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# NZLSAR News

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### Wellington practices airlift

Wellington SAR had six teams in the field for their annual SAREX in November. The Air Force Iroquois was

grounded Friday afternoon and Saturday morning by high winds and poor visibility – not uncommon in the Tararuas.



Moving quickly and safely – Wellington SAR team approaches the Iroquois

However by the time Sunday morning arrived the teams were camped out alongside the Tauherenikau River after completing night search, tracking, GPS navigation, patient handling and stretcher carry exercises.

Newer SAR members keenly awaited winch training. Initial training had taken place at the Westpac Rescue hangar at Wellington Airport with a winch mounted in the rafters. The real thing was to occur in brilliant Tararua weather – warm and nearly calm. The six teams were winched into the chopper and delivered up river to Tutuwai Hut. By midday there were 24 searchers and two Advisers at Tutuwai planning the final task – the airlift.

Wellington has previously practiced an airlift with good results. The concept is to move the teams from point to point in the shortest possible time. A key

component is the appointment of a Loadmaster to liaise with the aircrew to determine the number of searchers that can be carried on each flight given the weather, altitude, fuel availability and other factors.

For this airlift the capacity was five passengers – four flights with five passengers and one with six. The trip distance was 10 kilometres including a climb over a low saddle. Cycle times from HQ to HQ ranged from 19 minutes down to 11 minutes, making an average of 15 minutes.

The outcome is the ability to insert five teams into the bush in an hour – if conditions permit. Have other Districts practiced an airlift?

**Matthew Nolan**  
Adviser Wellington District

## Around the Regions

Some snippets from the Regional Reports to the November 2003 NZLSAR Committee meeting.

**Region One.** The Far North Group has been busy fundraising. An application to six Community Councils realised \$6,000, Lotto provided another \$10,500 and a COGS grant produced \$3,500. In the proceeding three months they have had no operations, Northland has had two and Auckland one.

**Region Two.** The report from this Region contained this information *“On a recent callout a new source of information in that DoC asset numbers which are attached to all these structures are a useful tool in determining where a missing party is if they have a cell phone. They can quote the number of the asset they are at or close to. DoC have the required information as to the exact location of that asset”.* This

engendered some discussion and members gave from their experience other examples such as power pylons. One member even had a radio or cell phone message from two missing persons in a bivy and it was from the asset number that he was able to ascertain where the missing party was.

**Region Three.** Reports from those who attended the two day August meeting were very positive. Operationally a person who had committed suicide took two and half days to resolve and there were many incidents that were very quickly resolved.

**Region Four.** The Regions AGM was recently held. The Officers appointed were Chairman – Warrick Price. Treasurer – Sheryl Turner. Secretary – Rod Smillie. Regional Representative – Tony Macklin. Training Coordinator and

Deputy Representative – Laurie Gallagher.

**Region Five.** The Warehouse recently held a raffle for Nelson SAR raising \$14,000 over a six-week period. The money was to upgrade the computers in the operations room in Nelson. This has allowed them to network 6 computers fitted with the Iman and Gman programmes, TUMONZ mapping and to train people computer input for operational use. They now have people on their call list that wanted to be involved in SAR but thought they did not have any of the skills or capabilities required. These people are proving very valuable to the operations system as was proved in a very recent major search.

A Tasman Police member is working alongside a NZ company to trial the Medi Track devices available in Australia for the tracking of Alzheimer suffers. Trials will take part in a bush and suburban environment and once these have been tested they will apply for a radio frequency and channel and obtain community sponsorship.

Motueka Land Search and Rescue (with Motueka Coastguard) recently opened their new SAR operations and meeting room, which has been built behind the Motueka Police station. Patron Mr.

Peter Talley opened it with the Chairman and National Field Officer from NZLSAR also attending.

There were some changes at the last Regional meeting that also included their AGM. A new Chairman John Scobie was elected replacing Malcolm Brennan who had served a three year term in which time he had help expand the Region. Eric McDonald who held both Secretary and Treasurer position resigned as Secretary but retained the Treasurer position. The Secretary position has been very ably filled by Leanne Edwards.

**Region Six.** Operationally the three months previous to the meeting had been reasonably quiet with 13 operations which were mostly sorted with initial action. The report expressed doubt that the level 4 CIMS training may not have equipped SAR management with the necessary knowledge or practical application of CIMS to SAR.

