

Connecting the Search and Rescue Sector

news



Search and Rescue Organisations Make Stronger Links

The NZSAR Council, New Zealand Police and RCCNZ have signed agreements with Coastguard New Zealand, Surf Life Saving New Zealand and LandSAR New Zealand to work together more closely, as part of moves to strengthen the search and rescue sector.

The joint Service Level Agreements (SLA) brings the groups together in a formal relationship for the first time. NZSAR Secretariat Manager, Duncan Ferner, says the organisations often work together on search and rescue operations but formalising the relationships means they will have a more coordinated approach.

The agreements also recognise the significant contribution the thousands of Surf Life Saving, LandSAR and Coastguard volunteers make around New Zealand.

Coastguard New Zealand's President, Ian Coard, says they're delighted by the allocation of funds being invested into the search and rescue activity they undertake.

"These funds are vital to ensuring our vessels can respond quickly to search and rescue incidents around New Zealand, 13% of the events our unpaid professionals attend annually. It changes the dynamic of the relationship with our Government SAR partners through formalising the role Coastguard plays in marine search and rescue. We believe it will lead to an even closer relationship."



Geoff Barry CEO of Surf Life Saving New Zealand signing the Service Level Agreement (SLA)

LandSAR New Zealand Executive Director, John Scobie, says the funding LandSAR received as part of the agreement goes some way towards ensuring volunteers continue to provide a safety net when trips into the wilderness don't go as planned.

"Our volunteers give up their own time to assist in search and rescues and sometimes they also need to spend time fundraising to pay for their own training. This money will help ease some of that burden on individuals and help us retain our membership across the country."



Flight Tracking

Organisations involved in Aviation SAR are pushing for improvements to the detection and location of missing aircraft. NZSAR, RCCNZ, CAA, Ministry of Transport and Airways Corporation representatives are asking aircraft operators to consider installing satellite tracking systems on their aircraft to assist them in the event of a SAR operation.

Presently there is a system of voluntary flight planning and position reporting through the Airways Corporation but there is nothing that actually tracks aircraft as they move around the country. Airways find they are often hard placed to help RCCNZ with position information, with Visual Flight Rules (VFR) aircraft, for a number of reasons such as aircraft not painting on radar, or the position reporting from the pilot has been inaccurate, if made at all.

The organisations believe an affordable solution is the selection of sophisticated tracking systems already available in New Zealand (examples are FlySafe, Navman, Track Plus, Spidertracks) which could, if used by the general aviation fleet, save a significant amount in search time costs and potentially save some lives. The tracking data would not be accessed until it was necessary for RCCNZ to follow the last known position of a lost aircraft, or gain information on earlier stages of that flight.

The joint group would like to hear views from Aviators before developing the initiative further.

If you have a view or any comments please send them to Rob Irwin, Airways New Zealand, PO Box 294, Wellington, or email rob.irwin@airways.co.nz

news continued



Robert Koester at the recent launch of his book

Lost Person Behaviour Guide Launched

*Who lives? Who Dies? What went wrong?
What was done right?*

A search and rescue operation valiantly strives to locate the subject alive in the shortest possible amount of time. It begins with a call for help and ends with the lost person being found, hopefully alive but possibly dead. Between the initial report and the find is the search. Will the search planners know what they are doing? Are they aware of behavioural research, able to use modern tools, and knowledgeable about lost persons?

A new search and rescue guide on where to look – for land, air and water searches – has been released to prepare both searchers and search planners to understand the who, where and why of lost persons. Called Lost Person Behavior, it is based on a landmark study and brings together the latest findings from the leading researcher in this field Robert J. Koester.

New Zealanders have been instrumental in developing the book. Robert spent time here with Search and Rescue Institute (SARINZ) personnel who provided subject matter, expertise and data from New Zealand's SAR operations that underpin research in this book.

Lost Person Behavior contains statistics that give probabilities of where the subject might be located and a general overview of the types of behaviours, likely actions and goals or intent of the lost person. It includes new detailed behavioural profiles that give insight into what drives the basic behaviours of lost people.

To order a copy of Lost Person Behavior
Phone SARINZ – 03 359 7669 or email info@sarinz.com



SAR in Action: From the Ground Up

He's legendary, but Sherp Tucker, one of New Zealand's most skilled and successful search and rescue leaders, maintains he survives solely on other people's efforts.

