



CONNECTING THE SEARCH AND RESCUE SECTOR

POLICE - LINK

RCCNZ - LINK

NZSAR AWARDS



“As a sector that encompasses so many different organisations, New Zealand Search and Rescue is a wonderful example of how working together increases effectiveness.”

Those opening comments from Her Excellency, The Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, GNZM, QSO, Governor-General of New Zealand, set the scene honouring recipients of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Awards held at Wellington’s Queens Wharf in April.

In her address to those gathered at Shed 6 for the award ceremony, Her Excellency said how pleased she was to have the opportunity to personally congratulate the recipients for their service – noting the hundreds of thousands of hours given willingly and generously by volunteers each year.

“It’s that commitment and community service that makes our search and rescue sector something to be proud of. The skill base involved is immense, the hours spent on training are huge. That dedication should be valued by all New Zealanders.”

In recognising the evening’s award winners, Her Excellency said that their service had gone above and beyond the call of duty. “Search and rescue is generally all about teamwork, but this evening some of you will have the spotlight shone on you. I’m very pleased to be here, on behalf of all New Zealanders, to thank you for your service.”

“The skill base involved is immense, the hours spent on training are huge. That dedication should be valued by all New Zealanders.”

Steve Orr from St John who, along with Joe Adam and Mandy Jackson from the Bridge to Nowhere Lodge, received a Gold Award for a prolonged and complex rescue from the Whanganui River said he was humbled to receive the award, and was quick to acknowledge the range of other agencies that supported the successful outcome. That sentiment was echoed by the evening’s other Gold Award winner Dave St John. “If there’s one thing I’ve learned it’s that you can’t do any of this stuff by yourself.”

The award ceremony honouring eight members of the SAR sector was held on the 50th anniversary of the Wahine disaster. The anniversary was commemorated with a range of events in the capital city, including a SAR display on Queens Wharf. ●

Operational Gold Award

**Steve Orr – St John
Joe Adam
Mandy Jackson**

**For the rescue of
a person from the
Whanganui River on
8 May 2017**



In the early evening of 6 May 2017, the Taranaki Community Rescue Helicopter was tasked to investigate a SPOT beacon activation near the Tieke Kainga campsite in a remote area of Whanganui National Park.

On arrival, an adult male was located with life-threatening vital signs. Intensive Care Paramedic Steve Orr attended the patient and prepared him for air transport.

However, due to low cloud the flight was aborted. With advice that conditions were unlikely to change in the short-term an alternative plan was required.

A plan was developed for Joe Adam and Mandy Jackson from the Bridge to Nowhere Lodge to make a night trip in their jet boat to ferry the patient to the nearest road end at Pipiriki.

Using torch light, and armed with extensive local knowledge of the river, Joe and Mandy safely navigated the jet boat downstream. They were met by a road ambulance for the two-hour journey to Whanganui Hospital, with Steve hand ventilating the patient all the way.

Without medical intervention, it is highly unlikely the patient would have survived the night. The persistence, teamwork, evaluation of options and lateral thinking of the team, led by Steve Orr, enabled the patient to be transported to life-saving care. The patient was admitted to ICU and discharged three days later.

Without the efforts of Steve Orr, Joe Adam and Mandy Jackson, the patient would not have safely reached hospital in a timely fashion, leading to a positive outcome.

Support Gold Award

**Dave St John –
Coastguard Marlborough**

**For his services to
Coastguard and
Coastguard Marlborough**



Dave St John is an invaluable member of Coastguard

Marlborough and a fundamental part of its team. His many contributions include being one of Coastguard Marlborough's training officers, a Regional Coastguard Instructor (RCI), the unit Operations Officer, a committee member, and sharing media liaison duties.

As a Coastguard Boating Education tutor, Dave's focus is on-water training, and in addition to training his own Coastguard crew, he also helps train other Coastguard Rescue Vessel users such as St John, Fire and Emergency, and LandSAR.

In the past 12 months, he has dedicated 515 hours to Coastguard, including 95 hours on the rescue vessel, 205 on training, 150 on community events, and 65 hours on maintenance.

Dave produced the Standard Operating Procedure and safety information for the new high-speed marine ambulance rescue vessel Bluebridge Rescue and trained Masters and crew for this vessel. He has helped build good working relationships with St John, New Zealand Police, the Harbourmaster, LandSAR and Fire and Emergency. In addition, he is the organiser of the 'Round the Resorts' – an annual visit to resorts and accommodation houses in the Marlborough Sounds to give staff safety advice to help prepare them for the summer season.

