

Exercise Evaluation Report

TAMAKI MAKARA 2025

Location: Marine Rescue Centre
Auckland

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Executive Summary

Tamaki Makaurau District Search and Rescue exercise in June 2025 was developed with the perceived need to manage a combined marine and land scenario to test the interacting between a marine focused IMT and a land focus IMT.

The exercise was well planned, however practically it didn't execute as planned. The two separate IMT's did test their individual skills and knowledge, but as separate scenarios, one land based and the other marine based.

The scenario identified some needs, as outlined in the findings of the evaluator and recommendations made.

All the participants, both IMT's, field teams and marine assets learnt from this exercise, under the mentorship of experienced mentors.

The exercise was inhibited by a SAR operation which started late on the first day of the exercise and into the second day.

This impacted on the IMT and necessitated relocating field teams to from the exercise to the operation.

Despite this, the exercise was a valuable learning opportunity for SAR personnel from all agencies.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Tamaki Makaurau district invest in a full set of NZSAR forms, AO size for each of the IMT functions to display their information. In particular Action Plans, Information Collection Plans, Field Team management, Marine Asset deployment, Missing person Summary, situation Reports and Safety Plan.

See findings and conclusions Objective 2

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Tamaki Makaurau district invest in large monitors to display IMT function information within an IMT. Sufficient monitor for each function and in support of whatever management platform is used.

See findings and conclusions Objective 2 and Objective 5

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the Tamaki Makaurau district continue to combine training with a combined Maritime and land based scenario

See findings objectives 1,2 and 5.

RECOMMENDATION 45

That the Tamaki Makaurau district SAR hold IMT2 training(2 days) during the year to imbed learnings from courses attended and exercises held.

See findings objective 2

Introduction

This SAREX was planned to fully utilize the funding of NZSAR for the 2024-2025 financial year. During the year not all of the funding had been used.

The exercise was planned to test the combined land and maritime response to a search operation, from an IMT perspective. The plan was to separate the land and marine components with separate IMT's to test the relationship between the two IMTs during the exercise.

The exercise was also planned to test the ability of IMT's and field staff to deploy landsar teams to an island environment as well as test the communication and synergies between the maritime response and land response teams.

The exercise plan also considered the need to test the appointment of an On-Scene Coordinator.

The SAREX IMT's, both land and marine, were based at the Marine Rescue Centre with the On Scene Coordinator based on Motutapu Island, where the scenario was created.

The exercise acknowledged the number of islands within the Tamaki Makaurau Search and Rescue area and the need to test the response to an island environment.

The scenario involved two teams of two lost party.

The lost parties were inserted on the morning of the first day and were retrieved at the conclusion of the SAREX during the demobilization of the field teams.

Two separate things occurred which disrupted the SAREX.

The first was a real SAR operation on the evening of the 17th. Initially this impacted on the land IMT in that it took some focus away from the SAREX to this real operation. Later this also impacted on the field teams as two teams were extracted from the SAREX to attend to this real operation

The second impact was some confusion of how the marine IMT was going to operate and how they relate to the land based IMT.

Ultimately this led to the Excon to decide to run 2 separate operations.

Background to the Exercise

The SAREX planners identified the need to have a combined land and Marine SAR exercise with two separate IMT's managing each.

The planners identified that the Tamaki Makaurau SAR area comprises of a number of islands each which poses a SAR risk.

Dates, location, organising agency(s), key people

This exercise was held on the 17th and 18th June 2025. This was a midweek exercise. The SAREX was organized and planned by members of the Police SAR Squad and the Auckland Maritime unit.

The key organizer was the District Police SAR coordinator.

Participating organisations

Organisations that participated included

Police SAR squad

Police maritime Unit

LandSAR

Coastguard

AREC

Exercise aim

The Aim of the SAREX was to test the response to a SAR event on an island in the Tamaki Makaurau SAR district

Exercise objectives

Objective 1

Test the collaboration between a joint land and maritime scenario / exercise.

KPI

Clear areas of responsibilities are identified between the 2 responses.

Effective tasking with little to no duplication of effort

Effective communication between land and maritime components

Objective 2

Exposure of staff to an IMT environment to build capability.

KPI

Staff capable and trained are identified and assigned appropriate roles

Staff in the IMT are appropriately supported throughout the exercise

Staff given the opportunities to make mistakes and learn in a supportive environment

Staff given appropriate resources early and time to use them.

Objective 3

Refresh and test the field response with a focus on deploying to an island

KPI

Correct equipment identified and taken with the team.

Tasking received and correctly communicated with team

Correct and adequate resources and skills

Communication between team and IMT established and maintained

Objective 4

Effective implementation of an IMT with OSC appointed

KPI

Areas of responsibilities identified by IMT and communicated to the OSC.

Communication and information flow pathways identified and implemented.

OSC appropriately equipped and enabled.

Objective 5

Implementation of D4H software in an IMT/OSC environment

KPI

D4H stood up early.

Roles and responsibilities identified and implemented.

Business rules around D4H use identified and implemented.

Objective 6

KPI

SAREX is operated in a safe manner.

Safety plan is created and implemented.

