

NEW ZEALAND
**SEARCH
AND
RESCUE**

Rapu Whakarauora Aotearoa

New Zealand Search and Rescue
Awards 2025

Commemorated during the United Nations
International Volunteer Year (IVY 2026)



Karakia Timatanga

Whakataka te hau ki te uru

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga

Kia mākinakina ki uta

Kia mātaratara ki tai

E hī ake ana te atākura

He tio, he huka, he hauhū

Tihei mauri ora!

Cease the winds from the west

Cease the winds from the south

Bring calm breezes over the land

Bring calm breezes over the sea

Let the red tipped dawn come

With a touch of frost

A sharpened air

And promise of a glorious day

Behold we live!



Foreword | He Kupu Whakataki

Hon James Meager
Associate Minister of Transport

As Associate Minister of Transport, responsible for Search and Rescue, it is a real privilege to introduce this year's awards and to acknowledge those whose efforts are honoured here. The New Zealand Search and Rescue Awards are a true celebration of the very best of New Zealand and I extend my congratulations to this year's award recipients.

Over the past year, search and rescue personnel across the country have responded to complex and often lengthy operations. Time and again, SAR teams have been among the first on the scene, and the last to stand down. Many have operated in difficult environments and under significant pressure, yet remained focused on a simple, shared purpose: bringing our loved ones home safely.

Their dedication, professionalism and willingness to step forward at short notice exemplifies the spirit of New Zealand: communities working together to keep people safe. It is this spirit that underpins a strong, resilient nation, and your people demonstrate it wholeheartedly.

New Zealand's search and rescue sector is built on partnership and trust. Volunteers and paid staff work side by side, demonstrating the courage to step forward for others. During this United Nations International Volunteer Year (IVY 2026), I particularly want to acknowledge and thank the incredible volunteers that make search and rescue possible. Your commitment and service make a huge difference to countless lives.

The NZSAR Awards celebrate excellence. Each award tells a story of the huge efforts of people who go above and beyond expectations. From operational responses to support behind the scenes, the recipients of this year's awards exemplify professionalism, determination, and compassion.

Spanning land, sea, and air, these stories are as varied as the terrains themselves. They illustrate the demanding conditions SAR personnel face every day and the depth and breadth of skill, teamwork, and commitment required to save lives.

Sadly, in some circumstances, search and rescue operations become recovery missions. While the outcome was not what was hoped for, it is appropriate that these collective efforts are also acknowledged at a national level. SAR personnel are required to draw deep on their own resolve in these circumstances, motivated only by a fierce determination to reunite people with their loved ones. My thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives during the past year.

I want to acknowledge the ongoing work across the sector to learn from experience, improve coordination, and maintain consistency nationwide. This focus on continuous improvement ensures that New Zealand's search and rescue system remains strong, resilient, and ready to meet future challenges.

On behalf of the Government, I warmly congratulate this year's award recipients. Thank you for your service, your professionalism, and your unwavering commitment to keeping others safe. Your efforts make a meaningful difference to lives and communities across New Zealand, and you should be immensely proud of what you have achieved.

Hon James Meager
Associate Minister of Transport



NZSAR Council Introduction

This year's awards recognise the collective effort across the Search and Rescue (SAR) system, encompassing not only the award recipients but also non-government organisations (NGOs), volunteers, and partner organisations. They highlight not just excellence in individual and team performance, but also the strength, collaboration, and commitment that underpin search and rescue across New Zealand.

The awards ceremony also provides an opportunity for the NZSAR Council to recognise the United Nations International Volunteer Year (IVY 2026), and to acknowledge the critical role volunteers play in the success of our sector.

Congratulations to the Winners of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Awards 2025

The New Zealand Search and Rescue Council extends its congratulations to the 2025 Award recipients.

Search and rescue in New Zealand continues to evolve in scale and complexity. Each year, SAR operations demand increasingly high levels of coordination, skill, and resilience – often carried out in challenging environments, under significant pressure, and frequently led by SAR personnel and volunteers who generously give their time, expertise, and commitment in service of others.

2025 saw many exceptional award nominations, making it a challenging task for the judging panel to select from such a high calibre of submissions. The nominations we received demonstrated significant merit and highlighted the breadth and depth of search and rescue activity across New Zealand. We would like to thank all those who took the time to submit nominations – it has been a privilege to gain insight into the remarkable work carried out across the SAR sector every day.

The Operational recipients recognised in this year's awards exemplify the very best of search and rescue. They demonstrate exceptional planning, sound risk assessment and management, strong leadership, clear communication, effective teamwork, supported by technical excellence and sustained effort. Many of these missions relied on seamless collaboration between volunteers and partner agencies, united by a shared purpose: to bring people home to their loved ones. The judging panel noted the courage, professionalism, and determination shown in circumstances where the stakes were high and outcomes often uncertain.

The Support Awards recognise individuals whose contributions extend well beyond specific operations. The judging panel highlighted the strong commitment of those individuals to collaboration across regions, including sharing expertise beyond their home areas and fostering the cross-pollination of knowledge, capability, and best practice within the SAR community. These recipients often play an important role in attracting and supporting new volunteers. They have demonstrated outstanding dedication and perseverance, often over many years of service, providing the leadership, coordination, and quiet reliability that enable SAR teams to perform at their best.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all those who contribute to search and rescue across New Zealand. Your professionalism, dedication, and commitment continue to strengthen a world-class SAR system and make a profound difference to the lives of others. On behalf of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council, thank you for the vital role you play in keeping our communities safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Fairhall'.

Ruth Fairhall
Acting Chair
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council

The New Zealand Search and Rescue System

Many organisations and volunteers work in partnership to deliver search and rescue across Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes our coordinating authorities – New Zealand Police and Maritime New Zealand’s Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) – as well as the governance provided by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council and its member agencies.

The Sector also relies on the vital contribution of our SAR partners, including New Zealand Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard Tautiaki Moana, Surf Life Saving New Zealand, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, rescue helicopter and air ambulance operators, and the New Zealand Defence Force, as well as the important support provided by health services.

Together, through strong collaboration, shared expertise, and a collective commitment to saving lives, these organisations form a highly effective and integrated SAR system that responds across land, sea, and air.



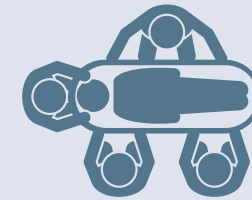
NH90 Helicopter – New Zealand Defence Force

SAR Snapshot 2025

For the year ending 31 December 2025

Search and rescue incidents

3,258 SAR incidents



What we achieved

169
Lives saved



691
People rescued



801
People assisted



Our people

60,480 Operational
Personnel Hours



2,675 Operational
Asset Hours



Our People | Coordinating Authorities



Leading the Response: 2025 in NZ Police Search and Rescue

In 2025, Search and Rescue (SAR) for New Zealand Police was characterised by high demand, increasing operational complexity, and collaboration with trusted SAR partners and volunteers.

In 2025, New Zealand Police continued to be a central pillar of the national SAR system, acting as one of the country's two coordinating authorities alongside Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ). Police are primarily responsible for Category One SAR operations, which include land, inland waterway, subterranean, and close to shore marine searches, as well as the majority of missing person incidents.

