

Exercise Evaluation Report

Tasman District SAREX 2025

Location: Picton-Queen Charlotte Sound

Date: 4th April 2025 to 6th April 2025

Report version: FINAL

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Executive Summary

This was a well-planned and very successful District SAREX held at Picton and focused on the Queen Charlotte area.

It involved multiple agencies in response including Police, LandSAR, AREC, Coastguard and for the first time Surf Life Saving.

The exercise identified several training opportunities between each of the agencies particularly between Coastguard and Surf Life Saving.

The exercise also included the involvement of Iwi in the planning and executing the exercise and identified the value in developing the Iwi relationships further to include all SAR operations.,

The exercise demonstrated the Police support of the SAR community through the attendance of the Iwi Liaison throughout the exercise and the attendance of the Tasman Police District Operations Manager.

The exercise identified in particular the need to increase the consistent training and experience of Police Incident Controller's within the Police SAR squads across the District.

It also identified the need for the Police District, and indeed nationally, to adopt a consistent SAR management platform and train to that platform.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

To resource the Incident Control Point with hard copies of laminated AO size,
Incident Action Plan
Information Collection Plan
Missing Person Summary
Field Team Deployments
Marine Asset Deployment
Safety Plan.

To achieve situational Awareness and Common Operating Picture.

See Findings and Conclusion Objective 1

Recommendation 2

Continue and grow the involvement of Iwi in training and operations within the SAR community through the Police Iwi Liaison Manager

See findings and Conclusion Objective 5

Recommendation 3

The Tasman Police District adopt a common management platform to manage SAR events and train to this platform

See findings and conclusion Objectives 1 and 2.

Recommendation 4

Resource the adopted platform to give the capability to display required information to all IMT to assist with situational awareness and a common operating picture.

Recommendation 5

To increase the training opportunities for the members of the Police SAR squad to manage SAR events in particular the Initial action and extended search courses

See findings objective 1

Recommendation 6

Encourage all Police SAR squad members from across the district to attend the district's annual SAREX to achieve consistency of training and experience across the district.

Recommendation 7

All IMT personnel from the Tasman District attend the IMT refresher courses (next one in June 2025 at Rotoiti), to achieve consistency of training across the district.

Introduction

The Tasman District is geographically very large. The SAR groups within this district are divided into 3 areas, Marlborough, Nelson and the West Coast.

The District SAREX's are shared each year with the three areas. The 2025 year was for the Marlborough area.

This SAREX was held in the Picton- Queen Charlotte Sound area and was designed to test and practice response to a major land/marine SAR event in the Marlborough area

The Planning group included the Police SAR coordinator, LandSAR members and Coastguard members.

The exercise was a scenario-based event. The scenario was based on a large group of trampers walking in the Queen Charlotte Sound area. Some volunteers had been inserted as the lost party and some dummies were anchored along the seashore to mimic victims in the water.

The response to this exercise was managed by an Incident Management team based in the Incident Control Point at the Picton Coastguard building.

This was a great Incident Control Point for any event in the Marlborough Sounds area.

Like many Police Districts, Tasman has a small pool of qualified and experienced Incident Controllers.

This exercise was used to expose the more junior and less experienced Police SAR squad members to the incident control role.

They were supported by experienced IMT operators from Coastguard and LandSAR.

The local Surf lifesaving club has only recently developed a Search and Rescue capability outside their normal patrol areas.

This was the first time surf lifesaving contributed to an exercise in this area, both in the field and in the IMT.

With training and practice between the organizations this will be a valuable addition to response agencies for SAR in the Marlborough area

Background

Background to the Exercise

The purpose of this exercise was to test and practice the multi agency response to a major land/marine SAR event in the Marlborough areas

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

The exercise was held in the Queen Charlotte Sounds area of the Marlborough Sounds with the Incident Control Point at the Picton Coastguard Building.

The exercise began with a briefing to the designated Police Incident Controller at 1800 Hrs. on Friday the 4th April. The Friday night consisted Soley on planning for the response for the following day.

The response teams gathered and were briefed from 0700 hrs. on the Saturday in accordance with the plan developed.