Safety briefings are given at appropriate times and are part of any briefing documents.

A fatigue plan is created and implemented.

Exercise Scenario

The scenario for the exercise is that a group of 6 friends have been dropped off at the island by a tour boat operator and were to stay the night on the island. When he has gone to collect them the next day they were not at the pick-up point. He has waited for approx. 1 hour before calling Police. The operator has tried calling the cell phone of the group but they are going to voicemail.

Police speak to the Next of Kin and confirm that they needed to be back for a Tangi on Tuesday afternoon.

As the scenario plays out it will emerge that they were dropped off with a tent and other items and 2x kayaks. The tent is pitched at the camp ground and the kayaks are missing. Police will search the island and locate 2 of the missing parties on Tuesday night / Wednesday morning. The missing parties will then identify that their mates decided to kayak home and be able to give an LKP for the kayakers in the water. This will start the maritime component on Wednesday morning.

The remaining 2 missing parties on the island will be located on the Wednesday around lunch time. If they are located early they will be injured and require a stretcher carry to a LZ for Westpac.

Evaluation Methodology

The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The evaluator was contacted early and gave advice on the wording of the exercise objectives. It was agreed that the evaluator would be based at the ICP in the Marine rescue Centre to observe activities within the IMT

Evaluation scope

It was agreed that the whole of the SAREX falls within the scope of the evaluation. Anything not observed could be commented on based on comments by participants and comments made during the hot debrief.

Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

All the IMT process was observed, both the Marine and Land components.

Field teams and marine assets were not observed.

Any comments made about field operations and marine assets are based on comments from participants or from the hot de-brief.

The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

This report is completed in a draft format and forwarded to the Tamaki Makaurau SAR coordinator for any comments prior to submitting as a final report.

Findings

Objective 1

Test the collaboration between a joint land and marine scenario

This objective was not really tested. As previously mentioned, this came about because of some confusions with the SAREX plan and secondly as a result of a SAR operation beginning during the initial stages of the SAREX.

The Land IMT and Marine IMT did operate, but as two separate scenarios.

KPI 1

Clear areas of responsibility are identified between the two responses

KPI 2

Effective tasking with no duplication of effort

KPI 3

Effective communication between land and marine components

Both IMT's were operated effectively as separate identities but had very little collaboration. As a consequence, none of the KPI's were achieved.

Objective 2

Exposure of staff to an IMT environment to build capacity.

KPI 1

Staff capable and trained are identified and assigned appropriate roles

For both the IMT's staff that were assigned functions had completed at least the Managing the Initial Response or Managing The Marine Response courses and all demonstrated that they were capable in these roles.

KPI

Staff in the IMT are appropriately supported throughout the exercise.

Each of the IMT's were well supported with a mentor attached to each of them to guide their processes. The mentors were senior Police staff in their respective fields, Marine or Land SAR.

KPI 3

Staff given the opportunities to make mistakes and learn in a safe environment.

Mistakes were made, processes not fully followed, however with the mentors these were largely rectified and the learnings from those mistakes taken on board.

KPI 4

Staff given appropriate resources early and time to use them.

From a field perspective available resources were as deployed and available. The SAR operation did impact on the land operations and the ability for the IMT to fulfill their plan in the time allocated for the SAREX

From an IMT perspective there were insufficient resources made available to display the workings and findings of each function.

In the land IMT this led to a lack of situational awareness across the functions at times.

It was fortunate that regular IMT meetings were held to minimize the impact of the lack of the situational awareness

From a marine perspective, the only information displayed was the action plan. There was a lack of understanding of all the function managers on the requirements of each of the functions. There was some duplications of efforts in the information gathering and a delay in obtaining critical information, (interview of informant).

Objective 3

Refresh and test the field response with a focus on deploying to an island.

KPI 1

Correct equipment identified and taken with team.

Not observed by the evaluator, however comments made by the field team members indicated that correct equipment was carried by teams.

KPI 2

Taskings received and correctly communicated with teams.

All the taskings were delivered to the teams by radio, phone or e mail.

All taskings appeared to be understood and carried out as required by the IMT. There was minimal confusion about what teams were doing and their locations at any given time.

KPI 3

Correct and adequate resources and skills

All field team members had the necessary skills to carry out the taskings set for them.

KPI 4

Communication between team and IMT established and maintained.

Good communication established with repeaters and DOC channels.

Good cell-phone coverage over most of the scenario area for phone contact, and including D4H capability

Objective 4

Effective implementation of an IMT with On-scene Coordinator appointed.

KPI 1

Areas of responsibility identified by IMT and communicated to the on-scene coordinator.

The on-scene coordinator was appointed as part of the scenario planners. They were deployed with the first teams.

Comments made indicated a clear understanding of the role of the on-scene coordinator.

However, the on-scene coordinator was not used for that purpose during the SAREX, so it was not tested.

KPI 2

Communication and information flow pathways identified and implemented

The IMT by-passed the on-scene coordinator with taskings. All information and communication was direct from IMT and field teams and vice-versa.

KPI 3

On Scene Coordinator appropriately equipped and enabled

This was not tested as the on-scene coordinator was by passed by the IMT

Objective 5.