Police coordinate nearly 2,000 land and marine SAR incidents annually, a figure that remained broadly stable through 2025.

Police operate SAR through a strong partnership model, working closely with New Zealand Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard Taupaki Moana, Surf Life Saving New Zealand, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications, rescue helicopter operators, air ambulance operators and Defence Force assets including RNZAF aircraft and RNZN vessels when required.

Supported by national readiness planning, volunteer capability, and regular multi agency exercises, Police ensured timely, effective responses to increasingly complex SAR incidents. Congratulations to all NZSAR Award recipients for 2025.

We are especially proud of the outstanding contributions recognised from New Zealand Police. This includes Keith Allen (NZ Police / RCCNZ), who received a Gold Award in the Support Category for his decades of dedicated service to search and rescue.



NZ Police working alongside Land Search and Rescue.

The Otago Lakes Police SAR Squad was also honoured with a Gold Award in the Operational Category for Operation Artigau (Wānaka), while Police SAR squads were further recognised for their roles in Operation Skeet (Mt Taranaki), the Crosbies Hut Rescue (Coromandel), and the Darran Mountains recovery (Fiordland).

These awards reflect Police search and rescue professionalism in highly complex, multi agency operations, resulting in successful rescues and dignified recoveries. Together, they highlight the critical role New Zealand Police play in SAR leadership, coordination, and specialist response across the country.

Beyond the awards, Police continue to provide leadership, coordination, and decision making at the centre of a nationally integrated SAR system, ensuring timely and effective responses to thousands of search and rescue incidents across Aotearoa New Zealand.

From Distress Call to Rescue: A busy year for Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre

In 2025, Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ), the country's national search and rescue organisation, experienced another demanding year. The centre received approximately 1,500 calls for assistance, coordinating responses across New Zealand and throughout the wider search and rescue region.

Over the 12-month period, RCCNZ worked alongside dedicated search and rescue (SAR) teams nationwide and across the region. This collective effort directly contributed to saving more than 60 lives and bringing hundreds of at-risk individuals to safety.

RCCNZ is responsible for one of the largest search and rescue regions in the world, spanning approximately 30 million square kilometres. Through this work, people in distress were able to return home to their families and communities – a responsibility RCCNZ continues to deliver with pride in support of those who respond daily to help others.

One notable incident occurred in July, when RCCNZ was alerted to a vessel in distress south of the Kermadec Islands while en route from New Zealand to Tonga. After a MAYDAY call was issued, the crew abandoned the vessel and took refuge in a life raft. RCCNZ broadcast the distress call to vessels within a 200-nautical-mile radius. The call was received by a merchant oil tanker – the only vessel in the vicinity – which, with support from the New Zealand Defence Force, successfully rescued the three people on board and ensured their safe return to New Zealand.

Alongside operational responses, RCCNZ also focused on improving beacon management. As of 2026, more than 150,000 distress beacons are registered in New Zealand. However, increased usage has led to more beacons being disposed of improperly, often in landfill, resulting in a rise in accidental activations – sometimes as frequently as once a week. When such activations cannot be confirmed as false alarms, response assets must be deployed.



Behind the scenes: RCCNZ Operation Room.



Maritime NZ's Alex Taylor (Watch Leader) raising awareness around beacon registration and proper disposal.



Life raft from merchant vessel in distress during a search and rescue operation in July 2025.

To address this, RCCNZ undertook a targeted campaign encouraging beacon registration and proper disposal. Anecdotally, this initiative led to a reduction in the number of beacons entering landfill and a corresponding decrease in accidental activations.

In 2025, Maritime NZ, in collaboration with SAR partners, successfully conducted a five-week trial of enhanced aviation coordination procedures. The trial delivered improved search and rescue outcomes and established clear priorities for our future work programme.

Our People | Search and Rescue Volunteers



Search and rescue in New Zealand is built on the extraordinary contribution of volunteers. Across the country, thousands of people give their time, skills, and dedication to help others in times of need – often in challenging and unpredictable conditions.

During the United Nations International Volunteer Year (IVY2026), the NZSAR Council is proud to recognise the many search and rescue volunteers who go above and beyond in service to their communities. Their commitment reflects not only technical expertise, but also a deep sense of care, resilience, and collective responsibility.

The NZSAR Council extends sincere thanks to all SAR volunteers. Your efforts save lives, strengthen communities, and embody the enduring spirit of service that defines search and rescue in Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand Search and Rescue Volunteer Service Award 2025

In recognition of the United Nations International Volunteer Year (IVY2026), a special Volunteer Service Award is awarded by Hon James Meager and Hon Louise Upston, Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

This award acknowledges the outstanding contribution, collaboration, and unwavering dedication of volunteers who work together to locate, assist, and bring hope to people in distress.

The volunteer service award is proudly presented to:

Surf Life Saving New Zealand

Coastguard Tautiaki Moana

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue

Fire and Emergency New Zealand

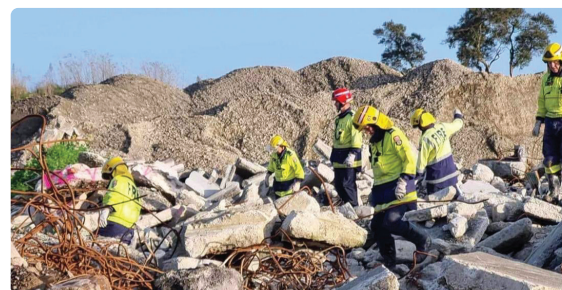
Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC)



Surf Life Saving New Zealand.



Volunteer members of AREC.



Training for Fire and Emergency New Zealand volunteers.



Volunteer for Coastguard Tautiaki Moana.



Volunteers for New Zealand Land Search and Rescue.



SURF LIFE SAVING

National support, local execution

It has been a significant year for the SAR team at Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ), with a new SAR Framework now introduced and capability building at pace.

SLSNZ includes 74 clubs and more than 5,000 active lifeguards. Their SAR service has evolved from traditional beach patrols to a model of national intent and local execution – delivered by 43 trained SAR squads.

Taskings have become more frequent in the past year for SLSNZ's SAR squads; steadily increasing over the last three years from 91 taskings in 2023, to 128 in 2024, then 198 in 2025 – plus an additional 75 non-tasked callouts.

With this increased demand, and utilising increased government funding, SLSNZ has rolled out new and improved core personal protective equipment (PPE), to have more consistent national standards across squads. This has been a transition from squads needing to fundraise, and has eased the administrative burden on volunteers.

The organisation has also launched a nationally-endorsed model for consistent, confident SAR delivery. This SAR Framework provides the foundation for connecting national systems with community-based squads.



The SLSNZ SAR Framework was launched at the inaugural SAR Leaders Forum in September 2025.

The framework was released at the organisation's inaugural SAR Leaders Forum in September 2025 and represented a major step forward. It sets a clear direction for how SLSNZ delivers SAR across Aotearoa and acts as a compass, not a manual, providing shared language and alignment across squads.

"This is where it gets real," said Matt Cairns, SLSNZ Search and Rescue Manager. "Over the next three years we'll embed the Framework into every part of our SAR system – from training and accreditation to equipment, wellbeing, and partnerships. National support will back local execution, ensuring our volunteers can continue

to deliver safe, trusted, and timely SAR response for communities."