With one of the highest responses to callouts of any of the Masters, along with his positive attitude and fostering of good morale amongst the team, David is a proud and valued member of Coastguard and a huge asset to the Marlborough region.

Certification of Achievement – Operational Activity

Methven LandSAR

**For the rescue of a
tramper from 13 Mile
Bush on 2 April 2017**



On 2 April, one member of a tramping party badly injured his ankle while walking to the top of Big Ben Range near 13 Mile Bush in Canterbury.

A helicopter was tasked to assist but could not get to the tramping party due to low cloud and bad weather. A team of 10 people from Methven LandSAR headed in, reaching the injured party in a steep gully at 1945hrs. They found themselves in thick bush and scrub best described as tiger country. Due to darkness, the terrain and ground conditions, a decision was made to wait until daylight to carry the tramper out.

At first light Methven LandSAR began the stretcher carry through thick scrub, over steep ground, in rain and slippery conditions. Additional LandSAR members were sent in to assist with the stretcher carry and relieve those becoming fatigued.

Methven's LandSAR are commended for their risk management, their decision making and can-do attitude.

**SLSNZ Otago Search and Rescue
Squad**

**For the rescue of 9 people from
Taieri River flood waters on
21 July 2017**



Close to midnight on 21 July, Otago's Surf Life Saving SAR team responded to multiple 111 calls from people trapped on the roof of a 4WD vehicle during severe flooding on the Taieri Plains near Mosgiel. On arrival and after assessing the situation, the team made a 40-minute detour in darkness, through challenging floodwaters and washed-out roads, to find a safe launching place for their IRBs.

Conditions were hazardous for the IRB crews, operating in fast-flowing floodwaters between trees and submerged objects, in the dark with pouring rain. One patient had to be towed by a rescue swimmer against the current to the waiting IRB.

This was a complex rescue that was made even more challenging by darkness, rising floodwaters and difficult communications. Without the direct intervention of the lifeguards and other emergency services working together these persons may well have drowned.

Certification of Achievement – Support Activity

John Thompson – Coastguard Waimakariri-Ashley

For his commitment and services to search and rescue

John Thompson has been a committed volunteer at Coastguard Waimakariri-Ashley since 2006. He has been the unit's President since 2015, as well as a board member and the SAR Coordinator. Through his work with Coastguard, John dedicates well over a thousand volunteer hours a year.

In the 2010 Canterbury earthquake, Coastguard Waimakariri-Ashley's headquarters were damaged beyond repair. John was on the building committee for six years during which time he supported David Johnson, who project managed the rebuild. During this time he also prepared the manuals necessary to place the unit's rescue vessel into Maritime New Zealand's Maritime Operator Safety System.

As his unit's President, John is highly respected by other volunteers for his outstanding contribution and willingness to support his team. He is also active in promoting Coastguard with young people, mentoring them to reach their full potential, benefitting both Coastguard and the community. His energetic and passionate persona is infectious and he makes volunteers feel valued and supported, appreciating any contribution they make.



Jeff Sayer – AREC

For his commitment and services to search and rescue

Jeff Sayer has given 54 years of unbroken service to search and rescue in New Zealand through his volunteer work in both communications and aeronautical search and rescue.

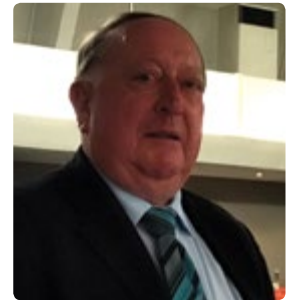
Jeff has been a key person behind many of the telecommunication developments in the Wellington and Wairarapa districts.

He has been a member of the Wairarapa SAR Committee and an Air Search Adviser to Wairarapa SAR since the 1970s. As well as his volunteer work, Jeff helped raise funds for a VHF network to enable communication during searches.

In 2002, Jeff was appointed the National Director of AREC, and worked hard to obtain funding for a major programme of updating HF, VHF and air band radios used for SAR around the country.

Jeff has been the AREC representative on the NZSAR Consultative Committee since 2004. He has also represented AREC in many sector-wide forums and workshops.

He retired from the position of National Director in December 2017.



