Exercise Evaluation Report

HORIZON

Location: Northland; Tauranga Bay

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2. Summary

The Northland Police District has many operational Search and Rescue challenges due to isolation and communication challenges. This is not uncommon throughout the rest of New Zealand.

Exercise Horizon was developed with a view to testing the Northland Police Districts SAR system ability to manage a scenario, where multiple agencies respond to a single incident in a variety of environments.

The scenario was a water-based incident with some victims self-rescuing onto a difficult coastline. The incident location was remote with access and communication difficulties.

As a result of an adverse weather forecast the marine aspect of the exercise was cancelled. This caused the non-participation of on-water resources and the marine SME's who were to be in the Tauranga Bay based ICP.

The result was Exercise Horizon was reduced to essentially a land only exercise.

EXCON injects were updated and altered to simplify the exercise.

The ICP was pre-established with all positions being pre-populated. The IMT members were experienced SAR personal, but new to their designated roles.

The exercise objectives were appropriate for the circumstances of the original scenario. The scenario did not change but with the marine resources, both on-water and in the ICP removed from the exercise the exercise defaulted into a training opportunity for a new IMT.

The aim of the exercise was not achieved.

3. Introduction

3.1 Needs Assessment

A needs assessment conducted by Northland Police determined Search and Rescue Operational capability and effectiveness at a remote location required testing, with a view to determining, capability and operational readiness.

SAREX HORIZON was planned to be a real-time complex exercise with marine and land elements.

Specific objectives included:

1. The handling and activation of Marine Distress Flares by Coastguard personal.
2. Multi-Agency and intergroup coordination with the emphasis being to test the inter-capability of communications and operational effectiveness between participating SAR Agencies.
3. Search and Rescue incident management from remote location
4. Applying CIMS to SAR at a moderate level within a scenario-based environment.

3.2 Exercise planning and coordination

The EXCON initiated all stages of the exercise and provided injects.

3.3 EXCON SAREX Management

The ICP was predetermined and located at the Tauranga bay, motor camp. All equipment, for the marine aspects of the ICP, was to be provided by Coastguard Northern Region.

The SAREX was also intended to be a training opportunity. Participants were encouraged to seek clarification, from an Exercise Director, of actions taken or procedures employed. A time out facility (SAREX pause) was created to enable the Exercise Director to facilitate wider group or team discussion as required. This course of action could fill any learning requirement or realign the team's efforts with search management best practice.

The IMT were expected to develop their action plan for the scenarios and resources (Police-Coastguard and LSAR) were to be tasked accordingly.

3.4 Marine response

An extremely poor weather outlook from forecasters the day before the exercise, resulted in:

- On water resources not being deployed for safety reasons

- Marine IMT specialists for the ICP from Coastguard consequently did not attend or participate in the exercise.

A hot debrief was conducted at approximately 1600 Hrs when the SAREX was concluded.

3.5 Live firing of Marine flares

The intended Phase two of the exercise consisting of a Flare demonstration did not proceed

3.6 SAREX Land Phase

The on-land exercise was conducted between Tauranga bay and Pakuru point, Mahinepua.
A requirement for the deployment of the Northland Cliff rescue team at Kaiara rocks (Dukes Nose), Pekapeka bay, Whangaroa was injected.

4. Background

4.1 Background to the Exercise

Periodically Category I SAROPs occur in the Northland Police District.
This requires an incident response and frequently, coordination from remote locations.

The remoteness of parts of the district generate operational challenges due to distance and communication practicalities.

Agency SOP's and command and control processes are not always perfectly aligned.
New Zealand Police, Northland Police SAR District, requested that selected Coastguard Units and Land SAR Units take part in a combined SAREX to provide training and to test the capabilities of Marine and Land SAR resources to work together, whilst under the direction of an Incident Management team, and working within the CIMS process.

Coastguard Northern region committed to the establishment of dedicated ICP's with IMT's capable of providing Coordinating Authorities incident controllers with Marine subject matter experts within the CIMS process

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

At 0800hrs on the morning of Saturday 28th April 2018 the participating police and LSAR units assemble at the ICP. They were briefed and received an exercise safety briefing.

At 0900hrs SAREX commenced

Once the IMT have developed their action plan for the scenarios Coastguard and LSAR resources will be tasked accordingly and the on-water phase of the exercise will commence.