Teams continued with tasks throughout the day. Land-based teams stayed out overnight. Marine based units returned to Picton to overnight.

The exercise concluded mid to late morning on the Sunday with a hot debrief at Mid-day.

Participating organisations

Agencies that participated included

Police

LandSAR – Marlborough and Nelson groups

Coastguard

Surf Life Saving

Supporting the exercise included DOC

Picton Harbormaster (available but not use

Exercise aim

To test and practice the multi-agency response to as major land/mariner SAR event on the Marlborough area

Exercise objectives.

	Objectives	Contributing Objectives
1	Continue to develop interoperability between SAR partner agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in a multi-agency IMT (based on CIMs roles and functions) Multi-period handover Transport of teams, supplies and missing party via water/land Field support and field search coordination Extended operational period /change in crew and IMT members.
2	Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency comms Use of broader intelligence opportunities (for example social media, interviews, hut books / wardens).
3	SAR operational personnel refresh and practice search and rescue skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoreline searching in tidal areas and shoreline searching from a vessel Beach drop-off and pick-up of personnel IMT skills Overnight self-sufficiency Stretcher management First aid Tracking Search techniques.
4	Test communication infrastructure in a SAR environment.	
5	To increase cultural awareness and requirements of operating in the Queen Charlotte Sound for SAR responders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include iwi as mana whenua for the area of the operation as key stakeholders and active participants in the planning and execution of the operation Establish processes with iwi to protect the whenua (land) and ngā tangata (the people) and ensure tikanga is upheld and overlays any other processes. For example, if any fatalities occur, items of cultural significance are found or kōiwi (human bones) are located Incorporate tikanga process into BAU activities for the operation (for example start and end of day karakia) Include iwi kōrero / brief regarding area of operation and any key significant locations of history, activity.
6	Risks are identified, removed, minimised or managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dealing with the Fatigue Policy (17-hour rule) Potential allergic reactions to wasps, insects, or noxious weeds Health, safety and wellbeing procedures including around vessels.

Briefing for IMT

1. GROUND

The Tasman District SAREX 2025 will be held in the Marlborough Sounds, from Anakiwa through to Bay of Many Coves, including both land and water.

Situation (Scenario)

On Friday the 4th April 2025, a group of Marlborough Tramping Club members travelled by Beachcomber water taxi from Picton to Anakiwa.

The group was made up of 10 mixed gender trampers aged between 30 and 62, who were intending on tramping the Queen Charlotte Track through to The Portage Hotel during the day, staying the night at the hotel.

The tramping group left intentions with the manager of The Portage Hotel providing an estimated arrival time of 3:30pm and a time to notify authorities if they hadn't arrived by 5:00pm.

The Manager has called Police at 5:10pm advising the Southern Communication Centre the group have not arrived as planned.

The Manager could not provide any details of the party only that there were 10 of the group booked into the hotel.

Although there were strong NW winds at the time, a helicopter has flown the Queen Charlotte Track from Anakiwa to Portage at 1800hrs on the 4th April, with no sign of the missing group. You will be provided with a missing person summary of the 10 trampers.

There is no requirement to contact The Portage, Beachcomber or the tramping club, all the information you require to manage the search has been provided, should you require anything else please see myself Ed Bezzet or Shaun Crabb.

Mission:

The overall mission is to successfully complete the SAREX objectives during the safe execution of the Tasman District SAREX 2025 in the Marlborough Sounds.

Execution:

This is a multi phase operation involving a multi agency approach. The following agencies are involved in the exercise:

Marlborough Coastguard

Rarangi Surf Rescue

LandSAR from across the Tasman District

AREC

Marlborough Tramping Club

As an IMT you will be provided a list of those resources and personnel participating in the SAREX, it would be a great opportunity to mix your teams to possibly improve the training opportunities.

No Duff

In the event of a real emergency taking place on the day, the call on the radio will be prefixed with 'NO DUFF NO DUFF' followed by the details. The O/C Operation or 2IC Operation will then determine the courses of action to follow.

Admin / Logistics

Blenheim SAR based computers have been provided for the SAREX, They have been connected to the wifi and networked together. SARTrack is to be used for this SAREX.