Volunteer leaders also embraced the new approach. Daniel Harvey, Squad Leader of Bethells Beach Surf Life Saving Patrol, said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the Leaders Forum, and meeting other leaders from SAR squads around the country. Each squad has unique local needs, but this national alignment and support strengthens our ability to upskill, develop, and show funders and tasking agencies our capacity and capability."

Bringing people home from the water: 2025 in Search and Rescue

In 2025, Coastguard Tautiaki Moana continued to play a critical role within New Zealand's search and rescue sector, responding to emergencies across coastal waters, harbours, rivers and lakes. As Aotearoa's primary maritime search and rescue organisation, Coastguard's work over the past year was defined by volunteer commitment, operational capability, innovation, and strong collaboration across the SAR sector.

Powered by more than 2,000 volunteers nationwide, Coastguard's on-water and shore-based crews collectively contributed over 300,000 volunteer hours, responded to 2,867 incidents, assisting more than 7,000 people and saving 48 lives*. These figures reflect thousands of vessel launches, hours of searching, and responses carried out at all times of day, often in difficult and unpredictable conditions. Behind every statistic is a volunteer who left work, family or study to answer a call for help.

A key focus during 2025 was strengthening SAR coverage in areas of high risk or growing demand. Following a successful trial period, a new Coastguard unit was formally established in the fast growing coastal community of Mangawhai, closing a recognised gap in maritime search and rescue coverage and significantly improving local response times. The unit was built through strong community backing, intensive training, and volunteers stepping forward to crew new rescue capability – a clear example of locally driven solutions strengthening the national SAR network.

Operational innovation also featured strongly. In one of New Zealand's most dangerous bodies of water – the Manukau Harbour and Bar – volunteers introduced new jet ski rescue capability, allowing faster access to shallow waters and other areas that are difficult or unsafe for larger rescue vessels. Designed to complement existing assets, this capability has enhanced response options in time critical situations and reflects Coastguard's commitment to adapting SAR tools to real world risk.



Coastguard has introduced new jet ski rescue capability in Manukau Harbour and Bar.

Throughout the year, Coastguard's work was also recognised internationally – from volunteers celebrated for their leadership in the Women in SAR training, to volunteers acknowledged for technology driven innovations that improve vessel safety, efficiency, and search efforts through drones. These advances, led by our volunteers, are now benefiting the wider SAR sector.

Across the year, Coastguard volunteers were involved in complex, high risk search and rescue operations, many requiring sustained effort and close coordination across the SAR sector. This included prolonged, multi agency responses involving maritime, aerial and shore based partners, where outcomes depended on precise communication, endurance and teamwork over many hours. In one widely reported incident, volunteers were part of a coordinated search that successfully located and recovered multiple people who had been in the water for hours after their vessel capsized. Such operations underscore the realities of maritime search and rescue - where conditions can change rapidly, margins are tight, and the collective capability of the SAR system is crucial to saving lives.

In 2025, Coastguard Tautiaki Moana continued to embody the values at the heart of search and rescue – service, collaboration, adaptability and care for others. Through the dedication of its volunteers and its close partnership with the wider SAR community, Coastguard remains committed to a single goal: helping people return home safely from the water.

*Data from reporting period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026

Trained volunteers bringing people home across Aotearoa

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue continued to play a vital role during 2024/25, supporting successful search and rescue outcomes in some of the country's most challenging environments. Volunteers were involved in 526 search and rescue operations, going to the assistance of 598 individuals whose lives were at risk, working alongside Police and partner agencies in urgent and often complex situations.

Our volunteers operate across suburban, urban, wilderness, alpine and rural areas, including regional and forest parks, shorelines, and caves, every hour of every day. This reach, combined with local knowledge and specialist capability, enables New Zealand Land Search and Rescue to respond effectively wherever and whenever people need assistance.

This year underscored both the scale and significance of volunteer contribution. Volunteers dedicated a combined 186,827 unpaid hours to search and rescue activities. These hours represent not only time, but commitment, resilience, and an unwavering dedication. From our cities to rugged alpine terrain, volunteers brought skill, professionalism, and compassion to every deployment.

Operational demand remains complex and varied. Search teams responded to a wide range of incidents, including overdue trampers, missing persons, people with cognitive conditions, and rescues in extreme



Members of the Sub-Alpine team and Search Dog team – including canine Lochy – during Operation Artigau, Wanaka, 2025.

conditions. The integration of all capabilities including Search Dogs, Alpine Cliff Rescue, Canyon, Swift Water and Cave Search and Rescue, alongside incident management and search planning ensures that teams remain agile and effective in challenging and unpredictable environments.

Training and capability development remain a cornerstone of success. Volunteers continue to undertake extensive training ensuring readiness for complex operations, anytime anywhere.

At the heart of every response are trained volunteers bringing people home across Aotearoa. Every callout represents a person in need, a family awaiting news, and a community relying on the expertise of

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue volunteers. We extend sincere appreciation to every volunteer who answers the call, often at short notice, in difficult conditions, and at personal sacrifice.

We also acknowledge the families, whānau and employers who stand behind our volunteers. Their support and understanding make this commitment possible and are integral to the success of every operation.

As we reflect on the year, we do so with pride in what has been achieved and gratitude for those who make it possible. New Zealand Land Search and Rescue remains committed to strengthening capability and readiness for the future.



Signals That Save Lives: The Work of AREC

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) has provided emergency communications in New Zealand since 1931. Its full name reflects its origins, where “amateur” described radio enthusiasts engaged in hands-on, experimental work. This spirit continues today and contributes to a uniquely skilled and valuable volunteer base within the Search and Rescue (SAR) sector.

While the term “amateur” now carries different connotations, AREC’s work is professional in every sense. The organisation respects its heritage but primarily uses its modern name, AREC (pronounced A-R-E-C).

AREC’s evolution from radio hobbyists to a critical NZSAR partner began during the 1931 Napier Earthquake, when it provided essential communications between Napier and Wellington. In 1933, AREC supported the search for four missing trampers in the Tararua Ranges, contributing to the formalisation of SAR in New Zealand. Since then, it has supported numerous operations and major events, including the Canterbury Earthquakes, Cyclone Gabrielle, and many others.

Today, AREC comprises over 500 volunteers across more than 40 groups nationwide, using their communications expertise to help keep communities safe. Their strong problem-



AREC Group Leader addressing SAR members.

solving mindset is complemented by deep telecommunications knowledge, which is shared with partner agencies to ensure connectivity when it is most critical.

Volunteers maintain essential radio infrastructure and equipment and contribute to communications planning that supports the overarching SAR mission: bringing people home safely.

Increasingly severe weather events have demonstrated how easily communities in Aotearoa can lose conventional communication channels, reinforcing AREC’s vital role for communities and SAR partners. In 2025, AREC identified areas needing improved radio support and established new groups in Ruatoria and Waiheke, made possible by local volunteer engagement.

AREC has also partnered with marae – including Moeraki, Ōtākou, Puketeraki, Whareponga, Hiruharama, Ōhako, and Pahou – providing communications training and advice in recognition of the critical role marae play during emergencies.



AREC working with SAR members in communications HQ.