David Pontin – SLSNZ

For his commitment and services to search and rescue

Along with 20 years of service as a surf lifeguard, patrol captain and senior leader, David Pontin is recognised as an outstanding educator. His ability to pass on his skills and mentor lifeguards was recognised by the movement in 2007, when he was awarded the New Zealand Surf Lifeguard of the Year.

At a club level, David helps instruct new lifeguards, IRB operators and crew, emerging senior lifeguards, and mentors instructional teams. He is a long-time member of the Capital Coast Callout Squad and also an instructor and patrol captain facilitator for the Central Region, passing on his experiences and skills to the next generation of leaders.

David was appointed to the National Lifesaving Committee (NLC) in 2012 where he served for five years. He was responsible for writing an educational philosophy that now drives all course development in the organisation.

He was a National Lifeguard School instructor and is also a veteran member of the National Event Lifeguard Squad, providing an on-water lifeguarding service at SLSNZ competitions.

David's ability and passion to pass on his skills makes him truly exceptional in the SLSNZ movement.



Pete Corbett – LandSAR

For his commitment and services to search and rescue

Pete Corbett got involved in LandSAR in the mid-1980s and has been a passionate volunteer in the search and rescue sector ever since.

He joined Southland Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) in the mid-1990s, while working as a police officer, and later became part of the Wanaka ACR team. He was active in the LandSAR response to the Christchurch earthquakes.

He has since held various positions in LandSAR, including National Operations Manager and Group Support Manager, and is currently the Training and Development Manager.

Pete has provided a steady influence through periods of considerable organisational and political challenges within his sector. His deep knowledge of SAR, along with his leadership and ability to coordinate between the various stakeholder organisations, has steered the development of the current New Zealand search management system.

His colleagues and peers admire his resilience and professionalism, and he is regarded as an important asset to his organisation and to the New Zealand search and rescue sector.



RCCNZ VISITS FIJI

Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) staff have been in Suva visiting the newly opened Fiji Maritime Surveillance Rescue Coordination Centre (FMSRCC).

In March RCCNZ staff, along with the Chief Executive and Director of Maritime New Zealand Keith Manch, were in Fiji as part of promoting closer ties with their search and rescue counterparts across the Pacific.

The New Zealand visitors were hosted at the new centre by the commander of the Fijian Navy, Capt. Humphrey Tawake.

RCCNZ Manager Mike Hill says Capt. Tawake was happy to welcome his visitors from RCCNZ and keen to acknowledge the assistance Fiji Search and Rescue receives from its New Zealand counterparts.

Mike says Capt. Tawake and his staff have a wonderful new facility and are working very hard to achieve a safe maritime environment for everyone who works and recreates in the search and rescue region.

“Just prior to our visit, the FMSRCC successfully located a missing aircraft in some very difficult country, which received national attention.” Mike says those at the new centre should be very proud of the progress and the impact they have already made across the region.

“Our relationship with Fiji is very close – they are our search and rescue neighbours.”



“Our relationship with Fiji is very close – they are our search and rescue neighbours.”



The visit to the FMSRCC was also a chance to catch up with the two Fijian Navy SAROs who completed training at RCCNZ last year. Petty Officer Atunaisa Waqainabete (Waqa) & Petty Officer Sikeli Satakala (Ziggy) were in New Zealand for three months of training at RCCNZ in August last year. Mike says having the two men attend courses in New Zealand has not only helped to grow SAR capability, but also allowed a better understanding of the wider Fiji SAR environment.

Whilst in Suva, the New Zealand delegation inspected five emergency response vessels provided by New Zealand last year. The largest, a vessel built by Christchurch-based boat builders Icon and named Ai Talai, was delivered in December 2017. The other four were SEALEGS amphibious craft. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade-funded vessels were provided to Fiji to enhance the country's disaster relief capability and were deployed during its recent tropical cyclones. ●





COSPAS-SARSAT – A WORLDWIDE DISTRESS CALL NETWORK

While the SAR sector may be aware of the lifesaving capabilities of 406 MHz distress beacons, only a few of us know much about the global satellite system that is dedicated to picking up their activation by people in distress.

The system that receives our beacon alerts is called Cospas-Sarsat. It was initiated by Canada, France, the United States of America and the former USSR back in the late 1970s. The first rescue was performed using the system in 1982, when the signal from a small plane was relayed to an experimental ground station in Canada. Since that time, the system has provided assistance for the rescue of over 43,000 people in close to 13,000 SAR events.