Topomaps Waikawa BQ29, Havelock BQ 28 and Endeavour Inlet BP 29 will be provided for the SAREX

Electronic Maps can be printed at the Picton Police Station as required.

Please brief the teams not to go into Mistletoe Bay and fill water bottles etc, they are currently running very low on water and have asked for this to be raised.

You all should have received joining instructions outlining an overview of this SAREX

Evaluator

The evaluator for this SAREX is Vince Ranger, he is an extremely experienced retired Police SAR Coordinator.

Iwi

The Iwi cultural advisors for the SAREX are Inspector Tracey Wharehoka and Mark Pirikahu.

Meals

Ration Packs, 2 per member, (1 classic and 1 adventure), are available for field teams, packed lunches will be provided for Surf and Coastguard, food will be available in the EOC for IMT members

A BBQ lunch will be provided at the conclusion of the SAREX

Accommodation

Has be arranged at the Holiday Park on Waikawa Road -report to reception area, they have rooms booked under individual names.

Health and safety

Group O/C's are responsible for ensuring their groups have sufficient equipment to carry out their designated tasks.

All participants are to be alert to the identification of any health and safety hazards that may affect participants who are deployed on this SAREX. Any identified hazard is to be reported to the SAREX Health and Safety Officer.

The Incident Controller is responsible for the Welfare and safety of participants deployed on this SAREX and it is to be accorded a high priority. If deployed participants have any concerns for other attending participants then these should be communicated directly to the SAREX Incident Controller.

Health and Safety mitigation will be discussed with the participants at briefings and documentation completed for every accident, incident or near miss as appropriate.

Debrief

Field teams should be debriefed as normal practice and the documentation completed.

A hot debrief will be run at the conclusion of the SAREX by the Incident management Team.

A full debrief will be completed by the SAREX Incident Controller/Director at a date to be determined

Participants can email (qualitative information) feedback to LeeAnne Macdonald (District SAR Assistant Coordinator) <mailto:leeanne.macdonald@police.govt.nz> with "what worked well" and "what could be done better" if unable to be present at the debrief.

Command

I am O/C this SAREX Operation

2 C is Shaun Crabb

Communications

You will be provided a Communications Plan, this will assist you to establish comms with your field teams and assets.

Finally

Please enjoy yourselves, don't be afraid to make decisions, to think outside the square, there is no right or wrong, this SAREX is designed as a training environment to improve your skills and decision making.

Evaluation Methodology

The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

It was agreed that the evaluator focus on the IMT component of this exercise but that any comments of field teams objectives be considered with comments made by responder teams/units

Evaluation scope

The scope of the evaluation included all of the objectives that were set

Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

The evaluator focused on and observed all of the IMT response to this exercise. No field teams or Marine units were observed. Any comments within this report relating for teams/units are based on comments made by participants

The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

The evaluator was engaged early and was able to give advice on setting objectives. The objectives were set by the Planning Committee. It was agreed that a draft report will be forwarded to the Area SAR Coordinator to make any comments prior to the final report.

Other information

All IMT actions were observed. No field teams/Marine units were observed

Findings

Objective 1

Continue to develop interoperability between SAR partner agencies.

KPI

- Working in a multi-agency IMT (based on CIMs roles and functions)

This was the first time that all of these agencies had worked together in an exercise environment.

However the agencies worked very well together, with all agencies holding function responsibilities within the IMT

The consequence of this exercise was that each agency has a better understanding of what each agency can or can't do. This was particularly so for the Surf lifesaving agency which is just starting the Search and rescue capability outside their patrol areas.

SARtrack was the computer platform used for this exercise, and is used by the Marlborough SAR areas.

However it is not used by neighbouring areas, nor by the other agencies. There was very little experience within the IMT's to manage this scenario using SARtrack as the platform. Information was not readily available to the IMT's to base their decisions on.

There was only 1 screen to project information. For the majority of the scenario, the map was the only information displayed via SARtrack.

Information not displayed, or not adequately displayed included

Sitrep form

Information Collection Plan

Marine Unit Deployment

Field Team deployment

Clue Board

Found item register

All these forms need to be displayed so that the IMT members can be situationally aware and to develop the Common Operating Picture.