Following Severe Weather funding secured in late 2025, AREC began developing its Rapid Deployment Team. This initiative will deliver highly trained, self-reliant volunteers equipped with specialised communication resources to support SAR and Civil Defence operations, particularly during complex incidents and severe weather events.

Over the past year, AREC responded to 62 SAR operations, conducted more than 200 training exercises, and participated in eight SAR exercises nationwide. A rise in volunteer applications following recent severe weather events reflects strong public interest in contributing to community resilience, with AREC proud to support this commitment through volunteering opportunities.

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.
www.arec.nz



Building Capability, Supporting Communities

Fire and Emergency New Zealand volunteers bring a diverse range of skills, experience and perspectives to search and rescue operations. What unites them is a commitment to helping others and a willingness to step forward in times of need.

Fire and Emergency recognises the immense commitment our volunteers show to the organisation and their communities. Volunteers balance training, readiness and response alongside their work, families and other responsibilities. Their contribution is made possible with the support of employers, colleagues and loved ones who also recognise the importance of this work.

Training is a critical element of building the skills and knowledge required for volunteers to operate effectively in demanding environments. This includes understanding how large-scale incidents are managed, how to work safely in challenging conditions, and how to operate in a coordinated and efficient way.

Teamwork is key to ensure search and rescue operations can be achieved safely and effectively. Volunteers work alongside paid firefighters, specialist responders and partner agencies to keep their communities safe, and to provide the necessary expertise in times of need. Strong communication, adaptability and trust are essential, particularly in high-pressure situations where multiple teams



Fire and Emergency volunteers save a donkey from a creek in Warkworth.

must work together seamlessly. The ability to remain calm, organised and responsive contributes to the effectiveness of the overall response.

Volunteers have supported responses to some of New Zealand's most significant emergencies, including severe weather events and other incidents requiring coordinated, multi-agency efforts. They also assist with preparations that ensure readiness for future events. Volunteer firefighters and search and rescue personnel have been recognised and awarded for their contributions to a number of these events in the past, including Cyclone Gabrielle. Their involvement strengthens operational capability and contributes to a more resilient emergency response system.

Volunteers not only provide search and rescue services to people in need, but also to their furry

and fluffy friends. Whether it is ducklings rescued from a drain, a kitten retrieved from high up a tree, or saving a donkey from a creek in Warkworth, Fire and Emergency volunteers frequently turn out to save the day.

From assisting at a large-scale incident or supporting readiness behind the scenes, Fire and Emergency volunteers make a meaningful difference in their communities. Their efforts ensure that when complex emergencies happen, Fire and Emergency resources are readily available wherever they occur.

Fire and Emergency is grateful to all who choose to volunteer for them. Their dedication, reliability and commitment to service strengthen the organisation and help build safer, more resilient communities across New Zealand.



Ēhara tāku toa i te toa takitahi,
engari kē he toa takitini.

**My success should not be
bestowed onto me alone, it was
not individual success but the
success of a collective.**

**The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award
(Operational) honours the people,
groups or organisations who have
performed at the very highest level
during a search and rescue operation
in 2025. The recipients of the Gold
Award have made a very significant
contribution, going above and beyond
their normal duties.**

Gold Award | Operational Activity

Is presented to

Wānaka Search and Rescue

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Search Dogs

Aspiring Helicopters

Police National Dive Squad

Otago Lakes Police SAR Squad

In recognition of their outstanding dedication, professionalism, courage, and humanity during Operation Artigau – a complex, risky and demanding search in Rob Roy Stream canyon, Wānaka in February 2025.

Operation Artigau – Search – Mt Aspiring National Park

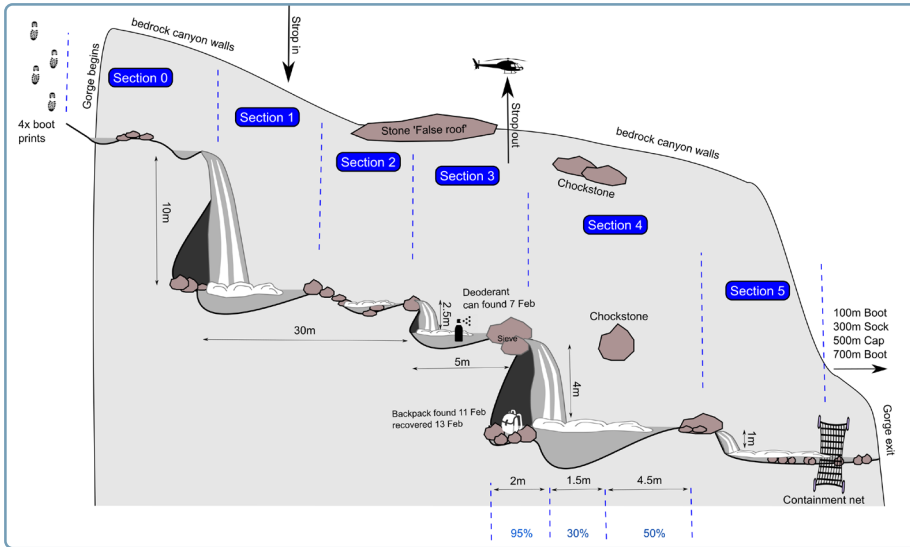
The following account contains details that may be distressing to some readers.

The disappearance of Argentine tourist Hector Gaston Artigau while walking the popular Rob Roy Track in Mt Aspiring National Park on Waitangi Day 2025, prompted one of the most intensive search and rescue operations the region has seen.

Hector, aged 21, failed to reconnect with the two friends he had been walking with and was believed to have fallen into the Rob Roy Stream canyon system.

The canyon is a technically complex environment, featuring a narrow schist gorge up to 60 metres deep, powerful glacial-fed water, submerged sieves, waterfalls, unstable boulders, and consistently low visibility. These conditions demanded advanced specialist skills, exceptional judgement, and persistence.

When the call was received, Wānaka Search and Rescue deployed its highly skilled River/Canyon Team to search sections of the canyon that had never previously been traversed. They utilised advanced rope systems, helicopter strop insertions, and probing techniques throughout their search.



Upper gorge topography – Rob Roy Canyon is incredibly dangerous and hard to navigate.

Search efforts were also conducted by helicopter and the Police National Dive Squad. The Sub-Alpine Team was deployed on multiple days and played a vital role in locating clues downstream of the canyon, helping to shape and refine the overall search strategy. On the final day, two specialist dog teams were also brought in, further extending the reach of the operation.

The success of the response rested not only on technical capability but also on the trust, coordination, and complementary expertise of each team involved.

The operation spanned over 20 days and involved approximately 40 Wānaka SAR volunteers, who collectively contributed 823 hours of their own time – without reward and often at personal cost.

Despite locating what were believed to be Hector’s footprints, along with his backpack, boots, a sock, and a cap, sadly Hector was never found.

Police SAR leadership and specialist canyon rescue experts described the operation as the most dangerous and technically demanding environment they had ever worked in, and acknowledged the methodical, calm, and highly professional approach demonstrated by all involved.

The operation was marked by adaptability and problem-solving, a strong emphasis on team safety and risk management, effective use of specialist and technical support,



View of Aspiring Heli above the canyon.



Traversing the canyon.

and the development of strong inter-team relationships. It exemplified professional excellence, courage, restraint, and humanity in the face of extreme risk and emotional complexity over a sustained period, and stands as a textbook example of a coordinated, multi-team SAR response.