New Zealand is one of 44-member states that are part of the Cospas-Sarsat Programme – a treaty-based, intergovernmental humanitarian cooperative. Maritime New Zealand, through RCCNZ, represents New Zealand at Cospas-Sarsat meetings and working groups.

How does it work? When a user activates an emergency beacon it sends out a signal on the 406MHz frequency and the SAR satellite system picks up the signal. Information is sent to a local user terminal (LUT), which is a ground receiving station. Here the signal is processed and sent to a Mission Control Centre (MCC), which determines the relevant RCC to forward the essential data. There are three types of satellites: Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Geostationary Orbit (GEO), and a new generation called Medium Earth Orbit (MEO).

Prior to the introduction of MEOSAR satellites there could be a considerable lag between the time the system picked up the beacon alert and the period it took to determine the location of the beacon's signal. This was because of the time it could take for one of the five LEOSAR satellites to orbit the earth and come into range.

New Zealand was one of the first SAR countries in the world to take up the system using MEOSAR satellites, which orbit the earth in greater numbers and at an altitude of 19,000 to 24,000 km – offering the benefits of the LEO and GEO satellites without their limitations.

New Zealand and Australia joined forces to build two new LUTs – one near Taupo and another in Western Australia – along with a shared mission control centre (MCC) in Canberra.

Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand Manager Mike Hill says the new MEOSAR satellites deliver greater accuracy, timeliness and reliability. “MEOSAR was the game changer. There are more of them, and they provide alerts faster.”

Within days of the completion of the LUT and establishing the connection with the MCC in Canberra, a New Zealand tramper activated his PLB in the Tararuas, becoming the first rescue in the world to make use of the new system. Mike Hill says the tramper's distress signal was relayed to RCCNZ in approximately four minutes – a lot sooner than the previous system could have hoped to process the same distress signal. This provided rescuers with essential daylight lifesaving time.

Since that rescue, he says, RCCNZ is seeing faster and more accurate detections with the MEOSAR system.

Mike adds that in the future, the MEOSAR system will offer a return link to allow the messages to be passed back from the MCC to the beacon owner. “As second generation beacons become available and the ground stations are updated it won't be too long before the system will be able to acknowledge the alert and confirm a response is being mounted.” ●

The Cospas-Sarsat programme takes its name from two acronyms - one Russian and one English. Cospas stands for *Cosmicheskaya Sistyema Poiska Avariynich Sudov* - loosely translated as *Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress*. The second acronym is a little easier - Sarsat is *Search and Rescue Satellite-aided tracking*.
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVpWywc7Fnl>

MASS RESCUE SAREX

We know that a mass rescue event will be overwhelming, but we also know the value of exercises in improving operational response. On Friday 4 May, the Maritime Operations Centre (MOC) and the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCCNZ) took part in a SAREX that aimed to test their management of multiple search and rescue assets responding to a mass rescue event.

EXCON was able to role play the response of more than 35 marine and aviation assets to the simulated Mayday call. All communications were made via radio or phone to replicate real life responses and to best exercise MOC and RCCNZ.

The exercise took place with the support of a number of organisations including AREC, Coastguard Kapiti and Mana, Life Flight and Police.

This was the first time this type of exercise has been run, and both MOC and RCCNZ found their operation procedures stood up very well to the challenges. All participants, including those in EXCON, said they found the exercise provided valuable training and highlighted areas for further work.

NZSAR thanks all those who participated in the exercise and helped ensure its success. ●

Northland SAREX

The Northland District SAREX, held at Tauranga Bay on 27/28 April, was supported by the well-designed Far North LandSAR SAR IMT trailer. This trailer has been fitted out by local member Grant Adams, who was recognised for his support with a superb cake.



ANZSAR CONFERENCE

The theme for the fourth ANZSAR Conference, held on the Gold Coast on 23 May 2018, was 'Resilience in Search and Rescue'. More than 200 people attended the conference and heard from a range of interesting and stimulating speakers.

The presentations considered resilience from personal to system and organisational levels, as well as aspects of technology, training and operational methods that provide resilience to SAR.

New Zealand was well represented with both keynote speakers and session presenters. Paul Carlyon, Surf Lifeguard, Clinical Psychologist and Board member of Surf Life Saving New Zealand, gave a morning keynote address 'Resilience: From the Beach to the Boardroom' and discussed SLSNZ's Peer Support programme.