**Region Seven.** This report noted an unusually low activity rate for the last three months with Wanaka the busiest with 12 callouts. Training continues in the Region. .

**John P Tristram**  
National Field Officer

## Operation Kapiti

**P**aged at 1655 hours Sunday afternoon by Dan O'Connell. Limited information on a missing eight year old on Kapiti Island. Missing since 1500 on the Wilkinson track, ran ahead of parents and not seen at meeting point.

After discussing the limited information with Dan, three Police SAR members were sent to Kapiti Boating Club with the SAR gear, along with Phil Whitelaw as a

forward base Adviser. Matt Nolan called in and organised two teams from the Parawai's, the local tramping club, to go immediately to the Island and four back-up teams from Wellington.

After calling the informant, wife of DoC Centre Supervisor, I was able to find out that the missing boy was eight years old, named Diego Alfonso, interested in wildlife and likely to follow a weka into the bush, i.e. inquisitive. Was lightly

clad in a black cap, polar fleece top, shorts and sneakers, with no backpack, rain jacket, food or water.

In the time of the operation we managed to get one SAR team, Nic Davies (Police SAR) and Phil Whitelaw onto the island to gain additional information and commence a search from the point last seen, believed to be 20 minutes from the bottom of the Wilkinson track.

As we were getting set up the Waikanae rescue boat was returning from the Southern end of the Island and spotted Diego on the foreshore and uplifted him and returned him to the landing point and very relieved parents. He had apparently ended up down on the foreshore and believed he was north of the base and headed south expecting to find the meeting point. He was in fact already south of the DoC base and ended up some five to six kilometres further south near Fisherman's island. When he encountered obstacles to his path he swam around them in the sea, getting cold and losing a sneaker. Located around 1830.

The interesting lessons to learn in terms of lost person behaviour are that this eight year old was already well outside our initial search zone by the time we were commencing operations. My plan of attack would have been to focus on the PLS and do TCA around that area. Searching the southern shoreline would have been a Monday morning task. However given the weather and his condition, cold, wet, no food or shelter and apparently blue, his chances of surviving the night would have been 50:50 at best. The lesson for me would be to do an aerial and shoreline sweep as a first response as well as PLS and TCA.

Thank you to everyone who responded late on a Sunday afternoon, Police SAR, AREC, and Land SAR. A very good result for a very lucky boy. I suggested to Phil that the family should buy a lotto ticket – clearly it was Diego's lucky day.

### **Terry Patterson**

Adviser Wellington District

### **A Postscript**

I went to the island with the Parawai team and debriefed Diego. He was heading back down the Wilkinson Track with the main party but ended up getting ahead of everyone. He eventually realised that he may have wandered off the main track but continued to head downwards to where he thought the rangers house/jetty were. Despite apparently passing behind the ranger settlement and within view of the jetty, he failed to recognise where he was and turned right at the coast thinking he was further north than he actually was. He continued along the rocky and difficult coastline for 4.5 kilometres before being spotted by the Waikanae boat. He never seemed to give up the belief that he was walking towards the house.

Diego had entered the water several times to swim around obstructions and lost his shoes towards the end. When found, he was hungry, wet and suffering from hypothermia but otherwise in good health and spirits.

This was a mammoth and determined trek for an eight year old and his location was well outside the immediate search area. He was a very lucky lad.

### **Nick Davies**

Operation Manager (Land)

## SAR Council Consultative Committee

Over the last couple of years, the governance of SAR in New Zealand has been reviewed to improve the overall management, coordination, and planning across all sectors of SAR. As a result, the National SAR Committee was wound up and replaced by the **New Zealand SAR Council**, whose members are chief executives or senior representatives of the key government agencies responsible for search and rescue. The NZ SAR Council's function is to provide strategic policy advice to government and strategic coordination of all search and rescue in New Zealand; it does not get involved in the planning or execution of search and rescue operations.

A **SAR Secretariat** has been formed to coordinate the measures necessary to support the provision of SAR in New Zealand on behalf of the NZ SAR Council. The Secretariat's role includes the "development, implementation, and monitoring of a New Zealand SAR plan, vision, mission, and goals, and the establishment, validation, and monitoring of national standards, procedures, training agreements and documentation relevant to all participants in New Zealand SAR." The quote is from Gerard Prins' excellent article on the SAR Secretariat summarised in the October 2003 edition of NZLSAR News. Read that again for a full picture of the new structure.