An unsworn member of the police, Sherp helps coordinate the Tasman region's team of 240 odd volunteers. He also contributed to the set up of Operation Brewer, which won the NZSAR Certificate of Achievement this year.



Operation Brewer was New Zealand's most complex and difficult rescue of an injured caver but Sherp spends most of his time dealing with more 'typical' Search and Rescue (SAR) situations. Where, as Sherp puts it, "the skills and competency of our frontline SAR practitioners accomplish many tasks the public never hear about but whose end results are summed up on SAR statistics forms as 'Safe and Well'".

One such mission saw five Scouts and their leader rescued after they were stranded by the semi flooded Goulter River, near Nelson Lakes. A Scout Leader had crossed the swollen river and walked for six hours to get help, leaving behind another Scout Leader and five Scouts.

Sherp doubts they heard the departing leader shout that he was going to get help and for them to stay put, over the roar of the water. The group was no longer by the river crossing when the dispatched helicopter arrived seven hours later. The helicopter started an area search of the steep, bush covered terrain. The crew eventually spotted some clothing from the air and winched the SAR team down onto an almost vertical hillside.

"The team rounded up a group of three tired kids fairly quickly," says Sherp, "and it transpired the Scout Leader, who was left behind with the kids, had gone to the tops to see if he could get help. He'd told the kids to stop where they were, down near the original river crossing, which was great – but they didn't. After four or five hours they got sick of waiting and decided to follow the Leader towards the tops.

"Young teenagers normally have very good fitness levels, but they don't have the gradual slowdown of energy levels that adults do; they go flat-stick for a while and then their energy tank is 'empty' with no reserves left. It can become a pretty dangerous situation fairly quickly.



"During the ordeal these kids had climbed up to four thousand feet above sea level, back down to one thousand feet and then back up to around three thousand feet, all in the one day. That's a fair old hike in that bush."

"The other two kids were located by the SAR team. One had stayed put in a fairly sheltered spot. The other was stuck in a rugged little gully down by a creek and he couldn't hear a thing over the sound of the water. He was a lot harder to find."

The tracking skills this team used to find the kids is called track and clue. It's a practiced observation skill, reinforced weekly. "You have a look at a piece of ground that someone's walked on and there are certain marks that aren't natural, so you work out what caused those marks", Sherp says.

"With experience you can work out which direction they were going, the size of the boot, and an approximation of the weight and size of the person. Experience and practice allows you to spot the same footprint five kilometres away.

"Gravel can get picked up on the bottom of a boot and put down on top of a rock. It might only be a couple of tiny specks of gravel, but it hasn't happened by itself. The better SAR trackers can spot all this at a good walking pace."



Sherp Tucker has been at the forefront of many SAR initiatives. He helped set up the Swift Water Rescue Team based in Hokitika, developed a tracking device and registration system for Alzheimer and Autistic sufferers who go wandering, helped establish a trained aerial observation resource for the Tasman region, and set up joint marine and land management teams.

He is very proud of the relationships built between all the SAR groups in Tasman. Teams can travel 400 - 500 kilometres from their home base to participate in operations, and a skilled frontline team with the "we are one" attitude ensures an effective response.

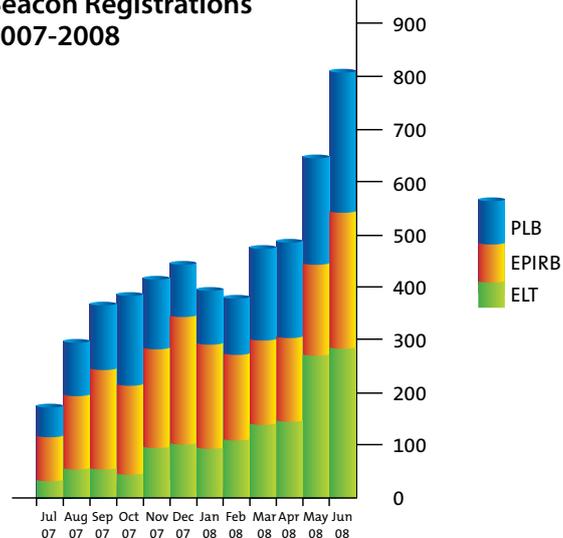
The team of volunteers who are Tasman SAR includes keen trampers, pig hunters, boaties, kayakers and climbers. They also look for people with management and administration skills to bring their expertise to the business of SAR.