The NZSAR Council would like to acknowledge the tragic loss of life and the impact on whānau, friends, the local community and all involved.



He kōtuku rerenga tahi.

A white heron's flight is seen but once.

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Support) honour the individuals who have made a very significant contribution through their work over a sustained period. This year we have two Gold Award winners. The recipients of the Gold Award (Support) have performed at the highest level to deliver a marked impact on the search and rescue sector.

Gold Award | Support Activity

Is presented to



Keith Allen

In recognition of his outstanding dedication and commitment over more than 40 years to search and rescue with New Zealand Police and Maritime NZ's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ).

Search and Rescue is not just a job for the people involved in it; it's a passion.

That rings true for former police officer Keith Allen who has dedicated more than four decades of his life to search and rescue in New Zealand; with the New Zealand Police and Maritime NZ's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ).

During that time, Keith has been involved in hundreds of complex land, marine and aviation search and rescue operations on the ground and in a coordination role.

Keith first became involved with search and rescue as a police officer in Lower Hutt and the Wairarapa in the 1980s. He responded to numerous SAR incidents during that time and exemplified courage and a deep commitment to saving lives, often going above and beyond to do so.

At the same time, as a volunteer, he was instrumental in the operation of Cape Palliser Marine Radio, maintaining equipment and staff radio operations to ensure that the local fishing community and recreational mariners were safe in such a remote and exposed area.

Keith played a critical role in building and sustaining critical SAR capability across New Zealand as a Search and Rescue Officer for Maritime NZ's RCCNZ. He coordinated hundreds of search and rescue operations



across the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region. His operational oversight contributed to successful outcomes in some of the most complex SAR incidents undertaken nationally.

He was instrumental in setting up and maintaining strong relationships with helicopter operators nationwide, ensuring effective tasking, availability and interoperability during SAR responses.

This work directly underpinned the development and ongoing maintenance of the NZSAR Resource Database, a nationally critical capability that supports efficient, informed and timely search and rescue coordination.

Keith took personal responsibility for auditing, updating and maintaining the SAR Resource Database for many years, ensuring its accuracy and reliability until his retirement in December 2025. This contribution, while largely behind the scenes, has had a profound and lasting impact on SAR operations nationwide, enabling faster decision-making, improved resource deployment and better outcomes for people in distress.

Throughout his time in the SAR community, he's been a trusted mentor, a valued coach and the general fount of all knowledge on search and rescue.

Keith's outstanding contribution along with his experience, judgement, and willingness to share knowledge have had a lasting impact on how SAR is delivered in New Zealand.

Images left to right: A legacy of service, Keith on the front lines of SAR – longline, Lifeflight and stretcher carry.





Gold Award | Support Activity

Is presented to



Carolyn Tapley

In recognition of her exceptional leadership, service and commitment over many years to Coastguard Canterbury, Coastguard Tautiaki Moana and the wider maritime community.

Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā whetū o te rangi.

Let each star in the sky shine its own light.

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Support) honour the individuals who have made a very significant contribution through their work over a sustained period.

Carolyn Tapley's commitment to search and rescue knows no bounds. Whether it is governance, fundraising or community education this dedicated search and rescue volunteer is on board.

Carolyn has held key leadership roles on the boards of Coastguard Canterbury and Coastguard Tautiaki Moana over the past 12 years and has forged strong connections within the local community.

Carolyn was instrumental in raising the funds for a new purpose-built facility in Lyttelton after their original building, badly damaged in the Christchurch earthquake, was demolished in 2020 as part of the Naval Point redevelopment.

Initial funding for a new building from the Canterbury Earthquake Appeal Trust fell short but Carolyn was able to persuade the Trust to increase their contribution to \$1.5 million. The \$2.6 million Canterbury Search and Rescue Centre was officially opened in March 2025 by Governor General Dame Cindy Kiro and will support SAR operations and volunteers for decades to come.

Carolyn is deeply committed to promoting cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity within the organisation and was a founding member of Te Pūhara Mana Iwi, Coastguard's Māori and Pacific Advisory Rōpū, and has forged strong connections with local iwi.



Carolyn Tapley is involved in Coastguard's Kaikaranga programme as well as Te Pūhara Mana Iwi (Coastguard's Māori and Pacific Advisory ropū).

These connections have been vital in promoting water safety, education, and waka ama initiatives. Through Carolyn's advocacy, Coastguard supported the repositioning of waka Kotukumairangi from Ōkains Bay to Te Ana Marina for the SailGP events in Lyttelton Harbour.

Carolyn has also advocated for connecting with local community groups and Coastguard has helped educate schoolchildren and officers of the Royal New Zealand Navy on local relevant safety issues.

Known for her calm and steady leadership, she provides a stabilising influence and promotes teamwork and mutual respect.

Carolyn's contributions to Coastguard Canterbury and Coastguard Tautiaki Moana are exceptional and enduring. Her leadership, tenacity and deep sense of service have had a profound impact on the organisation, its people and the wider maritime community.





Is presented to

Taranaki Alpine Cliff Rescue

**Ruapehu Alpine Rescue
Organisation**

Taranaki Police SAR Squad

**Taranaki Rescue Helicopter Trust
(TRHT)**

RTB Heli Ltd

**In recognition of their outstanding
contribution, teamwork and
professionalism during Operation
Skeet – a rescue and recovery mission
during a blizzard on Mt Taranaki in
September-October 2025.**

Certificate of Achievement | Operational Activity

Operation Skeet – Search, Rescue and Recovery – Mt Taranaki

The following account contains details that may be distressing to some readers.

Search and rescue teams often operate in extreme conditions, and Operation Skeet was no exception.

This multi-day operation on Mt Taranaki involved rescuing a group of climbers in blizzard conditions, with deteriorating visibility and freezing temperatures. One climber had fallen, separated from the group.

When the alarm was raised on 30 September, the priority was to locate the fallen climber while also finding and safely escorting the remaining group members from the mountain. This task was made exceptionally challenging by steep terrain, worsening weather, and the psychological stress of the unfolding situation.

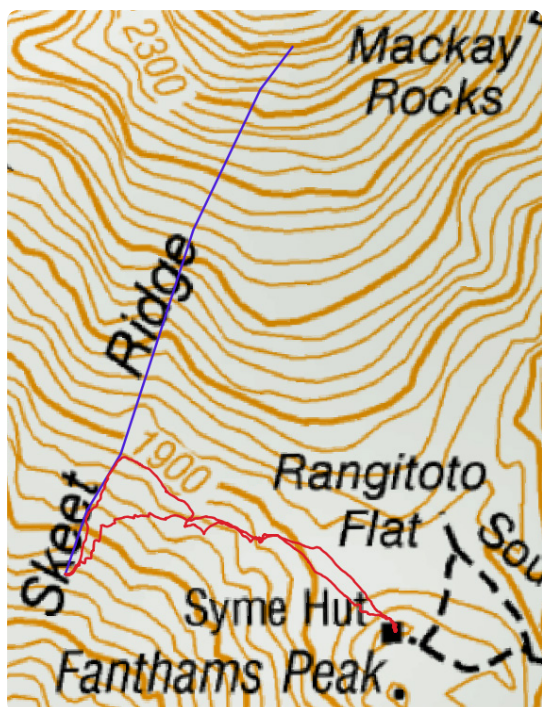
A Taranaki Rescue Helicopter Trust (TRHT) helicopter was instrumental in deploying Taranaki Alpine Cliff Rescue (TACR) volunteers and a Police SAR Squad member onto the mountain in extremely difficult conditions.

