

NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Media Release

The presentation of the National Search and Rescue Award for the year 2003 was made by Hon Paul Swain, Minister of Transport on Monday 19 May 2003 at 5.30 pm in the Beehive Foyer, Parliament.

The award was presented on behalf of the National Search and Rescue Committee to Mount Cook (Aoraki) Alpine Rescue Team in recognition of their outstanding performance and contribution to search and rescue in New Zealand.

"The committee is proud to make this award in recognition of the excellent work completed by the Mount Cook (Aoraki) Rescue Team" says National Search and Rescue Committee chairman, Superintendent Neville Matthews.

"This country relies on a large network of professionals, both paid and volunteer, sharing their expertise and commitment to routinely save the lives of ordinary New Zealanders. With this award we are recognising this selfless dedication and honouring excellence in this demanding field."

Speech Notes

It is my privilege to welcome you here today to the grounds of Parliament to make the second ever presentation of the NZSAR Award.

The NZSAR award has been in existence since being created in 1999 by the former National Search and Rescue Committee now replaced by the SAR Council. It was last awarded in 2002 to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

The New Zealand National Search and Rescue award is presented annually by the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Committee. The National SAR Committee includes representatives of all the main organisations involved in search and rescue.

This prestigious award is in recognition of an 'outstanding contribution to search and rescue' within the New Zealand region.

The award is open to any individual or organisation and may relate to a particular event or a sustained contribution over a period of time.

The award for 2003 is being made today to the Mt Cook Aoraki Alpine Rescue Team.

Over the years they have made an outstanding contribution to search and rescue. The Team can be described as the premier alpine rescue team in New Zealand, which services Mt Cook (Aoraki) National Park and carries out approximately 30 search and rescue operations annually with an average of three fatal accidents per year. Operations range from relatively simple pick ups involving persons with minor injuries or illness to crevasse rescues and complex evacuations by helicopter.

The Team is well provided for and led by Department of Conservation Staff who has been in the Mt Cook (Aoraki) environment for many years. The group is highly professional and well led and has evolved into, and is recognised as, a leading practitioner of international alpine rescue techniques. There are numerous examples of people being rescued from perilous situations and, as a result, lives being saved.