Sherp says the volunteer contribution is invaluable. "Last year we had over 230 operations in the Tasman region. Without our SAR

volunteers we would be seeing more fatalities and heartbreak in the communities. Their commitment and determination to bring the missing person back to their families as fast as possible is absolutely humbling."

beacons update

Beacon Registrations 2007-2008



NZSAR Council Awards

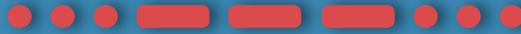
Do you know of an organisation, group or individual who should be acknowledged by their search and rescue peers? What about someone who has dedicated hours of their time to your organisation or those involved in a courageous rescue or difficult search – do they deserve national recognition?

The NZSAR Awards celebrate the success and effort of people who work or volunteer their time and skills in the field of search and rescue in New Zealand's Search and Rescue Region. There are two categories:

1. The NZSAR Gold Award honours the person, group or organisation that has made **the most** significant contribution to search and rescue.
2. The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement are awarded for **an important** contribution. More than one NZSAR Certificate can be awarded each year.

These awards are valuable not only for the contribution they acknowledge but also for raising community awareness about the efforts SAR people go to in this often complex and difficult work.

So go to www.nzsar.org.nz now. You will find more information about the awards along with details on the simple nominations process. Nominations for the 2008 Awards close on 31 October.



calendar

- **SARSCENE Conference 2008: 13-18 October, Newfoundland Canada**
- **NZSAR Award Nominations Close: 31 October**
- **32nd Meeting of the Australian SAR Council in Canberra: 13-14 November**
- **NZSAR Consultative Committee: 19 November**
- **NZSAR Council meeting: 26 November**
- **LandSAR NZ Conference: 21-23 November, Massey University, Palmerston North**

useful website links

- <http://www.nzsar.org.nz> – New Zealand Search and Rescue Council
- <http://www.beacons.org.nz> – Information on switching to 406 distress beacons & online registrations
- <http://www.msa.govt.nz/SAR/aboutRCCNZ.asp> – Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand
- <http://www.slsnz.org.nz> – Surf Life Saving New Zealand
- <http://www.nzfedfish.co.nz> – New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fisherman
- <http://www.nss.gc.ca> – Canadian Search and Rescue Secretariat

The newsletter is available as a pdf, visit the NZSAR website:
www.nzsar.org.nz

To view the pdf and access the hyperlinks you will require Adobe Acrobat Reader version 7 or above. A free download is available at:



www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readerstep2.html

If you encounter problems with the pdf it may be the security/firewall set up on your computer.



from Duncan's desk

It has been a busy period for the Secretariat, planning and delivering a number of long intended improvements. I have been heavily involved in providing advice to the NZSAR Council on what is needed to best sustain the NZSAR Sector, which includes addressing the key risks it faces. Issues such as training, staff retention, infrastructure, the asset mix, and volunteer issues all play an important role in maintaining a robust SAR sector.



The additional resources we received in this year's budget have enabled the Council to put its strategic plans into action. Service level agreements with SAR voluntary agencies have been developed and negotiated, and plans are in place to increase training and communication across the sector.

I am presently refreshing the NZSAR stocktake we started last year. Designing the policies behind the capture of our SAR statistics has taken quite a bit of time, but it has been a very valuable process. We will now be able to gain a better understanding of what agencies contribute to SAR, in terms of assets and people, and track the trends and changes over time. Research is another key area which will contribute to long term sustainability.

The joint NZSAR Council and Consultative Committee meeting in May considered additional research projects including a strategic review of individual and collective training within the sector.

Planning for the final year of the distress beacons campaign is largely complete. You will see the new advertising campaign in a number of places over the upcoming spring and summer season. The campaign emphasises not only the need to make the switch to 406 MHz beacons, but also the need to register the new beacons with the rescue coordination centre, and to dispose of the old 121.5 MHz ones responsibly. The beacons website www.beacons.org.nz will also be refreshed to bring it in line with the new advertisements, so keep an eye on that. If you know of anyone with an old 121.5MHz or 243MHz distress beacon, make sure you let them know time is running out to get it replaced with a 406 MHz beacon.

I am also pleased that Carl van der Meulen has agreed to join me in the Secretariat as Senior Advisor. Carl started work on 1 September and brings a lot of relevant experience from the Department of Internal Affairs, where he was involved with the Lotteries Grants process.

Nominations are open for the 2008 NZSAR awards so don't be shy! See www.nzsar.org.nz for details about the awards and the nominations process.

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NZSAR

