

Exercise Evaluation Report

SAREX KAHUNUI

Location: Waiotahi Valley Road , Kahunui

Date: 12th/13th/14th February 2021

Report version: FINAL

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Executive Summary

A multi-agency Land Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX), SAREX KAHUNUI, was conducted at the St Cuthbert's School Camp, managed by the Kahunui Village Trust, Waiotahi Valley, Kahunui.

The SAREX occurred on the 12th, 13th and 14th of February 2021.

All Objectives were met to an acceptable level.

The terrain, scenario's and 5 Skill sessions occurring within the SAREX, ensured personnel and procedures across all agencies were tested on a number of dimensions.

Opportunities for improvement have been identified and detailed in the recommendations .

There was a significant amount of pre-planning by the organisers together with a strong demonstration of energy and enthusiasm during the SAREX.

The general consensus of the Incident Management Team (IMT) Debrief and the wider Participant Debrief was that the SAREX had been very worthwhile, a very good use of the volunteers time and had highlighted areas of improvement.

1. Recommendations

1. Members of the IMT and those likely to be called upon to work in the IMT, participate in regular table top exercises to refine their skills. This will add value to other agencies requiring their skills.
2. The learnings from this SAREX are committed to a Readiness Plan for the area. (nzsar-resources.org.nz/Guidelines/creating-readiness-plans)
3. The T-Card system is explored as an option to record personnel involved in the SAREX / SAR OP. This will allow search planners to progress their planning ahead of SARTrack becoming operational.
4. Liaise with IWI and identify member/s to be involved in the IMT.
5. If a "Round Robin" style of SAREX is adopted , ensure there are sufficient attendees to populate positions in the IMT.

2. Introduction

Every year the New Zealand Police is required to exercise with Partner Agencies in the Search and Rescue (SAR) environment. This includes both Land and Marine SAR.

The Whakatane Police Area is on the eastern fringe of the wider Bay of Plenty Police District.

The Whakatane Police SAR Squad works closely with the Whakatane / Opotiki NZ LandSAR volunteers, Tauranga SAR Inc and AREC.

The organisers of the SAREX adopted a "Round Robin" style of SAREX - 3 x scenarios and offered 7 Skills sessions

The St Cuthbert's School Camp provides a remote learning and living experience, for students of the Auckland based school, during the school term.

The school provides a variety of terrain, short steep hills, cloaked in mature forest, along with a nearby river and farmland.

This area was unfamiliar territory to most of the participants of the SAREX.

3. Background

<This section explains the context within which your evaluation was undertaken.>

3.1 Background to the Exercise

Recreational hunting and tramping, has been a pastime of many New Zealanders for generations.

The Whakatane Policing Area is replete with opportunities for these activities, with hunting having an international reputation for its quality.

The local community also rely heavily on the area to provide meat.

The selection of the “Field Skill Exercises” identified the traditional disciplines, one could expect to apply during a search.

There was a need to introduce new members to the Incident Management Team (IMT).

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

12th, 13th, 14th February 2021

St Cuthbert’s School Camp, Waiotahi Valley Road, Kahunui, Opotiki.

Off SH2 between Whakatane and Opotiki.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| NZ Police | Constable Tina Zabern and Senior Constable Marty Marsden |
| Whakatane LandSAR | Darryl Howard |
| AREC | Karl Hunt |
| Kahunui Village Trust | Lauren Moyes |

3.3 Participating organisations

| | |
|------------|--|
| NZ Police | Whakatane, Tauranga, Taupo SAR Squad members |
| NZ LandSAR | Whakatane, Tauranga, Rotorua, Taupo, Ruapehu |
| AREC | Bay of Plenty members of AREC |

3.4 Exercise aim

Exercise the participants of Whakatane Land SAR “Inc” , in the disciplines applied to a Land Search & Rescue Operation.

3.5 Exercise objectives

Incident Management Team (IMT);

To give IMT members the opportunity to utilise SARTrack, establish an ICP, conduct 1st Operational period planning , tasks and manage changeover.

To allow IMT roles assessment against current Operations Manager competencies.

To measure the IMT against NZSAR response guidelines.

Field Team members;

To assess Field Team Members against the current LandSAR FTM competencies by regional SME’s / Assessors.

To revise and practice Tracking teams in the processing of LKP's / PLS, campsites and all tracking skills.

To revise FTM skills in search methods, tracking, navigation (including map and compass), VHF radio communications, first aid, stretcher and rope management.

To demonstrate the application and integration of Search Dogs and Drones in SAR Operations.

To maximise skills uptake or reinforce learns for field team members to maintain response readiness.

AREC

Test Capability / Resources

3.6 Exercise FORMAT

STYLE : Round Robin

SAREX Incident Control Point (ICP) – Tutorial Room at St Cuthbert's School Camp

SAREX Area – Kahanui - St Cuthbert's School Camp and environs.

Scenario's

LP1 - Missing group of school children

LP2 - Missing Hunter

LP3 - Despondent

Skills Sessions:

Navigation (NAV) GPS

Search Observation

Vehicle Site Processing

Basic First Aid, Stretcher loading, Stretcher & Ropes

Sound / Sight Line

Camp Site Processing

Map & Compass Navigation

4. Evaluation Methodology

4.1 The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity:

A forthright report outlining observations of the SAREX KAHANUI, in relation to stated objectives.

4.2 Evaluation scope:

Assess Interagency relationships.

Identify strengths and limitations within current Standard Operating Procedures.

Identify strengths and limitations in personnel training.

Recommend improvements and strategies for future implementation.