The Secretariat needs close liaison with all of the organisations involved in the direct coordination and execution of search and rescue operations. This liaison is primarily through a **SAR Consultative Committee**.

The Consultative Committee held its first meeting on 27 November 2003, chaired by Jon Graham (SAR Secretariat).

Representing the various SAR agencies were: Maritime Safety Authority (Ian Webb, Peter Williams), Ministry of Transport (Alastair Bisley, Helen Hanify, Helen Stewart), NZ Defence Force (Ron Logan), NRCC (Rodney Bracefield), Police (Gerry Prins), NZLSAR (Laurie Gallagher), Coastguard Federation (Kevin Rangji), Aviation Industry Association (John Funnell), and AREC (Brian Purdie). Not present was Civil Aviation Authority (apologies from Cath Taylor) or Department of Conservation.

The meeting was an opportunity to introduce members, then Jon Graham gave an overview of the role of the SAR Council, the Secretariat and the linkages with the Consultative Committee. The role of the Consultative Committee is to provide advice to the SAR Council. The Committee will also be a forum to discuss SAR Council policies and strategic objectives and to provide feedback to the Council.

Alastair Bisley spoke about the events leading up to the formation of the SAR Council – the Maritime Patrol Review and the Maritime SAR Review, and also discussed the linkages between the Council and the Consultative Committee. In particular, he stressed that the Council does not have an operational role. To ensure a coordinated and effective SAR system, the Council needs to work closely with stakeholders who play an operational role in the SAR system.

Jon introduced a five-step strategic planning process to collect information and provide direction for the SAR Council:

1. Develop a strategic vision and mission
2. Analysis of environment
3. Develop strategic goals

4. Implement and execute strategy
5. Evaluate performance

Strategic planning will be worked on at the next meeting, after each Search and Rescue agency has considered a SWOT analysis of their own sector and organisation, including their internal and external environments, and prepared their views on a Mission and Vision. Jon Graham, with Kim Penny (previously from MSA) will run workshops with each organisation represented on the Consultative Committee to help speed up the process. The workshop with NZLSAR will be in early February.

Future meetings will discuss training and funding, and provide opportunities for greater levels of input and discussion amongst representatives. We look forward to an efficient SAR environment with effective liaison and cooperation between agencies, high standards of operation, and adequate funding to do the job properly.

**Laurie Gallagher**

Adviser, Wellington District  
NZLSAR Representative on the  
Consultative Council

### NZLSAR Committee News

The NZLSAR Committee met at the Wellington Airport Conference Room on Saturday 15 November 2003 for a busy day with a full agenda. Some of the reports and agenda items included:-

**Advisers Review and Standards.** The minutes of the previous meeting (August combined meeting with the Regional Officers) were felt to be in variance with the sentiment expressed there. It was felt that the resolution in the Notes from the combined meeting were the majority viewpoint and so the resolution in the August minutes was deleted and the following two inserted.

**Moved that** persons nominated for the post of Adviser must have at least five years relevant experience in SAR and have attended a forty hour MSLO course, and CIMS level 4 Course (or equivalent), and must have an understanding of track and clue awareness and modern search methods and resources.

**Moved that** the period of grace of two years for existing advisers apply from 1 September 2003.

How these will be implemented will be the topic of further discussion

**Health and Safety.** This was a topic at the August combined meeting with a presentation given by a representative of the Department of Labour. Like many other people and organisations the NZLSAR Committee is not clear on the implications of the Act and so have written to the Commissioner of Police for his departments interpretation of how it affects SAR volunteers. That opinion is still awaited.

**Medical.** A package for Regions including the Course Outline and Assessment Criteria for the Nominated Field First Aider, the Casualty Assessment Form, Medical Adviser Standard and Patient Care Audit Documents is ready for circulation. Regions are to be encouraged to approach and nominate personnel they feel would be appropriate as Medical Advisers. These people need to be NZ Registered Medical Practitioners, have at least an empathy and preferably a real interest in the outdoors. A training workshop for these personnel is to be held in Wellington early in the New Year. Nominations and or requests for further

information can be forwarded to John Tristram or Tric Moller. The Medical Advisory Working Group will be coordinating the training workshop.