4.3 Participating organisations

NZ Police, Northland District SAR
Coastguard Northern Region
Coastguard Whangaroa
Coastguard Northern Air Patrol
Land SAR Northland
Land SAR Far North

4.4 Exercise aim

To ascertain and test the effectiveness of a Multi-Agency IMT working from a remote ICP to manage on-water and land scenarios and assets

4.5 Exercise objectives

- To facilitate the training required to enable Multi agency IMT personal to work efficiently together as a team
- To test how efficiently and effectively Coastguard and LSAR resources can work together under the direction of an IMT.
- To test the lines of communication between the IMT and on Rescue resources.
- To facilitate the necessary training needed to enable Multi agency IMT personal to work efficiently together as a team
- To test how efficiently and effectively Coastguard and LSAR resources can work together under the direction of an IMT.
- To test the lines of communication between the IMT and on Rescue resources.

4.6 Exercise Scenario

4.7 Ground

The Incident Control Point (ICP) for this exercise was based at the Tauranga Bay motor camp, Tauranga bay. Northland.
The on-water scenario will be conducted in the coastal waters off Whangaroa bay, Whangaroa.
The land-based scenario will be conducted between Tauranga bay and Pakura point, Mahinepua. In addition, a cliff rescue component will be conducted at Kaiara rocks (Dukes nose), Pekapeka bay, Whangaroa

4.8 Situation

0645 hrs
A 406 MHz beacon is detected in position 34° 59.254' S, 173° 46.235’ E. This is 1.0 nautical miles Northeast of North Head, Whangaroa Bay.
This beacon is registered to **BAY SIGHTSEER**, a 15.6M Launch out of Opua.
A Trip Report logged with Coastguard Radio shows the launch departed Opua for Cape Karikari at 1700 NZST Friday April 27th with 11 POB.

0705 hrs (Inject)
A patient advises they were on a boat which sunk in Whangaroa Bay. The vessel was called **HORIZON**, a 12.5M Launch which had 9 POB. It is believed Horizon collided with another larger Launch.
The patient loses consciousness and is taken to hospital by Ambulance. No further information was obtained.
A guest at Tauranga Bay Holiday Park comes upon an injured person on the beach

On Saturday the 28th of April 2018 SAR resources from Whangaroa and Bay of Islands Coastguard Units along with Northland, Far North Land SAR and Police SAR units will take part in a full-scale search and rescue exercise in the Coastal waters off Whangaroa bay.

The exercise was to be conducted in 3 phases,

Phase one: on water SAR Scenario.
Phase two: on land SAR scenario.
Phase three: Flare demonstration

All rescue units will be coordinated by a Police coordinated IMT working from the designated ICP at Tauranga bay motor camp

5. Evaluation Methodology

5.1 The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The evaluator was requested to participate in the IMT hot debrief at the conclusion of the exercise. Immediate feedback was invited using observed activity of each member of the IMT

5.2 Evaluation scope

In scope was observation of the Incident Management Team at the ICP to report on performance that included ability to function, manage communications and achieve the objectives set for this exercise.
Outside of scope were observations of in field teams

5.3 Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

I remained in the ICP for the duration of the exercise.
Considerable activity and use of process by IMT members was observed during the day. Particular note was made of each IMT appointee and their ability to remain within their “lane”. In other words, their ability to carry out the duties of their role while resisting the temptation to reach into other areas.
Workload and compliance with “best practice” and process was observed.

5.4 The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

The evaluator was requested at short notice due to the unfortunate unavailability of the original. Objectives and KPI’s were already set.
General observations made by both participants and the EXCON as witnesses during the “Hot Debrief” is included as appropriate in my comments.

5.5 Other information

A key aspect of this exercise was to assess the capability of the IMT to utilise Subject Matter experts, particularly in the marine phase of this exercise. The poor weather forecast resulted in no participation by coastguard elements. This significantly compromised the exercise as designed both in terms of the scenario and the overarching purpose of the exercise which was to test the interoperability of resources from different agencies.

6. Findings

6.1 General Comments

6.2 Computer-based Incident Management support systems

A frequently observed trend in training and in some operations is the use of computer-based technology in an ICP. This often works well and supports good operational practise with the recording of many if not all of the activity of an operation including, logs, taskings, information and resulting intelligence, resource tracking etc. However, it is critical that the users are competent and the ICP is adequately resourced to utilise this capability.

