



## *Search and Rescue*

# EXERCISE ROTOITI

**Tasman District  
Land Search and Rescue Exercise 2013**

### DISTRIBUTION

O/C SAR, Tasman DHQ	(1)
SAR Squads, Tasman	(3)
Area Commanders Tasman	(3)

## Introduction

The Tasman Police District major land search and rescue exercise (SAREX) for the 2012-13 year was held at Lake Rotoiti on the 8th & 9th of November 2013. The exercise involved approximately 60 LandSAR personnel and 22 Police personnel.

## Objectives

The objectives of the SAREX were:

- a) *To enhance the intergroup operating capabilities of LandSAR groups in the district.*
- b) *To promote leadership within SAR teams.*
- c) *To assess LandSAR field teams in basic SAR skills outlined in the LandSAR field competencies document.*
- e) *To set a baseline for field team performance throughout the district.*
- f) *To assess how fatigue and psychological pressure affect the operational effectiveness of the teams and to train in conditions that will simulate a realistic operational environment.*

## Scenario

The SAREX consisted of a 24 hour 'Rogaine'. During the 24 hour period the 11 teams that competed had to attempt to complete 10 skill stations. These stations were based on the LandSAR field competencies. Five of the stations were compulsory. Details of the stations are included in the exercise order, which is attached as Appendix A.

The scenario was designed not as an attempt to train field teams, but as a way of assessing their level of competency. During past years it has increasingly become obvious that attempting to train a large number of field personnel in all the necessary SAR skills is unachievable. It is also clear that attempting to train IMT personnel at the same time as field personnel leads to large delays for field personnel and is ineffective.

So the concept we are now using for the district SAREX is to assess the field teams and let them know what level they are at so they can tailor their group training throughout the year to address their weaknesses. They will also have an idea how they rate against other teams in the district. We intend to continue to use this concept for future exercises, after incorporating modifications and lessons learnt from this year.

### **Monitoring report**

The SAREX was reviewed by the following people:

- Senior Constable Brent Swanson. - South Canterbury SAR coordinator.
- Senior Constable Philip Simmonds - Senior Canterbury SAR/DVI squad member.

Their report is attached Appendix B.

A hot de-brief was held immediately after the SAREX. The feedback at the date of this report is 100% positive.

### **NZSAR funding was applied as follows:**

Set up costs



SARex costs



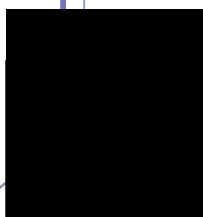
### **Effect of funding**

- We have (thanks to Canterbury) stumbled onto a very good SARex format and the ability for assessors to travel back and forth has resulted in many improvements over just two SARex's.
- Assessors from away giving real credibility to the event and assist with identifying improvements. Those suggestions have been discussed by both Canterbury and Tasman and have been adopted in both districts.
- Our biannual SARex is now annual - major benefits from this alone.
- It allows our district to come together more often to train/test. A situation that was likely to be lost without extra outside financial support.

- The particular format will give real 'teeth' to the LandSAR competencies as the SARex ties in perfectly with them and gives a real mechanism to test against them.
- In 20 odd years, first SARex where all the feedback was overwhelmingly positive (huge spin offs in addressing volunteer interest in the absence of operations, testing group capabilities).
- Consistency - Canterbury and Tasman have discussed the suggested improvements. All suggested improvements have been adopted in both districts and future SARex' will be a mirror image of each other. We intend to invite assessors from other districts in the hope it will spread further.

### **Invoice**

An invoice is being pre-pared and will be forwarded separately.



Sergeant Sean Judd  
SAR/DVI Coordinator  
West Coast

2nd December 2013

## **1.0 Ground**

- 1.1 Exercise Rotoiti will be held at St Arnaud, Nelson Lakes area. It is based at the Rotoiti Lodge.  
The applicable map is BR24 Kawatiri.
- 1.2 The exercise will be conducted on both private (Rotoiti Lodge) and public Land. We will be utilising some Department of Conservation facilities.
- 1.3 Some of the area is covered with native beech forest. There is also sub alpine scrub and tussock.
- 1.4 Environmental hazards in the exercise area include a section of State Highway, wasps, fast flowing rivers, farm vehicles, bluffs, steep and/or slippery terrain, trip hazards, cold/wet weather, strong winds, sun and power lines.