Dave Greenberg gave the afternoon's closing keynote address, talking about his 25-year career aboard the Wellington-based Westpac Rescue Helicopter and the coping mechanisms that gave him resilience.

Among the messages from speakers was the need to avoid siloing of teams and their feedback during debriefs, and the importance of never underestimating the difference between training and an actual operation. ●

Podcasts and presentations will be made available on the conference website - sar.anzdmc.com.au.

FLOOD RESCUE DO'S AND DON'TS

As world sea levels rise and extreme weather becomes more common, countries and communities need to become more resilient to floods.

SLSNZ Lifesaving Services and Education Manager, Allan Mundy, was in Australia late last year for a flood rescue symposium held in Tasmania.

Allan says SLSNZ's attendance at the SLST (Surf Life Saving Tasmania) Flood Rescue Symposium follows a number of flood-related deployments in 2017, including the rescue of nine people from the Taieri River flood waters in July 2017, which earned the SLSNZ Otago Search and Rescue Squad a certificate of achievement at this year's NZSAR Awards.

The danger of entering a river that has not yet broken its banks (phase 2) was also high on the list of don'ts because of the threats of large debris, which can cause damage to the hull of a rescue vessel, and the extreme power of the confined body of water.

Allan says one lesson learnt from the practical skills training at the conference was the risk of approaching vehicles in flooded waters from downstream.



The symposium also highlighted the potential danger of contaminants and raw sewage.

Those attending the symposium were looking for information to help people be better informed and equipped when heading into hazardous flood environments to perform rescues.

The two-day event was in two sections – one covering theory and another focussing on practical skills. Those at the symposium heard about the four key phases of a river during a flood cycle. Phase 1 is normal flow; phase 2 is when it is in flood, but still within its banks; phase 3 is when it spills its banks; and phase 4 is when the flood waters are in retreat.

Following the trip to Tasmania, Allan has offered some key do's and don'ts to SLSNZ managers and SAR Coordinators. Among the advice is being aware of the limitations of both the craft and your training, including making sure of back up – either another vessel or an air asset. He says deploying in the dark with debris, unfamiliar water and nil visibility is extremely dangerous.

Allan says the symposium also highlighted the potential danger of contaminants and raw sewage, observing that three quarters of the first responders from Cyclone Trina were hospitalised due to exposure to human pathogens and other related skin infections and diseases. He says wearing a wetsuit in contaminated water offers a perfect breeding ground for harmful bacteria and harmful contaminants.

Thoroughly washing equipment used in flood events is also crucial since pathogens and chemicals can be reactivated once gear gets wet.

He says joining from downstream of a vehicle can alter the hydrology – reducing its weight and causing it to float away. Instead, rescuers are encouraged to approach vehicles from across the current and hover alongside to make an extraction.

Another key lesson was the need to have three crew members on all IRBs. He says high speed patient pickups are often not possible in confined areas, and more than one person can be required to get larger patients into rescue craft. ●

The Do's & Don'ts

- Do ✓ Decontaminate all gear
- Do ✓ Keep the bow of the IRB pointed upstream
- Don't ✗ Undertake the task if you're unsure of the safety of all your crew
- Don't ✗ Enter into a flood without backup
- Don't ✗ Deploy in the dark with debris, unfamiliar water and nil visibility
- Don't ✗ Immerse yourself in flooded waters
- Don't ✗ Enter a river that has NOT broken its banks
- Don't ✗ Approach vehicles in flooded waters from behind – come from the side
- Don't ✗ Drive at speed

SAR EXERCISE GETS CLOSURE FOR FAMILY

It's not often that a search and rescue exercise actually turns up a missing person, but that's exactly what happened when Canterbury held its district SAR exercise in March this year.

A woman went missing from her home in the Rangiora area on 2 December 2017, and extensive searches by LandSAR and Police SAR were unsuccessful in locating her.

That was until the case was used as a template for a SAR training exercise involving more than 100 participants, from Canterbury LandSAR, Police SAR, and the Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Group.

The woman's body was found on the banks of the Ashley River on Saturday, March 24, on the first day of the weekend-long exercise.

"It was a real relief to be able to bring some closure to her family," says SAR coordinator Sergeant Phil Simmonds.

"A lot of the same Police staff and LandSAR volunteers who were involved in the first search for the woman came back to take part in the exercise, which was awesome to see."

The exercise was based from Loburn School and field teams were deployed in the Ashley River area near Rangiora.

