

Exercise Evaluation Report

SAREX REPIA

Location: *Southern Boundary of Lochinvar Station, State Highway 5 (Napier-Taupo Highway), Rangitaiki.*

Date: *Friday 2 September 2022 to Sunday 4 September 2022*

Report version: *FINAL*

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Executive Summary

This was a successful SAREX for the Bay of Plenty District with a turnout from many of the groups across the district.

Some of the groups did not receive notification of this exercise until 2 weeks prior to the exercise and may have led to some individuals unable to attend. This was despite the Taupo SAR coordinator advertising this SAREX in early 2022 and sending out reminders in July and August.

The purpose of the exercise was identified as a learning and assessing opportunity for field team and IMT members against the LandSAR competency framework.

The assessors were qualified and experienced LandSAR personnel, primarily from the Whakatipu and Wanaka groups.

There is value in having these assessors from outside a district to ensure competency consistency across the country.

While the SAREX planner was unable to attend as the SAREX controller, his role was effectively filled by Taupo Police SAR squad member.

The venue, equipment and logistic support was well planned and executed.

The SAREX demonstrated a very strong relationship between local SAR groups and local Iwi.

The Key finding leading to the recommendations was the identified need to further the practice, experience and learning of IMT members across the district groups. At times members of the IMTs during the scenario activities, struggled with their roles.

Recommendations

- 1) To carry out a number of IMTEX style exercises throughout the year and across the Bay of Plenty district to strengthen the knowledge and skills of IMT personnel.
See findings for objective 3 and 4
- 2) To consider following district SAREX's to test pre plans and IMT processes and capabilities.
See findings for objective 3 and 4
- 3) To test the skill of IMT to on SARtrack and Optus D2 satellite systems on a full and extended scenario-based activity
See findings for objective 5

Introduction

SARex Repia is the SARex of the Bay of Plenty Police district and included the Central North Island Alliance groups which neighbour that district.

The SARex was planned by the Taupo Area Police SAR Coordinator and run by a group of LandSAR personnel from the Whakatipu and Wanaka area.

LandSAR members attending included members from groups from Taupo, Turangi, Rotorua, Tauranga and Whakatane from the Police District and included members from Taihape and Whanganui from the Central North Island Alliance outside the Police district.

The plan does not identify who the planning team was. And does not identify any requirements of district SAR groups for this District SARex

The purpose of the exercise was to exercise IMT and field members and upskill and assess abilities with external subject matter experts providing training a skills assessment against the competencies, and to provide feedback to those attending.

These competencies all related to the LandSAR competencies.

The overall purpose was that of learning and refreshing LandSAR skills.

Background

Contact was made to the evaluator well prior to the exercise and draft copy of the plan was forwarded. This draft report identified the aim and objectives that were set by the exercise planner.

There was no discussion on the context of the evaluation, other than to satisfy the need to have the exercise evaluated.

On that basis, during the exercise I attached myself to a team and observed each of the activities, with the exception of the Sunday morning activity of processing camp sites and vehicles.

The advantage was that I was able to see all the activities.

The disadvantage was that I could only observe a small number of the participants and assessors.

Background to the Exercise

The plan did not identify projects, activities or issues that supported the need of this SARex, nor did it identify a planning team from within the LandSAR groups.

The SARex was held between Friday 2 September 2022 and Sunday 4 September. It was held at the Southern boundary of the Lochinvar Station, off the Napier-Taupo highway. The topography was easy, and vegetation was low scrub.

All the activities were held within 2 kilometers of the exercise base.

It was an ideal location for the activities that this SARex were based on.

Participating organizations

The SARex was planned by the Taupo Police Area SAR coordinator. The key deliverers and assessors were Whakatipu, and Wanaka based LandSAR members.

Each of these assessors are experienced and trained LandSAR members and trainers.

The SAREX management, directing and support staff numbered approximately 11 including Police personnel from the Taupo area team, LandSAR volunteers from the Taupo group and the LandSAR directing staff from Whakatipu and Wanaka groups.

There were approximately 27 field team members amongst the participants, with a further 12 identified as IMT members.

Exercise aim

The aim of the exercise has been identified through its purpose, to exercise IMT and field members and upskill and assess abilities, with external subject matter experts providing training, skills assessment against the competencies, and to provide feedback.