## 2.0 **Situation**

- 2.1 The major Tasman District land search and rescue exercise for 2013 will be held at St Arnaud .
- 2.2 The exercise will involve personnel from LandSAR and Police.
- 2.3 LandSAR groups from the Tasman District, Kaikoura, Blenheim, Nelson, Motueka, Golden Bay, Murchison, Tapawera, Karamea, Westport, Reefton, Greymouth, Hokitika, South Westland, Haast. Police with assistance from LandSAR will coordinate the exercise.
- 2.4 Police SAR Squads from West Coast, Nelson and Blenheim will supply personnel to run the assessment stations, again with assistance from LandSAR.
- 2.5 Police assisted by LandSAR will establish, maintain and operate VHF, HF and satellite communications.
- 2.6 Police will provide volunteer caterers.

### **3.0 Mission**

- 3.1 To assess LandSAR field teams in basic SAR skills as outlined in the LandSAR operational and probationary field team member competencies.
- 3.2 To assess how fatigue and psychological pressure affect the operational effectiveness of the teams and to train in conditions that will simulate a realistic operational environment.
- 3.2 To enhance the inter-group operating capabilities of LandSAR groups in the Tasman District and to promote leadership within SAR teams.
- 3.3 To set a baseline for all groups for the SAR competencies.

## **4.0 Execution**

### **4.1 Phase One - Setup**

The West Coast, Nelson and Blenheim SAR Squads will establish the ICP and surrounding facilities on Friday 8th November. Two VHF radio repeaters will be installed as per the Communications Plan. Police staff will also set up equipment required to run the assessment stations.

Participants will arrive by 0900hrs on Saturday 9th November. They will bring a non-competing driver to avoid fatigue related crashes on their way home on Sunday 10th November. For teams that have a large distance to travel there will be limited camping facilities at the Rotoiti Lodge Friday night.

Registration for teams will be between 0900 -1000hrs Saturday 9th November. Teams will receive a briefing pack (appendix A) containing:

- Exercise Map
- Navigation Station Map
- Rules
- HF Radio Station task
- Communications Plan
- Station Instructions

All participants will complete a registration form with their personal details and next of kin contact details and a declaration they will comply with the rules and don't have any injuries or medical conditions that would prevent them competing (appendix B).

Exercise management personnel will complete a similar registration form (appendix C). Each station management team will also receive a station pack that will include the same documents as the competitor pack, but in addition will include (appendix D):

- Guidance for Station Supervisors
- Team Feedback form
- Flowchart on team progression through station

### **4.2 Phase Two - Briefing**

A briefing for all personnel will start at 1000 hrs. This will include exercise rules and an exercise safety briefing. Teams can then use any spare time for planning.

The exercise will start at 1100hrs.



### **4.3 Phase Three - Exercise**

From 1100hrs all teams will compete in the exercise as described in the exercise rules and station instructions in the

competitor pack (appendix A).

The exercise will run through the night, however all teams will be required to spend a minimum of four hours in a rest area. Teams can also rest at any other point during the exercise.

The exercise will finish at 1100hrs on Sunday 10th November. Teams are required to be back at the ICP by this time and will face heavy points deductions for lateness.

### **4.7 Phase Four - Debriefing**

A BBQ lunch will be held and a hot debrief will occur. Teams will be presented with their qualification (either gold, silver or bronze).

### **4.8 Phase Five - Dispersal**

4.8.1 Following a clean up of the ICP area, all personnel will be free to leave.

4.8.2 Facilities will be available for anyone who feels too tired to drive to have a rest prior to leaving. Alternatively they can swap drivers.

## 5.0 Administration and Logistics

### 5.1 Personnel

LandSAR field personnel (estimated)	50
LandSAR support	25
Coastguard Support	0
Police SAR	20
AREC	0
LandSAR FSOs	1
RNZAF	0
Exercise Assessors	2
NZSAR Secretariat	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>

5.2 There are basic facilities at the ICP. The course has many DOC toilets which are detailed on the course map.

5.3 The Rotoiti Lodge will be used for catering and exercise management only. It is not available for sleeping.

5.4 Drinking water is available from a tap at the ICP and the rest area. Participants are cautioned about drinking from waterways in the area due possible contamination from tourists and stock. Didymo is also present.