It also included helicopter safety, Incident Management Team, and field refresher training.

Phil says being able to base a SAR exercise on a real-life scenario gets better buy-in from participants.

And for a lot of participants, it was unfinished business, so the volunteers were ready and raring to get into it.

"We had all spent more than 2,500 hours searching for this woman in the nine days after she went missing.

"We all wanted to find her and return her to her family, and that feeling meant the people cooperating in the exercise were fully invested in the search.

"Many of the volunteers were so attached to this case that they had been out searching in their own time between the initial search in December and the SAR exercise operation in March." Phil says it didn't take too much thinking to decide to use this case for the district SAR exercise just for that reason.

"We all wanted to find her and return her to her family, and that feeling meant the people cooperating in the exercise were fully invested in the search."

"The numbers we had involved in this SAR exercise meant we could concentrate on areas wider than the initial search area covered in December, and that worked for us in this instance.

"Search and rescue operations are a large part of Police work across every district, so ensuring the people involved in these jobs are trained as best as possible is hugely important," he says. "By focusing the exercise on the search for this missing woman, the Police and LandSAR personnel involved were given real life experience, which will be incredibly helpful in future search and rescue operations."

This exercise demonstrated the relationship between Police and LandSAR and the quality of the teams available for search and rescue operations in Canterbury. "LandSAR volunteers do so much training and assist Police in so many operations each year. It's a huge commitment and it is so appreciated. The work these volunteers do is exceptional..

"It's so reassuring that these people are happy to give up their time to help - New Zealanders are lucky to have them."

Phil also wanted to extend a big thank you to Loburn School. "The principal gave us full access to everything; we were handed the keys to the hall, given use of the printers and anything we wanted. That was a massive help and we are so grateful." ●



WATERBOURNE RESCUE

On Easter Saturday the Police’s Wellington Maritime Unit, along with Coastguard Wellington, Wellington Airport Fire Service and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, responded to several calls from members of the public worried about the safety of competitors in an event on Wellington Harbour.



“When rescue services got in touch with event organisers, they were still trying to reconcile the number of competitors with those who had returned to shore.”

Concerns were raised about those competing in Waterbourne – a three-day event involving windsurfers, kitesurfers and paddleboarders.

The race, which had over 100 entries, had been scheduled to follow a route across the harbour from the Petone foreshore, around the southern end of Matiu/Somes Island, finishing on the beach at the Lower Hutt suburb of Eastbourne.

Senior Sergeant Dave Houston of the Wellington Maritime Unit says weather conditions at the time of the start of the event were reasonable, but during the course of the race, the wind picked up to 50 knots – leaving some competitors needing assistance to get back to shore.

Dave says those running the event were well organised and had a safety plan in place. He adds the event had six rescue boats on standby and had contingency plans to stop the race if conditions exceeded 35 knots.

Following emergency calls from the public, the Police launch and the rescue helicopter, along with Coastguard and Wellington Airport Fire Service vessels, were deployed to assist with the rescue.

“The organisers believed they had the rescue under control with their own boats picking up competitors. However, we were receiving multiple calls from the public concerned with the safety of people in the water.”

Dave says although the event’s rescue boats were picking up competitors, they were leaving their gear in the water.

“When rescue services got in touch with event organisers, they were still trying to reconcile the number of competitors with those who had returned to shore.

“When we spoke to the organiser there were still 45 competitors unaccounted for.”

The difficulties with the reconciliation process were compounded by some competitors returning to the starting line in Petone with others turning up at the finish point on the Eastbourne beach. This made checking off the race entrants doubly hard.

“When the SAR assets arrived on the scene we were checking to make sure there was no one left in the area. We were pretty confident there was no one there, as the area was saturated with rescue vessels.”

He says equipment was initially left in the water until everyone was accounted for, so in the event of a missing competitor the drift data would assist in finding the missing person.

One of the key lessons from the Easter event is making sure rescue services have one central point of contact. “You need to make sure you know who the organiser is and only deal with that person – so you’re getting one source of information.”