This exercise was used to expose less trained and experienced Police SAR incident controllers. While they all worked well to their abilities, it exposed the lack of operational experience of some of these Police staff in this role

KIP 2.

- Multi-period handover

Handover briefing was completed to a new IMT, midway through the Saturday of the exerciser.

This handover was well managed, was in accordance with CIM's and SAR best practice.

KPI 3

- Transport of teams, supplies and missing party via water/land

The majority of teams were transported by vessels to their task areas, and throughout the exercise coastguard and Surf Lifesaving units were tasked to re-locate land based field teams.

KPI 4

- Field support and field search coordination

The IMT managed the coordination of all field teams and Marine units, including the support that each required. Such as relocating field teams to updated tasks
Extended operational period /change in crew and IMT members was not required until the end of the Saturday, with fresh crews where possible utilized for the Sunday.

Objective 2

Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response.

KPI 1

- Multi-agency comms

Comms with a multi-agency response is always an issue.

This was address by the IMT by ensuring that all responding teams and units held a common landSAR radio. That gave a common radio channel between all responding teams/units.

However, within the IMT there were some issues in using SARtrack to manage the log and some coastguard-to-coastguard communications on their own radio channel and therefore not included on the SARtrack log. Ther Coastguard radio room, adjacent to the main ICP room, became a mini coastguard IMT. That risks the IMT members not being situationally aware.

Within the IMT there was very little information displayed. While the information was held either on forms held on the desk, or within the SARtrack platform, much of it was not easily available to all IMT members. Again, this led to some IMT members not being situationally aware.

At times some function Managers were stepping into managing other functions. An example being an intelligence manager who had completed a new Incident Action Plan. The Planning manager was not aware of this second Plan. At one time there were 2 separate plans within the IMT. Again, this led to some confusion and a lack of situational awareness.

During this time tasks were being set, without referencing to a strategy or objective.

Ultimately the IMT became task driven, not objective driven. This also led to a lack of situational awareness.

KPI 2

- Use of broader intelligence opportunities (for example social media, interviews, hut books / wardens).

The intelligence function throughout the exercise was well managed.

The information collection plan was developed but was in an A4 size and left on the desk amongst other papers. It was seldom referred to.

However all relevant enquiries were made.

Not all the IMT were situationally aware of what the intelligence function were doing nor werre aware of the information collection plan.

Objective 3

SAR operational personnel refresh and practice search and rescue skills.

The operational practices of field teams and marine units were not observed by the evaluator however comments made in this report are based on comments by the participants.

Most of these KPIs were observed and participants assessed by their team leaders/ skippers

KPI 1

- Shoreline searching in tidal areas and shoreline searching from a vessel

All of the agencies, LandSAR, Coastguard and Surf Lifesaving had teams searching the shoreline. While some of the targets were initially missed it gave these search assets good practice in searching in this environment. In particular the Surf Lifer Saving assets, who had never trained or had operational experience in this environment.,

KPI 2

- Beach drop-off and pick-up of personnel

landSAR teams successfully dropped off at all required locations and was well practiced.

KPI3

- IMT skills

Comments of the IMT have been made under objective 1. In addition, however, the exercise managers used this opportunity to expose junior members of their management teams into the IMT for this exercise.

In particular the Police incident controllers. Like many districts nationwide the risk to districts is not having a sufficient pool of trained and experienced SAR incident Controllers. This exercise identified that lack of training and experienced. Despite that they all performed that function.

KPI 4

- Overnight self-sufficiency

This was not observed by the evaluator, however all landSAR field teams camped out overnight with no issues being identified

KPI 5

- Stretcher management

Stretcher management was not tested.

KPI 6

- First aid

First Aid was not observed by the evaluator; however, no issues were identified.

KPI 7

- Tracking

Tracking was not observed by the evaluator and not tested to any great degree.

KPI 8

Search techniques.

Search techniques were not observed by the evaluator, however no issues were identified by the participants

Objective 4

Test communication infrastructure in a SAR environment.