Exercise objectives

The objectives to achieve this aim have been identified by the exercise planner and included

- 1) To allow assessment against the competencies by Subject matter Experts/Assessors of the field team and incident management member competencies.

- 2) To give field team members the opportunity to revise skills in search methods, navigation, bushcraft and first aid and patient/stretchers management.
- 3) To give IMT members the opportunity to establish an ICP using the principles of CIMS
- 4) To measure the IMT against NZSAR response guidelines
- 5) To allow the IMT to operate SARtrack and OpusD2 satellite system.

Exercise Scenario

The exercise consisted of several practical workshops followed by a small scenario-based exercise.

The participants of the SAREX were divided into three groups who rotated through the practical exercises and the scenario. Each group had a separate scenario

IMT participants rotated through the three scenario activities, and in between took part in the practical exercises.

The practical workshops included

Search techniques, consisting of a practical search using purposeful wandering through an area to locate previously dropped "clues".

Navigation, primarily using GPS to navigate to several designated points using various functions of the GPS, including sight and go, compass, bearings, and waypoint management. Stretcher carry and using ropes to affect a safe carry and including demonstration of knots and their various uses.

Bushcraft, which included some instruction, demonstration and activity to light fires.

The three scenario-based exercises for the three groups included a despondent who travelled into the area, a forester who had become overdue and a hunter with some medical conditions.

Each of these exercises were planned and managed to take three hours to complete.

Evaluation Methodology

The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The exercise controller on the day discussed with the evaluator the scope of the evaluation. It was agreed that the evaluation of the exercise as a whole would be best achieved by attaching to one team and following through the whole of the SAREX

Evaluation scope

The evaluator followed 1 team through the practical workshops and evaluated the IMT during the scenario-based activity.

On the Sunday morning a clash of activities between the campsite and vehicle processing activity and a full IMT briefing meant the evaluator couldn't attend the campsite and vehicle processing activity, choosing to attend the IMT briefing.

Apart from that, the SAREX was able to be evaluated in full.

Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

The evaluation is based on observations made by the evaluator, discussions with various members who attended and with the subject matter experts and assessors.

The Practical exercise involving the campsite and vehicle processing was not observed, and any comments is solely based on what was relayed to the evaluator.

The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

This report has been prepared using my notes and observations during the SAREX and was prepared as a draft document. The draft document was reviewed by the Police area SAR coordinator. This final report is submitted after some minor adjustments following comments by the SAR Coordinator.

Other information

It was unfortunate that the SAREX planner could not attend the SAREX as the SAREX controller, however that role was maintained by the Taupo Police SAR group.

It was well managed considering that short notice change in the exercise controller function.

Findings

The KPIs in the plan we set against the workshops, as opposed to the objectives.

For Navigation the KPIs included:

Plan using map GPS a route off track calculating distances and approximate times

Identify hazards off map and contours

Create searchers briefing for task

Identify throughout route position and mark on map.

Navigate using GPS by setting waypoint, go to and using track-back functions.

Project waypoint and go to.

Record and prepare communications for broadcast.

Provide 6-digit LOCSTAT or SITREP and communicate this.

Provide 14-digit grid reference for clue/item and communicate this.

Save into PGS notarized clues, waypoints or POI's.

The majority of these KPI's were met.

There was no route planning

There were no searchers briefing

There were no route positions to mark on the map.

All other KPIs were covered and met during the workshop and scenario activities.

The Navigation workshop was appropriate and successful, with all participants learning or refreshing skills, particularly with GPS use.

For Search methods the KPI's included:

Average range of detection in area to be searched.

Conduct a search through bush area covering a minimum of 3 full sweeps using purposeful wandering for 10 items placed in search area.

Discuss boundary marking with paper marking tape or crepe paper in 1-metre lengths for visibility.

Purposeful Wander through area and resets to get good coverage and used to boundary marking.

The KPIs for this workshop were met. All participants learned or refreshed their skill of purposeful wandering.

However no other search methods were practiced or discussed.

For Bushcraft

No KPI's were set.

The only activity for bushcraft was fire lighting. That activity consisted of lighting a fire using cotton wool and petroleum jelly, ignited by a flint.

The activity was successful in that the participants all learned or refreshed fire lighting skills. However, there were no other bushcraft skills considered during this activity.

For First Aid, Patient and Stretcher Management.

Primary and secondary assessment of patient.

Preparing stretcher, loading and securing patient.

Loading a patient and making comfortable and secure for transport.