5.5 Fires are not permitted at any point during the exercise. Small cookers are permitted but care must be taken in the location of these so as to avoid setting fire to vegetation (or anything else) and to avoid poisonous fumes.

5.6 No meals will be provided to exercise participants, other than the Sunday BBQ. For management personnel working at the ICP cooking facilities will be available. No meals will be provided.

5.7 Police will not pay mileage for personnel attending this exercise.

## **6.0 Command and Signals**

- 6.1 The exercise controller is **Sergeant Sean Judd**.
- 6.2 The second in charge is **Sergeant Steve Savage**.
- 6.3 The exercise safety officer is **Senior Constable Adrian Cupit**.
- 6.4 **Callsigns (for repeater network and HF)**
- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| ICP               | Rotoiti Base                           |
| Fieldteams        | Rotoiti 1 - ?? (assigned upon arrival) |
| Genuine Emergency | "No duff, no duff"                     |
- 6.5 More detailed communications information including channels is available from the separate document entitled 'Communications Plan'.

## **7.0 Safety**

- 7.1 There is a hazard register of all hazards exercise participants can reasonably expect to encounter, and the appropriate way of eliminating, mitigating or managing that hazard. This hazard register will be available at the SAREX.
- 7.2 All participants will be given a safety briefing on the Saturday morning. In addition all station supervisors will brief exercise participants on particular safety issues relating to their station prior to teams attempting the station.
- 7.3 All accidents, incidents, or near misses must be reported to the safety officer (Senior Constable Adrian Cupit) as soon as practicable to allow an investigation to take place.
- 7.4 Safety is everyone's responsibility, however team leaders, exercise instructors, exercise facilitators and managers hold particular responsibility for ensuring the safety of exercise participants.

EXERCISE ROTOITI 2013.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I along with Sergeant O'Rourke (Officer in Charge SAR Canterbury) in 2011 I attended a rural fire exercise at Raincliff, Timaru. We decided that the concept had merit and could be used for the assessment of LandSAR Volunteers

using the competencies from the LandSAR field manual.

It was decided to run a 24 hour Rogain/Adventure Race style exercise.

In 2012 the concept was put into practise for the first time in the annual Canterbury SAREX . The exercise was an overwhelming success with very positive feed back from participants and assessors.

I was then invited along with Senior Constable Simmonds to attend the Tasman SAREX using the same concept on the 9th November 2013.

## **STATIONS**

### **OBSERVATION**

It was locate close to the IMT and the environment was suitable. I thought more practical articles and items could have been laid out. Stationary items pens etc were used when items like hats, gloves loll wrappers etc would have been more realistic. Also teams were allowed to move too slowly during the moving section to be realistic.

### **SEARCH METHODS**

It was a suitable location and scenarios and instructors maintained good control.



## **HF RADIO**

I liked the concept of team been able to complete the erection and radio test at any time during the exercise. The only issue was some teams not following the written instructions and this was a good learning for them.

## **TEAM BUILDING**

The concept and scenarios were very good and the teams I observed seemed to enjoy the challenge. This was still evident towards the end of the event when fatigue was setting in. The Instructors did a great job maintaining there enthusiasm during the exercise.



## **NAVIGATION**

It appeared that the course had been set to hard but as the average times were finalised it appeared that it was about right. Perhaps the targets could be set out in a more regain style (circular around a focal point) to avoid a follow each other scenario that developed. The navigation should perhaps involve more map and compass and less GPS. Clear Fluro markers should be used so teams are not disadvantage at night.