No KPI was set for this objective.

Communications were managed by AREC, as was the radio operation. SARtrack was used as the communication log platform. This log was displayed only periodically during the scenario.

Objective 5

To increase cultural awareness and requirements of operating in the Queen Charlotte Sound for SAR responders

KPI 1

- To include iwi as mana whenua for the area of the operation as key stakeholders and active participants in the planning and execution of the operation
- Iwi representation was made through the Police district Iwi Liaison manager. She had the voice of the local Iwi throughout this exercise. That however didn't include the early planning stages of the exercise

KPI 2

- Establish processes with iwi to protect the whenua (land) and ngā tangata (the people) and ensure tikanga is upheld and overlays any other processes. For example, if any fatalities occur, items of cultural significance are found or koiwi (human bones) are located

Local Tikanga is not widely appreciated in a SAR sense, for this area up until very recently and it was a big step in the right direction to include the Iwi focus on this exercise. The Police Iwi Liaison was also supported by the LandSAR Māori advisor.

KPI 3

- Incorporate tikanga process into BAU activities for the operation (for example start and end of day Karakia.
- As above, local Tikanga was observed during the exercise, with a great deal learnt through the input of both the Police Iwi Liaison and LandSAR Māori advisor. The expectation is that this knowledge will grow and that local Tikanga will be a natural part of SAR activities in the future.

KPI 4

- Include iwi kōrero / brief regarding area of operation and any key significant locations of history, activity.

objective 6

Risks are identified, removed, minimized or managed

KPI 1

- Dealing with the Fatigue Policy (17-hour rule)

Fatigue was considered throughout the scenario with teams and units stood down for a rest period throughout the night.

In particular the SAR community learnt and appreciated the effort for Surf Lifesaving to maintain acceptable fatigue levels while operating IRBs for extended periods

KPI 2

- Potential allergic reactions to wasps, insects, or noxious weeds
- Health, safety and wellbeing procedures including around vessels.

A safety plan was developed and held within the IMT. The safety plan was briefed to team leaders/ skippers.

Each agency was also irresponsible for the safety of their personnel. Having each agency as part of the IMT increased that safety management across this exercise.

Other findings
SAR Support

This exercise was well supported by all agencies. This was demonstrated by

- The attendance of the AREC Regional Manager from Christchurch.
 - The attendance of the LandSAR CEO
 - the attendance of the LandSAR Māori Advisor and the Police Iwi Liaison Manager
 - and in particular the attendance of the Police District Operations Manager
- The Police Operations manager demonstrated a clear understanding of the Roles and requirements of the SAR agencies and support for the SAR community within this district.

Conclusions

Objective 1

Continue to develop interoperability between SAR partner agencies.

Objective MET

This exercise developed and demonstrated good interoperability between all of the agencies from the IMT, Comms through to operational activities

Objective 2

Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response.

Objective PARTIALLY MET

Information within the IMT was disjointed most of the time. Information was not made available to all IMT members at the right time. Information was not displayed.

Objective 3

SAR operational personnel refresh and practice search and rescue skills.

Objective MET

Operational staff all refreshed their search practices and skills. This was the first occasion Surf Lifesaving in this area have been used in a SAR exercise and have only very recently set up their surf SAR response team. All the agencies saw their value and future training opportunities. It was the first time that the Surf personnel contributed to an IMT, and they gained valuable insights into those requirements and training needs.

Objective 4

Test communication infrastructure in a SAR environment.

Objective MET

AREC were involved in all Communication set up and plans. The radio operators worked effectively and gained further experience in logging calls into SARtrack

Objective 5

To increase cultural awareness and requirements of operating in the Queen Charlotte Sound for SAR responders

Objective MET

It was refreshing to see this objective and how it was met through the inclusion of the Police Iwi Liaison and LandSAR Māori Advisor. It was accepted that this is a subject to be continued with to ultimately become a focus of SAR responses across the district.

Objective 6

Risks are identified, removed, minimized or managed.

Objective MET

The teams demonstrated aversion to unacceptable risk throughout the scenario. Safety manager function was maintained in the IMT throughout and individual agencies fed into the safety plan