Through calmness under pressure, sound operational planning, decision-making and expert technical skills, the team located the missing party approximately two hours after the initial call and brought the climbers to safety.

The second phase of the operation involved the recovery of the fallen climber – unfortunately found to be deceased – a demanding task that required multiple teams to reascend Mt Taranaki in severe weather and adapt their plans to rapidly changing conditions.

Working in blizzards and strong winds, the teams carried heavy technical equipment, rope systems, and recovery gear through deep snow while navigating avalanche-prone terrain. Despite these challenges, they carried out the task with dignity, care and determination, locating the climber and preparing him for evacuation. A moment's silence was observed before worsening conditions forced the team to return to base, leaving the deceased climber on the mountain overnight.

A narrow 30–45 minute weather window the next day allowed the recovery plan to be executed, with RTB Helicopters and Ruapehu Alpine Rescue (RARO) playing critical roles in the final phase before conditions closed in again.



Topography: the blue line shows the estimated fall line of the fallen climber.

The technical skill, professionalism, and clear, composed decision-making of all involved ensured not only the safe descent of the surviving climbers, but also that the deceased climber could ultimately be returned to his loved ones.

The rescue teams demonstrated outstanding leadership, teamwork, and coordination across agencies. They showed exceptional resilience and sustained effort, along with courage, compassion, and cultural respect, and are highly commended for their efforts.

The NZSAR Council would like to acknowledge the tragic loss of life and the impact on whānau, friends, the local community and all involved.



Icy conditions at Syme Hut.



Changeable conditions meant adapting plans and waiting for a weather window for the recovery phase.



On descent, the TACR team pauses with quiet relief - having located the deceased, prepared him for recovery, and able to bring answers home to the family.



Certificate of Achievement | Operational Activity

Crosbies Hut - Search and Rescue - Coromandel Forest Park

What began as a casual early summer walk in Coromandel Forest Park turned into a full 24-hour rescue operation for an 80-year-old man in December 2025. Thanks to the coordinated efforts of Thames Land Search and Rescue and Waihi Land Search and Rescue, the operation had a successful outcome.

Dressed only in shorts and a T-shirt, the man set out for a trip to the Waiomu Kauri Grove. With favourable weather, he chose to continue further along the track, extending his walk beyond his original plan.

When rain set in, and aware he was now a considerable distance from home, he decided to head to Crosbies Hut for shelter. However, just 100 metres from the hut, he fell and was unable to get back to his feet. At around 10pm, he contacted his son to seek help.

Fortunately, a woman and her two children who were staying at Crosbies Hut that night were able to be contacted by Police and asked to assist while rescue teams were en route. The family located the injured walker and helped him cover the short but difficult distance to the hut - a process that took approximately two hours in worsening conditions. The family provided first aid and kept him comfortable until further help arrived.

With helicopters unable to access the site, Thames Land Search and Rescue personnel travelled in on foot and helped stabilise the man overnight at the hut.

An additional Land Search and Rescue group from Waihi was deployed with a mule stretcher in preparation for a stretcher carry the following morning, should weather conditions prevent a safe helicopter extraction.

The Thames group set off the next morning, carrying the injured man by stretcher. The terrain was steep and slippery, making progress slow and physically demanding. The second Land Search and Rescue group from Waihi joined the operation, along with Police Search and Rescue.

Is presented to

Thames Land Search and Rescue

With support from

Waihi Land Search and Rescue

In recognition of their outstanding commitment, endurance, skill and teamwork during a two-day rescue of an elderly man near Crosbies Hut in Coromandel Forest Park in December 2025.

Despite the use of the mule wheel, the stretcher carry remained challenging due to the steep and slippery terrain, requiring careful, slow progress to ensure the safety of all involved.

It took more than 12 hours for the rescue team to bring the man three-quarters of the way down the track to a location where a weather window opened, allowing the helicopter to successfully uplift the patient. He was then transported to hospital and treated for hypothermia.

The volunteers' exceptional training, endurance, resilience, practical skills, and teamwork were critical in saving the walker's life. Their professionalism, dedication, and sustained effort ensured a successful outcome under challenging circumstances.

The NZSAR Council wishes to acknowledge the efforts of members of the public – the family at Crosbies Hut – whose assistance was instrumental to the success of the operation.



Steep and slippery terrain made the rescue challenging.



The stretcher carry required careful, slow progress to ensure the safety of all involved.



Rescue helicopter successfully uplifting the patient.



Is presented to

**Police Search and Rescue –
Southland**

**Alpine Cliff Rescue Wakatipu
Search and Rescue**

Heliworks Queenstown

Southern Lakes Helicopters

Helicopters Otago NZ Ltd

Emily Shrosbree

Mathew Denys

In recognition of their outstanding skill, determination, teamwork and contribution during the complex and challenging recovery of two Australian climbers lost on Sabre Peak in the Darran Mountains in December 2025.

Certificate of Achievement | Operational Activity

Darran Mountains – Search and Recovery – Fiordland National Park

The following account contains details that may be distressing to some readers.

A single, solitary rope was the only clue to the location of two missing Australian climbers on Sabre Peak in the Darran Mountains – a detail that could easily have been overlooked if it weren't for the technical skill of the Helicopters Otago crew conducting the search.

Sabre Peak, a 2,162 metre mountain in the Darran Range, is a popular destination for rock climbers. It is described as a thin blade of rock sitting astride the narrow ridge that separates the Moraine and Marian Creeks.

In December 2025, two climbers, Emily and Mathew, activated their personal locator beacon after becoming concerned about another climbing party they had encountered on the mountain, and who were overdue from their intended ascent of Sabre Peak. Emily and Mathew were able to provide detailed information to the helicopter crew, including the climbers' personal details, intended route, timings, equipment, and skill levels. They even recalled and described the colour of the clothing the climbers were wearing, demonstrating the strong culture of peer support within the outdoor community.

RCCNZ notified Southland Police Search and Rescue (SAR) Squad, who were at the same time, managing a separate report of two missing individuals. They queried whether the incidents were linked. RCCNZ subsequently shared the additional details provided, which closely matched the information Police held about the two missing persons.

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) had tasked Helicopters Otago with searching for the overdue climbers, using both the beacon location and the information provided by Emily and Mathew.

During the search, the helicopter crew identified a single rope emerging from a narrow gap in the rock. The ability to detect this rope within the surrounding landscape was exceptional and proved critical to the operation. It could easily have been missed and, with deteriorating weather conditions forecast, may never have been seen – potentially preventing rescuers from locating the climbers at all.

What followed was a complex and highly challenging retrieval operation requiring the expertise of the Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) team. Heliworks Queenstown was tasked with transferring the team to terrain near the site. Unable to reach the climbers that night, the team returned the following morning and ultimately located them within a narrow, 1.5-metre-wide gap between a snow gully and rock face.