I observed in Exercise Horizon that frequently the "data entry" into the computer-based management system became the primary role of key people (The Operations and Intel/Planning managers) in the IMT to the detriment of the operation. The managers lost situation awareness on numerous occasions due to being distracted by the technology.

Unless adequate trained human resource is available it is highly recommended that computer-based information, systems is not utilised for operations or exercises.

6.3 Tasking/Debriefing

It was noted that completed taskings were not always fully and adequately debriefed for appropriate feed back into the intelligence and planning process, prior to the team was re-tasked.

This was likely due to the lack of resource within the IMT who at times struggled to keep up with the work flow required by the computer-based management system.

Exercise objectives.

The majority of the exercise objectives required the participation of all planned participating agencies.

The withdrawal of Coastguard from the whole exercise compromised the overarching purpose of the exercise. Safety both operationally and particularly in exercises is paramount and the withdrawal of the on-water resources is not questioned.

It is not the role of this exercise evaluator to evaluate the exercise as such, but it is recommended that for future exercises alternatives in the event of an inability to deploy assets as in this case for safety reasons is available.

- To facilitate the training required to enable Multi agency IMT personal to work efficiently together as a team

The exercise was compromised to a considerable degree due to elements of the intended exercise not being activated. The IMT as established were familiar with each other although most were in new roles where they had limited operational experience.

The IMT did have a fairly collegial approach with the more experienced assisting other less experienced members of the team. While this is common in an operational setting the interests of the targets are paramount, this did not allow individuals to step up as much as they could

- To test how efficiently and effectively Coastguard and LSAR resources can work together under the direction of an IMT.

Not tested.

- To test the lines of communication between the IMT and on Rescue resources.

The from deployed teams to the ICP was to a good standard. The communications facility was well resourced with equipment and highly capable. There was no formal "runner" between the ICP and the communications centre and the receipt or delivery of messages was adhoc, although not as obvious as the ICP continued to monitor the radio net directly with portables.

- To facilitate the necessary training needed to enable Multi agency IMT personal to work efficiently together as a team

Some cross training did occur within the ICP but only with some Land SAR and Police and on a clear needs basis when the appointees were under stress due to the volume of work.

- To test how efficiently and effectively Coastguard and LSAR resources can work together under the direction of an IMT.

Not determined

- To test the lines of communication between the IMT and on Rescue resources.

The previously mention forecast did not negate the ability to test communication capability. Coastguard resources could have remained in their safe havens and still participated in operational communications, if necessary via relay through the Auckland MRC or through a local shore station.

7. Conclusions

Competent performance of the IMT is critical factor in producing a successful outcome in SAROP's.
A multi-agency and multi environment operation is frequent and always challenging.

In this exercise, many of the objectives set were not able to be achieved either partially or in their entirety.
The exercise did demonstrate the competence and commitment of those that did attend.

I was unable to determine if agency SOP's and Readiness Plans are complimentary and if agency inter-operability will meet the needs of the Northland Police for Category I Search and Rescue Operations.

It is noted that computer-based management systems often add great value to operations. Care needs to be taken when employing computer-based management support systems, to ensure that key roles, in particular function managers are supported and not so involved in detail that they are unable to maintain operational situational awareness at all times.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that to meet the needs of the Northland Police for Category I Search and Rescue Operations a desktop multi-agency IMTEXT with an appropriate scenario is conducted to test existing Readiness plans and agency SOP's to ensure agency SOP's and Readiness Plans are complimentary and fully inter-operable This should ensure any misalignment or contradiction is identified.

It is recommended that computer-based management systems only be utilised when there is adequate and competent resource to operate it in addition to IMT function managers.

It is recommended that even in the event of a poor weather forecast necessitation the need to abort some aspects of an exercise in the future, the IMT can still be fully established with SME's to exercise interoperability.

It is recommended and operational communication aspects could still be exercised with appropriate faux asset simulated communications

It is recommended that future exercises would benefit greatly by having one or more "dedicated" SME's to coach and mentor within the IMT as required.

9. Appendix


Marble Bay
Tauranga Bay
HORIZON ICP
Tauranga Bay Holiday Park
Tauranga Bay Rd


Stephenson Island
HORIZON ICP
Molukawanui Island
Tauranga Bay Holiday Park
Kaeo
10
Kapiro Rd
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Kerikeri