Basic knot craft and low angle belay and back-up.

Carry over a distance utilizing full team with changes, side swaps and various methods.

Use and demonstrate correct calls for lifting, lowering, uphill and downhill movement.

Stretcher attendant's roles assigned, calls made correctly and patient care with observations completed.

This activity was successful in that the participants practiced stretcher skills, using a mule stretcher. They all learned or refreshed the skill in using this stretcher. The patient was loaded and secured, carried over a distance and instructions delivered by team leader.

There were too few participants in the group to change teams or other methods. There was no practice with other stretchers. There was no first Aid component practiced during the workshop.

For clue processing

There were no KPI's set for clue processing activity, however some clear directions to assessors on the method, all of which are based on best practice.

This workshop was not observed by the evaluator, however all of the comments from participants were all very positive.

This was a successful activity.

Objective 1

To allow assessment against competencies by subject matter experts/assessors of field team and incident management member competencies.

This objective was clearly met.

The assessors were all very well qualified and experienced to carry out this role with vastly different skill and knowledge between participants.

The evaluator observed the learnings and assessments of the team members he was attached to.

During the IMT scenario activity it was noticed that the IMT members struggled with the concepts of CIMs and the function responsibilities. That is despite many having attended at least the Managing the Initial response course.

Objective 2

To give field team members the opportunity to revise skills in search methods, navigation, bushcraft and first aid and stretcher management.

This objective was met however the activities did not fully meet the needs of the objectives.

The search methods activity covered two activities on the method of purposeful wandering. It did not include any activities to revise skills on any other search method.

Bushcraft was sole based on fire lighting skills and did not consider any other bushcraft skills.

First Aid and stretcher carrying did not include any first aid discussions, nor the requirements of primary and secondary assessments, nor stretcher carrying with equipment other than the mule.

Navigation did not include route planning to any great extent.,

All the participants were very positive about the workshop activities and scenario. Everybody learned new skills.

Objective 3.

To give IMT members the opportunity to establish an ICP using the principals of CIMS

This objective was met.

While the ICP was in fact dictated to the participants in that the caravan was already set up and there were no alternatives, the IMT participants were required to set themselves up as an effective IMT and establish their roles.

The principals of CIMS were the basis of the IMT set up.

However, some participants did not understand the responsibilities of the functions within that CIMS structure.

Objective 4

To measure the IMT effectiveness against NZSAR guidelines.

This objective was met.

It identified that participants struggled with IMT function responsibilities and basic search management techniques.

These failings occurred despite the participants having completed the basic search management courses.

The NZSAR guidelines were not referred to by the IMT.

Objective 5

To allow the IMT to operate SARtrack and Optus D2 satellite system.

This objective was met.

However, the scenarios were based on the initial response to a search which meant limited value in the use of SARtrack. The satellite system was set up and running for the IMT so its value, while appreciated by the IMT, was limited to those who set both SARtrack and the Optus D2 systems up.

Other issues identified by the evaluator.

1) Numbers

The 35 to 40 participants for this SAREX is a reasonable number for any SAREX and included volunteers from most of the groups within the Bay of Plenty and Central North Island Alliance groups.

However some of those groups, including Police from the other areas, did not receive notification of this SAREX until 2 weeks prior to the event. That was despite the early advertising of this SAREX and follow up reminders from the Taupo Area SAR Coordinator. Earlier notification to some SAR individuals may have led to more participants to the SAREX across the district LandSAR groups.

2) Planning Team

The Planning Team was not identified in the plan, other than the Taupo Police Area Coordinator.

There were no identified projects, activities or district issues that supported the SAREX as it was planned.

3) Iwi Partnerships

This SAREX demonstrated a very strong relationship between the Area SAR community and local Iwi groups. It was evident throughout the exercise and led to inclusive discussions on SAR matters, local knowledge and resources made available, including the Wharetoko Maori trust blocks for this SAREX.

CONCLUSION

This was a very successful SAREX designed primarily as a learning opportunity for field team members and to make assessments of their capabilities against the LandSAR competency framework.

In addition it tested the capabilities of IMT capabilities against these competencies, particularly on the initial search actions.

It identified that further learning, experience is required by IMT personnel.

It tested the ability of management support personnel to set up the satellite communications systems and to set up the SARtrack management tool.

It identified the very strong relationship between the local SAR groups and local Iwi.

All of the Objectives of the exercise were met.