## **PACK INSPECTION**

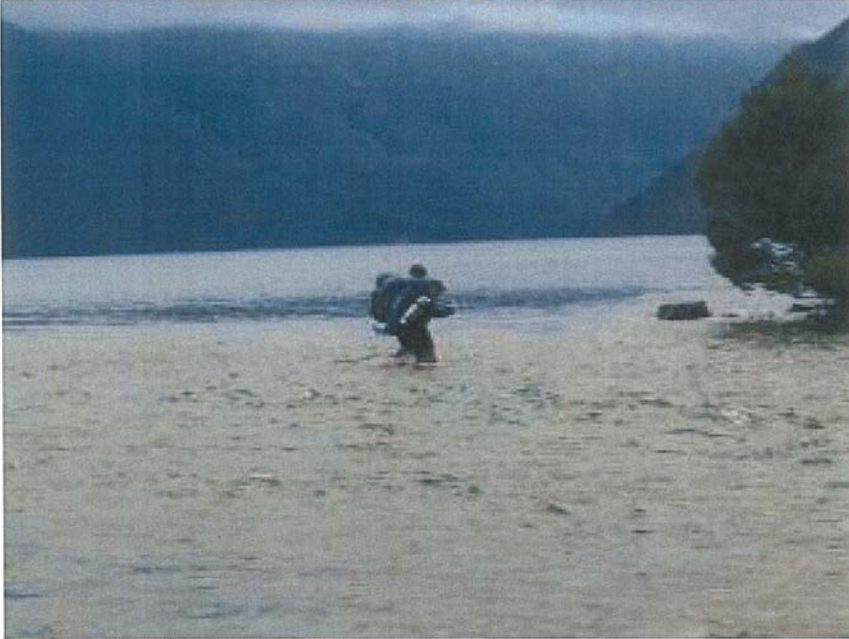
There was some confusion at the start caused by the Assessor but I believe the goals were achieved in the end. The pack checks should be performed perhaps later in the exercise and randomly. Random spot checks could also be carried out during the event.

## **CLUE PROCESSING**

The location and scenario was very good. Some teams admitted to been challenged but they also added that this was positive. The Assessors were also suitably experienced to run this activity.

## **RIVER CROSSING**

The location was suitable and sufficient safety measures were in place to ensure nothing adverse could occur. The site was shut during the night due to safety issues. In the future a better safer location may assist so the activity can run for the 24 hour period.



## **REST AREA**

The location was suitable and there were no issues.

## **QUIZ**

This was good with no issues.

## **FIRST AID**

The location and scenario were very good. To ask a team to do a stretcher carry (sometime 3 people) however was a big ask and had some physical injury risks associated. It may have been more practical for the teams to do a small non technical stretcher lower using a rope. It was also noted that one of the assessors was attempting to give feed back to the team members. This could provide an unfair advantage to other teams if this is communicated.

## **KEY PERFORMANCE**

### **INDICATORS PERSONNEL**

#### **INVOLVEMENT**

The general feed back was very positive with good interaction between assessors and participants. Everyone in general seemed to be aware of what was required of them.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The risk assessment plan was completed and available on request. Risks were identified in the written instructions and also reiterated at the briefing before the event started. A safety officer was appointed and actively involved



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in monitoring the event in the field. A hazards register was identified to all personnel and available at the IMT.



### **PLANNING MEETINGS**

Regular meetings were held during the event and all aspects, hazards and issues discussed. Command and control of the event was maintained throughout.

A small IMT team did an excellent job and tracking teams, resources and teams scored throughout the event.





## **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this report is to evaluate and assess the general running of the Tasman SAREX and if its goals were met.

- 1 I believe it is imperative that those assessors at stations do not coach or advice participants in any way as this may give an unfair advantage to some teams. It should be made clear to teams that they will receive written feed back from the Station assessors after the event.
- 2 Police staff operating in the field should wear police fluro vests.
- 3 It was an improvement from the Canterbury event to include the navigation and fitness station together.
- 4 Four person teams should compete; this would allow a team to continue if a members pulls out during the event.
- 5 The suggestion was made of a "shotgun start" This would mean teams would draw straws for the first activity and then start. This has the effect of spreading the field from the start.
- 6 Assessors at stations need to remember that participants feed off there enthusiasm and vice versa, in general this was evident from most involved.

## **SUMMARY**

It is my opinion that this event was very successful. This was evident from the buy in from the participants involved and their feed back during and after the event. The IMT was at the right level and Sergeants Judd and Savage set the tone for the event right from the start with good planning, command and control and a very good briefing.

Senior Constable Brent Swanson  
Officer in Charge  
Search and Rescue  
Mid/South Canterbury