, and as the operation dragged through the early hours of the morning, my hope began to fade. But when the news came over the radio that the kids had been found, the entire camp cheered! The cries of joy of the family are something I'll never forget. Knowing you played a part in reuniting parents with their children, well you just don't get that sort of feeling and satisfaction in day-to-day life.

What about the other exercises you've been a part of?

We helped out with comms at the Exercise Whakarauora Tangata SAREX in Te Anau. It was a real eye opener to be part of a training exercise of that scale. Plus, I've been to Stewart Island for training and got a jet boat ride when helping with the Kepler Challenge in Te Anau.

What is your favourite thing about volunteering in SAR?

I'd say it's the chance to work in a team and alongside people from a range of agencies who are all very good at what they do, and highly professional.

What do you do for work?

I'd decided farming wasn't for me, so I'd begun a few part-time courses in things like computer networking. At the start of 2024, I began studying for a Bachelor of Information Technology full time at Southern Institute of Technology.

What would you say to other young people about getting involved?

If you're interested in technology, AREC is a great way to use those skills in the real world to help save people's lives. You don't need to have prior radio experience, and there's radio equipment provided. There are great opportunities for training, plus plenty of excitement on the job. Even though I have only been with AREC since April 2023, I have had so many great adventures.