**Payment to SARINZ.** Disquiet had been expressed that NZLSAR may be paying for courses that Tai Poutini Polytechnic were also paying for. SARINZ had been written to and they had replied stating they expected payment from NZLSAR. This payment has now been made.

**Finance.** The Committee reviewed the budget and reallocated money from areas that savings had been made. It was decided that the allocation of \$500 for administration made to each Region would be added to. For the costs incurred such as travel and phone bills by the Regions Chairman and Representatives while carry out these roles, up to \$500 is available for each position. The Committee previously had agreed that payment to the Region should be subject to the provision of a financial report from the Region. Where these have been received payment has subsequently been made.

**Search Dogs.** Andrew Pealing and Linda Pike, two of the bush wilderness assessors tenures were due for renewal and it was agreed that they continue as National Bush Wilderness Assessors for a further two years.

Two avalanche training assessment courses were held over the winter season – one at Coronet Peak and the other a NZLSAR/NZ Police Dog course at Turoa. Brent McDonald attended as the NZLSAR Assessor for both courses with three dog teams in the North Island and four teams in the South Island gaining operational status. One of these teams which was both operational for avalanche and bush wilderness has recently gone to British Columbia and is actively seeking SAR involvement there.

Since the last report operational search dogs have been used on a variety of searches with both successful live and cadaver finds. A system for better recording operational search dog team responses is currently being compiled and information gained will be used as a training tool for search dog personnel.

An agreement with Origin Pacific negotiated by USAR on behalf of both our organisations means Operational Dog Handlers are able to fly on certain aircraft accompanied by their dogs to training and operational events. In these situations the dogs will be carried inside the aircraft at no charge. A jerkin for the dogs identifying them as NZLSAR operational is currently being investigated and will be an expenditure item in the 2004/2005 budget. This initiative has already been utilised by one of the dog teams from the Tasman Region.

**NZ SAR Council.** A letter had been received from Jon Graham the Secretariat Manager informing the organisation of the formation of a Consultative Council, its membership, role and inviting NZLSAR to become a member of this Committee. This was agreed to and Laurie Gallagher was appointed to this position. The Consultative Committee is planned to meet quarterly, for two hours in Wellington at the Ministry of Transport, which houses the SAR Secretariat. The purpose of the meetings would be for representatives to provide broad based advice to the SAR Council on issues relevant to their organisation in relation to search and rescue. It would also be a forum in which SAR Council policies and strategic objectives could be discussed and feedback provided. A report on the first meeting of the Consultative Committee can be found elsewhere in the News

**NZLSAR Awards.** It is with much pleasure and thanks that the Committee agreed to the nomination of the National Bush Wilderness Assessors: **Larry Charles, Markus Milne, Andrew Peeling** and **Linda Pike** for a NZLSAR Award. This was for their outstanding contribution to NZLSAR in terms of instructing, mentoring, motivating and supporting other NZLSAR dog handlers from throughout NZ. Through their individual credibility as operational dog handlers, their professionalism in dealing with volunteers and commitment to the Standards has seen an outstanding response from the dog community nationally in terms of their National Field Officer

inter-group relationships and commitment to training in the best interests of the subject. Currently NZLSAR has 14 operational bush wilderness teams available and this number will only increase, this will be the legacy of the work these four individuals in particular have contributed.

Discussion followed on whether a NZLSAR plaque should be given at the same time to those given an Award. This was agreed to but with no retrospective presentations to be made.

**John P Tristram**

**Editors Comments.** A very big thank you to **Matthew** for your articles and. Copy for the **April News** is most welcome and the close-off date is **Monday 26 January**. Articles on gear, SAR training or operations are most welcome. Please either mail as neatly hand-written, printed hard copy or on a disc to **NZLSAR, PO Box 12081, Thorndon, Wellington**. Alternatively email it to **tristram.nzlsar@xtra.co.nz** Even if you have some thoughts on an article but are diffident in putting pen to paper, feel free to give me a ring on **04-470-7247** and we can talk it through.

**John P Tristram, National Field Officer**

**As can be seen from the space at the bottom of this page more articles are desperately needed. Please feel free to contribute.**