4.3 Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

Observed:

SAREX management and coordination

VHF radio communications

Skill Sessions, Drone and Search Dog Demonstration.

Not Observed:

In Field activity of Scenario Teams – monitored remotely via Radio and SARTrack

GPS Navigation & Sound Light Line – not observed in their entirety.

4.4 The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

There was good interaction with the O/C Exercise prior to the SAREX.

The details of the SAREX and the location were forwarded in advance of the SAREX.

It was agreed the evaluator would focus on the objectives , observe the SAREX activity and submit an evaluation report accordingly.

Activity from the evaluator during the SAREX included;

- Observe SAREX IMT activity and conduct, Clue site processing, Search Observation, Basic First Aid / Stretcher & Rope Management.
- Attend IMT final Debrief and whole of SAREX participant Debrief

4.5 Other information

NZ Police SAR Mentor (Detective Senior Sergeant Wilson)

A senior member of NZ Police, operationally experienced in the execution of Search and Rescue, presented during the course of the SAREX, observing activity and offering advice to members of the IMT.

Drone Demonstration.

The Drone Demonstration, stimulated a conversation on the value of a drone in a Search situation, optimal conditions and the constraints, for its use.

Search Dog Demonstration.

This was an informative demonstration, highlighting the incredible commitment of the handler and dog to reach the Operational Level. The demonstration reinforced the need for a Search Dog to be considered in the first application of assets to a Search and Rescue Operation.

VENUE – St Cuthbert’s School Camp.

Excellent venue to conduct training. It is spacious, although remote access is easy, excellent accommodation facilities with plenty of flat ground to take up the overflow of participants in tents. Tutorial areas are well suited for setting up an IMT and Communication facilities. The Chef and messing facilities were also excellent.

5. Findings

Planning Preparedness:

A comprehensive Exercise Plan was generated.

It identified key decision makers, agencies and property owners

There were detailed Emergency & Hazard Management Plans .

Team kits contained essential items , aligned to each Team.

Integrated Response:

The appropriate agencies were involved in planning – LandSAR, AREC, – Landowners and Iwi were also consulted.

The SAREX and participants aligned to CIMs model and principles.

On site attendance was self-recorded by participants as they arrived at the Venue.

Incident Management Team

Structured in accordance with CIMS

3 X 3 hour scenario's with the same members in the IMT for the duration of the SAREX is mentally very fatiguing.

Managing Communications:

Separate from, but proximate to the IMT. Slick and professional.

IWI Relationships:

There was good communication with Iwi during the planning phase prior to the SAREX.

Participants were welcomed by a member of the Kahunui Village Trust.

An opportunity was missed to include a member of the Iwi in the IMT.

Landownership:

There was good communication and involvement during the planning phase.

Risk Management:

Exercise Plan had a dedicated section addressing possible scenario's and action to action to take should a "No Duff" be called.

The I/C and IMT as a collective emphasised Safety / Risk in its broadest sense throughout the SAREX.

Field Activity:

There were three missing person Scenario's with strong participation throughout. The Friday, over-night missing school party was notable for the involvement of several young folk from the "Bluelight" organisation.

Radio communication was maintained at all times.

The Skills Sessions were challenging and very relevant.

The tenacity of the "Trackers" in the last scenario, picking up from where they had been stood down from the previous evening, continuing on to make the "find", was admirable.

Health & Safety

The SAREX relied upon a Risk Planning document as a reference .

Additionally, participants were challenged throughout the SAREX to consider the Health and Safety issues they may be confronted with during the various scenario's and the round robin skills exercises.

6. Conclusions

Incident Management Team (IMT);

- ***To give IMT members the opportunity to utilise SARTrack, establish an ICP, conduct 1st Operational period planning tasks and manage the changeover.***

This Objective was met.

This was for some participants the first experience on participating in an IMT.

They were closely monitored by an experienced LANDSAR assessor.

There was an obvious maturity in the conduct of the IMT as the SAREX progressed with a significant difference between the first scenario and the third.

Participants signed in on an attendance sheet as they arrived at the venue. Whilst this had value in establishing numbers on site, Search Management may wish to consider utilising the T-Card system, in the future, this will align people to function and avoid the confusion of having “Lost Party” participants included in a Search Team.

- ***To allow IMT roles assessment against the current Operation Manager competencies;***
- ***To measure the IMT against NZSAR Response guidelines***

These objectives were met.

The members of the IMT were feeling the intensity of the IMT by the conclusion of the last scenario.

There was close scrutiny of the IMT members, and their roles by LANDSAR assessors.

They were clearly experienced in their topic, their enthusiasm was stimulating, generating at times robust discussion and they created a “Just” learning environment , allowing the IMT members to discuss their decisions without fear of criticism .

Field Team members;

- ***To Assess Field Team Members against the current LandSAR FTM competencies by regional SMEs / Assessors.***
- ***To revise and practice Tracking teams in the processing of LKP’s / PLS, campsites and all tracking skills.***
- ***To revise FTM skills in Search methods, tracking, navigation (including map & compass), VHF radio communications, First Aid , stretcher and rope management.***
- ***Maximise skills update or reinforce learnings for Field Team members to maintain response readiness.***

These objectives were met.

As with the IMT assessors, the Skills Assessors were clearly experienced in their topic, their enthusiasm was stimulating, they created a “Just” learning environment, challenging both the experienced and the novice.

AREC

Capability / Resources

A sustained professional effort throughout. Constantly looking for improvement.

Overall, a very professional and valuable contribution to the SAREX.