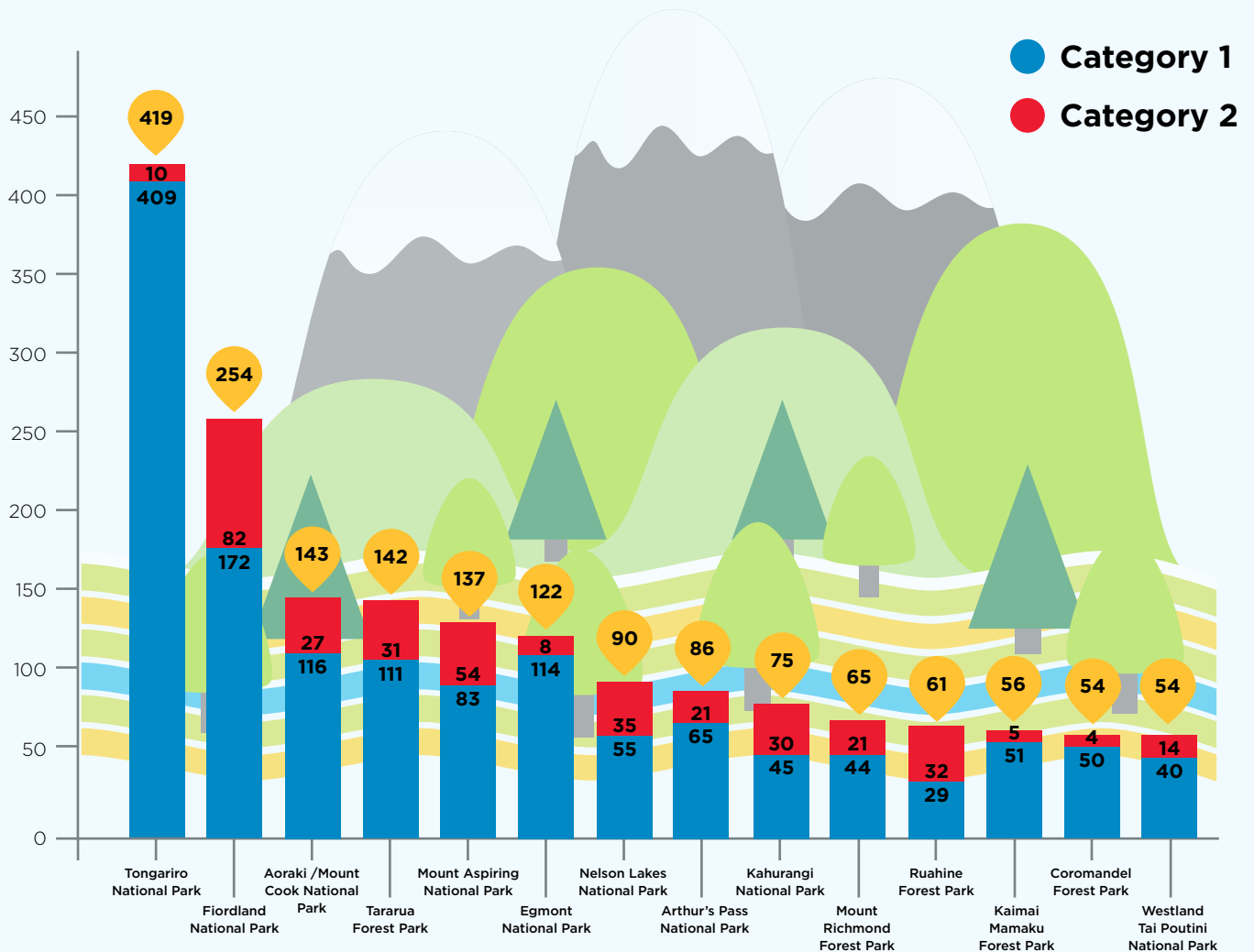
Another issue identified during the reconciliation of competitors was that others involved in the event were feeding incomplete information back to rescue services.

“The reconciliation process is critical, especially when you are dealing with large numbers of people.”

By early afternoon the search for all the missing windsurfers in Wellington Harbour had ended with Police Communications able to confirm that all windsurfers reported to be in trouble were safe and accounted for. ●

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK STILL A SAR HOTSPOT

NZSAR recently worked with the Department of Conservation (DOC) to update our current datastore of SAR incidents with information about the DOC land areas where SAR has occurred over the last seven years. DOC will be using this information to assist with their visitor management work. The graph shows all the areas where there have been more than 50 SAR incidents - it comes as no surprise that the busiest area is the Tongariro National Park with 419 incidents! The graph also shows the comparison between Category 1 and 2 incidents in each area. The new data system (SARdonyx) will be able to auto-populate this information, along with territorial authority boundaries.