Over several hours, the Alpine Cliff Rescue team successfully accessed the site and confirmed the location of the two climbers. Had they not located the climbers when they did, further access to the site would not have been able to occur until at least February 2026 due to anticipated weather and snowfall. Coordinated by the Southland Police SAR Squad; the Southern Lakes Helicopters crew, together with members of the ACR team then worked to carry out the recovery.

The search teams are commended for their exceptional attention to detail, sound decision-making, and strong risk assessment and management. This was a complex and technically demanding operation in extremely challenging terrain and conditions. Without the combined efforts of the many agencies and individuals involved, it is likely the climbers would not have been found for some time, if at all. While the outcome for the two climbers was not what anyone would have hoped for, the extensive efforts of all involved ensured they were located and returned to their loved ones.

The NZSAR Council would like to acknowledge the tragic loss of life and the impact on whānau, friends, the local community and all involved.



Above Right: The Darran Mountains.

Bottom Left: Sabre Peak.

Bottom Right: A solitary rope – the critical clue to the location of the two missing climbers.



Certificate of Achievement | Operational Activity

Earl Mountains – Search and Rescue – Fiordland National Park

Disciplined risk management, specialist alpine rescue techniques, persistence and teamwork were the key to the successful rescue of three people stranded in the Earl Mountains in Fiordland National Park.

In the early evening of 21 February 2025, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) received alerts from both a personal locator beacon and a Garmin inReach device. A party of three trampers reported they were stranded on a steep alpine cliff face in the Earl Mountains, unable to move up or down. Although uninjured, they were exposed to deteriorating weather, including rain, fog, and low temperatures.

Their location placed them in near-vertical terrain. A rock wall of around 100 metres rose above them, and the group had become separated into two clusters approximately 50 metres apart. The situation was assessed as highly precarious.

Southern Lakes Helicopters responded promptly, conducting reconnaissance and attempting winch extractions in marginal conditions as daylight faded. Low cloud, precipitation, and variable winds complicated the operation.

Although the helicopter crew located the three-person party and assessed extraction options, they made the critical decision to abort due to unacceptable safety risks, including proximity to terrain, potential rotor downwash, and worsening conditions. This decision prioritised the safety of both the trampers and the rescue crew.

RCCNZ maintained contact overnight via inReach messaging, providing guidance and reassurance while the party endured a cold, wet night on exposed terrain with limited shelter.

Meanwhile, a coordinated first-light rescue plan was developed which included helicopter insertion of specialist personnel, technical rope access options, and planning for hypothermia and fatigue risks.

Is presented to

**Alpine Cliff Rescue Wakatipu
Search and Rescue**

Southern Lakes Helicopters

Helicopters Otago NZ Ltd

Heliworks Queenstown

**In recognition of their outstanding
alpine rescue techniques, persistence,
teamwork and discipline during the
rescue of three stranded trampers in
the Earl Mountains, Fiordland National
Park in February 2025.**



The party of three were stranded on a steep alpine cliff face in the Earl Mountains.



Members of the Alpine Cliff Rescue team were deployed using winch and HEC longline techniques.

At first light on 22 February, two helicopters – an emergency medical service (EMS) aircraft from Helicopters Otago and a commercial helicopter from Heliworks Queenstown – deployed Alpine Cliff Rescue personnel using winch and HEC longline techniques. Despite the challenging terrain, the team reached the trampers, made contact, and prepared them for extraction.

All three rescue subjects were successfully extracted using winch and longline methods and flown to Te Anau. Remarkably, despite the circumstances, no medical treatment was required.

This was a highly coordinated, multi-agency search and rescue operation spanning two days, requiring effective communication and ongoing care for the stranded party. The teams are commended for their disciplined risk management, technical expertise in extreme alpine terrain, sound decision-making under pressure, persistence, and seamless multi-agency collaboration.



The three person group had become separated into two clusters approximately 50 metres apart.



Certificate of Achievement | Operational Activity

Mt Rolleston – Search and Rescue – Arthur’s Pass National Park

An alert received in the early evening marked the beginning of a complex alpine rescue on the north-east face of Mt Rolleston – an operation that would require precision, coordination, and advanced technical skill in challenging terrain.

RCCNZ received Cospas-Sarsat alerts for two climbers after one had fallen, leaving them suspended beneath the other, who remained secured at an anchor stance. With insufficient rope to lower the fallen climber to a safer position, the pair were unable to self-rescue and had activated their personal locator beacon (PLB). The incident occurred at approximately 1,800 metres above mean sea level on steep and exposed terrain above Arthur’s Pass.

Even with accurate PLB coordinates, locating subjects in complex alpine terrain can be difficult. A GCH Aviation rescue helicopter crew from Greymouth was quickly tasked and arrived on scene, locating the pair. The climbers were observed to be “bluffed,” with the lower climber suspended beneath an overhang and unable to be recovered by their partner. Recognising the complexity of the situation, the crew assessed that a specialist alpine rescue response was required and remained on site to maintain situational awareness until further resources arrived.

A second GCH helicopter from Christchurch, was tasked in response. Both helicopter crews and Alpine Cliff Rescue Canterbury personnel rendezvoused at Arthur’s Pass Village before executing a coordinated response in difficult alpine conditions.

The rescue team was deployed onto a nearby ledge via winch. From there, they traversed across steep and exposed terrain to reach the climbers. The situation was stabilised, and the stranded climbers were carefully moved upslope to a safer position.

Additional Alpine Cliff Rescue Canterbury members were inserted to support the operation. In total, four rescue personnel worked together to recover the climbers. Once secured, all six individuals – two climbers and four rescuers – were winched clear of the terrain and transported safely to Arthur’s Pass Village. Both climbers were recovered in good spirits and were largely uninjured.