Implementation of D4H software in an IMT/OSC environment.

KPI 1

D4H stood up early

Despite being a new management platform for most participants, the D4H management tool was well utilized from the beginning of the scenario. This was a learning environment in the use of this system.

D4H is not used in the Marine environment as a management tool so there was no inter-agency collaboration on that platform. The Marine SAR management is maintained through a paper-based system with a Coastguard radio log keeping system. That log keeping system also allows for live tracking of marine assets.

The only displayed form in the marine IMT was the action plan. This led to minimal situational awareness across the whole IMT and led to some delays in obtaining key information.

KPI 2

Roles and responsibilities are identified and implemented

By and large each of the IMT's demonstrated a knowledge of the roles of each of the key functions. However, there were occasions where some functions stepped across the lines of other function managers. This risks duplication of tasks and gaps in response.

However, each of the participants learnt the value of taking responsibility for each of those functions they were responsible for.

The thought processes of each of the IMT's were very sound.

KPI 3

Business rules around D4H use identified and implemented.

D4H is a new SAR management platform for most of the participants. Each of the participants learnt the value of using this platform and its pros and cons.

D4H is not used in the marine environment primarily because it is not supported by Coastguard, other than as a log keeping tool.

Objective 6

SAREX is operated in a safe manner

KPI 1

Safety plan is created and implemented

A safety plan was created for the land-based teams and formed part of the initial briefing, identifying risks known. A safety manager was appointed.

KPI 2

Safety briefings are given at appropriate times and are part of any briefing documents

The evaluator observed one safety briefing, being the overall briefing at the beginning of the scenario. That briefing covered safety.

All the taskings set initially contained the necessary safety and risk component.

KPI 3

A fatigue plan is created and implemented

Fatigue was well managed with an early plan to have field teams stood down in late evening on the night of the scenario.

The marine component of the exercise did not have a specific fatigue plan, with the knowledge that their involvement would be relatively short, (less than 1 day).

Conclusions

Objective 1

Test the collaboration between a joint land and maritime scenario/exerciser

OBJECTIVE; NOT MET

This objective was not met for 2 reasons.

First a SAR operation began in the afternoon of the 1st day of the exercise, taking some field teams from the exercise, and refocusing some IMT members onto the operation.

Second, there was some confusion with the maritime response and how they were expected to collaborate with the land based IMT.

Both the land based IMT and the marine IMT operated as separate scenarios.

OBJECTIVE 2

Exposure of staff to an IMT environment to build capacity

OBJECTIVE MET

Both the Maine and Land IMT's exposed suitably experienced staff into the IMT environment, and both had very experienced and effective search managers as mentors.

This was a great environment for those respective participants to identify gaps and experience within themselves.

Having said that they all performed well within their roles, considering the experience and knowledge.

OBJECTIVE 3

Refresh and test the field response with a focus on deploying to an island

OBJECTIVE MET

All participants demonstrated skill, knowledge and resources to deploy to an island environment.

OBJECTIVE 4

Effective implantation of an IMT with On Scene Coordinator appointed

OBJECTIVE PARTIALLY MET

The two IMT's were established and were effective for their individual scenarios, one a land based and the other marine based.

There was some confusion within the exercise about the roles of the IMT's for the scenario so there was very little interaction between the two IMT's. Their respective scenarios were managed by them as separate scenarios.

Both IMT's were effective and achieved their goals of either finding the lost parties or would have found them as a consequence of their planning and future tasks.

The On Scene Coordinator was appointed. Both the On Scene Coordinator and the IMT understood the role of the On Scene Coordinator.

However, that function was not utilized and by-passed by the IMT. All of the taskings and briefings were completed by the IMT directly to field teams.

OBJECTIVE 5

Implentation of D4H software in an IMT/OCS environment

OBJECTIVE PARTIALLY MET

The D4H management platform was set up for this exercise. It is a platform that has not been used a lot by SAR managers in the Auckland District; however, all of the participants were able to manage their individual functions using this platform.

The On Scene Coordinator could also log into the platform and see the taskings and plans.

Ther D4H platform was not utilized in full by the On Scene Coordinator because the IMT by-passed that function and communicated directly with teams.

While the D4H platform was set up for the scenario, each of the IMT functions fed their workings into the system but were unable to display what their decisions were. The only information displayed in the IMT was the field teams deployments, the Action Plan and some information of the missing parties.

In the Marine Scenario, D4H was not used. Operationally it is not a platform that is used.

The Maritime staff, Police and Coastguard, utilize the Coastguard log keeping and live tracking platform.

This platform was not displayed in the room set aside for this exercise. It is only available in the operations room.

For each of the IMTs, the lack of display of key information did lead to a lack of situational awareness at times.

This was rectified to some degree in both IMT's with regular IMT meetings.

Operating in two systems between Marine based and Land based searches will always create a barrier to a consolidated management base.

OBJECTIVE 6

SAREX is operated in a SAFE manner

OBJECTIVE MET

All of the KPI's achieved with good safety briefings and consideration of safety for all teams in their taskings during the exercise. Fatigue was well managed with teams stood down during the late evening.