CALENDAR

SAREXs and SAR training see:

nzsar.govt.nz/Calendar/Events

NZSAR Awards - nominations close 31 January 2019

www.nzsar.govt.nz/awards

NZSAR Reconciliation Exercise: 20 June

LandSAR Conference: 22-24 June

SAR Managers Course RNZPC: 25 June - 6 July

NZSAR Consultative Committee meeting: 8 August

WEBSITES

www.nzsar.govt.nz SAR sector resources and information including a PDF of this newsletter

Safety information and tips for the public planning outdoor activities: www.adventuresmart.org.nz

Information about 406 Beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon: www.beacons.org.nz

ANZSAR Conference papers and presentations: sar.anzdm.com.au

WAHINE DAY – 10 APRIL 2018

Wahine Day was marked with a series of events taking place across Wellington. The events were designed to acknowledge those who had lost their lives – as well as the family, survivors and those involved in the response to the disaster.

Below are selection of images from Wahine 50 including a dawn service, a SAR display, the memorial service and a flotilla review.



Thanks to Wahine 50 Charitable Trust for the images



DUNCAN'S DESK



Winter is back – great if you like snow sports, but perhaps less fun for everyone else. And when it comes to snow, even I will agree that there can be too much of a good thing. For anyone contemplating going near the snowline this winter, it's worth taking a look at www.avalanche.net.nz ahead of time to gauge the avalanche danger level for the area you plan on visiting. The Avalanche Advisory should also be consulted before the deployment of any SAR teams or assets into areas of potential avalanche hazard. The NZSAR Council funds the Avalanche Advisory via a Service Level Agreement with the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC), who have also completed a full refresh of the website which is looking great.

This issue of LINK includes a lot of coverage of the annual NZSAR Awards (see pages 2-3). People in our sector do amazing things every day, and many demonstrate a huge commitment to search and rescue teams day in and day out, year upon year. The recognition of an NZSAR Award is a small thing

next to this dedication, but hopefully goes some way towards showing the Council's respect and gratitude. We're always on the lookout for nominations, so if you think someone or some team is deserving, please consider nominating them (<https://nzsar.govt.nz/NZSAR-Awards/How-to-Nominate>).

We also took the opportunity to coordinate our Awards ceremony with the Wahine disaster 50th commemorations on 10 April 2018. It was sobering to attend a number of the Wahine functions and talk with survivors, crew and family members of those who didn't survive. We are fortunate in New Zealand that SAR-related disasters of this scale are far and few between, but it did serve to refocus our attention on our readiness and preparedness should we be required to respond to a mass rescue event some time in the future. To that end, in May, we participated in a new form of mass rescue exercise, one which explored both the Maritime Operations and Rescue Coordination Centres' abilities to manage an overwhelming number of SAR assets in a near-to-shore mass rescue event. The exercise went very well with considerable skill demonstrated and a number of learnings to ponder.

I recently had the opportunity to attend and present to the Australia New Zealand SAR Conference in Queensland. Over 230 delegates attended this conference, including quite a few from our side of the Tasman. The one-day conference included six keynote and 18 individual presentations on a wide

range of land/sea/air search and rescue topics. If you want to follow up, the programme is at www.sar.anzdmc.com.au and most of the presentations will be made available shortly. This conference is run around this time each year and the organisers are always keen to hear from people who may wish to attend or present next year.

This LINK also has a focus on the Cospas-Sarsat distress beacon system (see page 5). Our search and rescue region is heavily committed to, and reliant on, this reliable and effective international arrangement. We have over 70,000 registered distress beacons in New Zealand and the newer 406MHz beacons, paired with the ever-growing constellation of MEOSAR satellites and matching ground stations, are revolutionising search and rescue both here in New Zealand and around the world. This system continues to evolve and is delivering astonishingly effective lifesaving results – and we see the benefits for New Zealanders every day. The team at the RCCNZ are very involved with Cospas-Sarsat and make a significant contribution to its operation. It's great to see New Zealand SAR agencies being proactive and helping to ensure our world-wide system for search and rescue is as effective as possible.

Stay safe this winter
(& Go the All Blacks!)

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NZSAR AWARDS

Do you know an organisation, a group, or an individual who you think should be acknowledged for their contribution to search and rescue?

There are two categories – operational activity and support activity.

More information about these two categories, the NZSAR awards and the simple nomination process can be found on our website at: www.nzsar.org.nz/awards



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