Is presented to

Alpine Cliff Rescue Canterbury

GCH Aviation

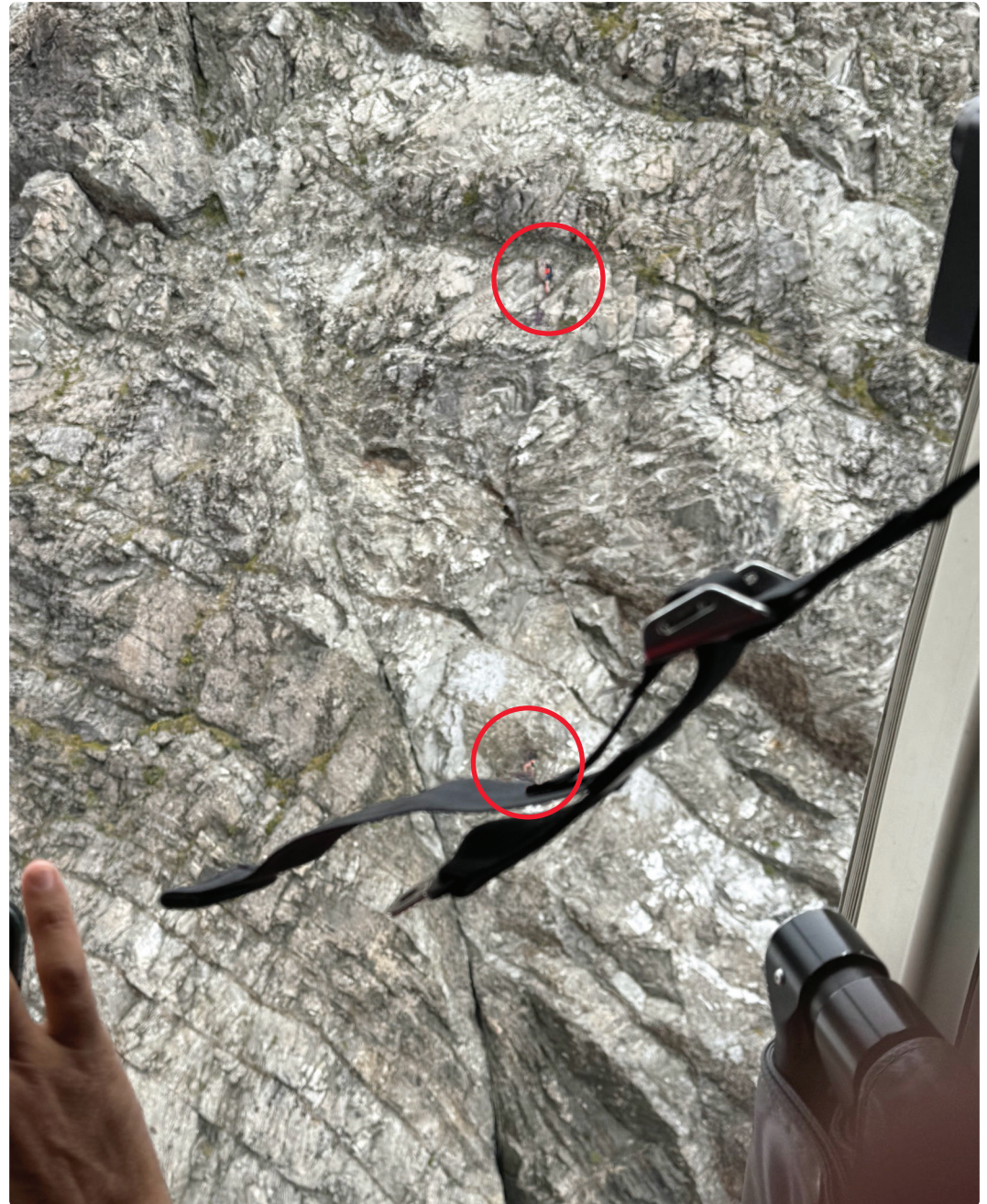
In recognition of their dedication, commitment and teamwork during a technically challenging rescue of two climbers from Mt Rolleston in Arthur’s Pass National Park in March 2025.



Bluffed: The right orange circle shows the winch in site, the red line shows Alpine Cliff Rescue Canterbury's path to the two climbers, circled in green. The left orange circle shows the winch out site.

This operation demonstrates the critical importance of disciplined risk assessment, technical expertise, and strong coordination in alpine environments. The responding teams showed exceptional judgement in recognising the need for specialist capability, maintaining safety on scene, and executing a complex cliff rescue under pressure.

The teams are commended for their technical skill, situational awareness, and seamless multi-agency coordination. Their professionalism and measured decision-making ensured a successful outcome in a challenging and potentially life-threatening situation.



Right: View from the helicopter shows the locations of the bluffed climbers – circled in red.



Certificate of Achievement | Support Activity

Thanks to his technical expertise and dedication, Jim Nelson is a trusted and reliable presence within search and rescue, helping maintain critical communications during operations.

Jim has contributed to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) for 28 years and Methven Search and Rescue for 21 years, demonstrating sustained commitment to the search and rescue community.

He is an integral part of the Methven Search and Rescue group using his radio skills to bring home the lost, the missing and the injured. He consistently turns up to SAR call outs, helps get the teams out in the field and then manages the radio communications, often staying up all night to support the team.

When Jim's not helping with operations, he's maintaining radio equipment, including the large aerials at their base. He also helps with training to ensure that the team will never be without people to assist in incident management.

At the same time, he has actively supported AREC activities, kept up to date with technology and keeps in touch with the wider AREC team.

Now in his 80th year, age is no barrier to Jim, he remains a dedicated volunteer. His selfless commitment to supporting the SAR community for the greater good is evident.

Is presented to



Jim Nelson

In recognition of his outstanding support, dedication and guidance to the search and rescue community through Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) and Methven Search and Rescue.



Jim is commended for his outstanding dedication and demonstrated commitment over many years of service. Jim has provided leadership, coordination, and the quiet reliability that enable SAR teams to perform at their best.



Is presented to



Jessica Gibbs

In recognition of her exceptional leadership, support and commitment to Far North Search and Rescue and Murchison Search and Rescue.

Certificate of Achievement | Support Activity

When Jessica Gibbs moved from the Far North to the South Island, Murchison gained a highly valued volunteer.

She is widely respected for her exceptional contribution to search and rescue capability and community safety in both regions.

Joining the Far North Search and Rescue group team in 2012, Jessica quickly established herself as a highly capable, reliable and committed volunteer. She actively participated in numerous search operations in the field and as part of the Incident Management Team in operations and planning.

She played a pivotal role in helping rebuild the Far North Search and Rescue group, coordinating training and capability for a large intake of new members and helped to restore operational readiness and confidence within the group. During her 11 years there she was Group Training Officer, Vice President and acting President.

In 2023 Jessica moved to Murchison in the South Island. The local Search and Rescue group was largely inactive at the time.

When the group was restarted, Jessica became one of the first members of the newly formed committee. She immediately provided leadership, direction and momentum. Her willingness to lead from the front and invest significant time and



energy directly contributed to restoring local SAR capability and improving community safety. Through her leadership, Murchison SAR grew to 22 active members and was able to respond to local SAR operations with trained field teams.

Jessica is commended for her leadership, strong commitment to collaborate, share expertise and foster the cross-pollination of knowledge, capability, and best practice within the SAR community.



New Zealand Land Search and Rescue, Queenstown.

Council Acknowledgements

The New Zealand Search and Rescue Council extends its sincere thanks to the many individuals, organisations, and volunteer groups who contribute to the strength and success of search and rescue across Aotearoa New Zealand.

We provide search and rescue services for people in New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region and this work is made possible through the collaboration of dedicated professionals and volunteers who give their time, expertise, and energy to support those in need. From frontline responders to those working behind the scenes in planning, coordination, and support roles, each contribution is vital to ensure we find and rescue people in distress so that they can come home safely.

The Council acknowledges the commitment of partner agencies, community organisations, iwi and hapū, and local communities who continue to work together to uphold a strong, connected, and resilient search and rescue system. Their collective efforts ensure that help is available when and where it is needed most.

We also recognise the ongoing support of families, employers, and whānau, whose encouragement enables volunteers and staff to continue their important work.



Gold Award recipient Aspiring Helicopters during Operation Artigau, Wānaka, February 2025.

Help Us Celebrate SAR Excellence | 2026 Award Nominations Open

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

Information about NZSAR Awards and the nomination process can be found at www.nzsar.govt.nz/awards.

The 2026 Award nominations close on 31 January 2027.





New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region (NZSRR) is one of the largest in the world, covering over 30 million square kilometres or a twelfth of the Earth's surface.

NEW ZEALAND
SEARCH
AND
RESCUE

Rapu Whakarauora Aotearoa