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# NZLSAR

# News

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## Alzheimer's disease

While "surfing the net" I came across some research from an American source for lost Alzheimer's disease subjects. It makes interesting reading with direct application to our situation as I suspect a person suffering from this disease in America will act in a manner not too differently to a New Zealander similarly afflicted.

### The basic statistics

- Number of searches: 82
- Mean distance from the PLS: 0.6 miles (0.88 km)
- Median distance from the PLS: 0.5 miles (0.8 km)
- Standard deviation of mean: 0.5 miles (0.74 km)
- Mean age of subjects: 76 years
- Standard Deviation of age: 9.2 years
- Subjects yelling for help: 0
- Males: 55 (67%)
- Females: 27 (33%)
- Walked out: 40 (51%)
- Evacuated: 22 (27%)
- Deceased: 18 (22%)
- Probability Zone: 0.4-0.5 miles
- Probability Zone: 0.3-0.6 miles
- Probability Zone: 0.2-1.0 miles

- Probability Zone: 0.0-1.1 miles
- Probability Zone: 0.0-1.5 miles

### Subject profile summary

- "They go until they get stuck"
- Subject leaves own residence or nursing home, possibly with last sighting on a roadway.
- Subject has previous history of wandering.
- Coexisting medical problems that limit mobility are common.
- Subject will usually be found within 0.5 miles of point last seen.
- Subject usually found a short distance from a road. (33 yards median).
- Subject usually found in creek or drainage and/or caught in briars/bushes (63%).
- Subject will not cry out for help or respond to shouts.
- Subject will not leave many physical clues.
- Subject may attempt to travel to a former residence or to a favourite place.
- Subject usually succumbs to the environment (hypothermia, dehydration).

### **Suggested search techniques**

- Early use of trackers at point last seen (PLS).
- Early use of tracking dogs at PLS and along roadways.
- Early deployment of air scent dog teams into drainages and streams, starting nearest PLS.
- Early deployment of hasty ground teams into drainages and streams nearest PLS.
- Thoroughly search the residence/nursing home and surrounding grounds and buildings; repeat every few hours.
- Cut for signs along roadways.

- Search heavy briars/bushes; remind field team leaders of this.
- Dog teams and ground sweep teams (in separate sectors) expanding from PLS.
- Air scent dog teams and ground sweep teams task 100 yards (initially) parallel to roadways.
- Search nearby previous home sites and the region between home sites and PLS.
- Strong investigative effort throughout search.

**Copied with thanks to the two researchers involved**

### **The River Crossing**

The river was announcing  
An ominous crossing  
With the boulders knocking.

You can do it and make a fight of it  
Always taking the hard way  
For the hell and delight of it.

But there comes the day  
When you watch the spate of it  
And camp till the moon's down  
Then find the easy way  
Across in the dawn  
Waiting till that swollen vein  
Of a river subsides again.

**Denis Glover**

### **Topographic maps for emergency use**

Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) advise they have now put in place a procedure for 1:50 000 and 1: 250 000 scale topographic maps to be obtained for emergency service use.

All the offices on the LINZ Personnel Emergency Callout List now hold stocks of these scale maps. They have been instructed to issue copies to authorised emergency service representatives at no charge. LINZ is concerned that this may cause the map stocks to be depleted rather rapidly so they are insisting that the maps are to be signed for. This will also enable them to build up statistics of usage.

The maps will bear a stamp that they are to be used for emergency service use. As this is a new procedure it may prove to have a few problems so please provide any feedback that you can. They hope this will enable the emergency services to obtain maps more efficiently.

**John Meads**

Inspector. Coordinator: SAR/RCC

### **A word from Emergency Management Limited**

I have just received a shipment of the **Search is an Emergency** handbook which all Advisers, Field Controllers, Police SAR Coordinators and SAR Squad Sergeants should be familiar with. It is easy to read and use with plenty of diagrams and charts covering key aspects of modern search management and practice including:-

- Lost Person Behaviour Analysis
- Search Urgency Assessment
- Matzoon Consensus
- Confinement
- Planning
- Probability of Area
- Probability of Detection
- Track and Clue Awareness

It has a search management monograph which will enable you to work out very quickly your staffing requirements for a search. For example if you wanted two square miles searched at 50% POD, this will mean 100

feet spacing and take 350 searcher hours. If you want an 80% POD it will mean 40 feet spacing and take 850 searcher hours.

This handbook, a condensed version of the main text, has over two hundred copies in circulation in New Zealand. It is written by the **Emergency Response Institute** in the USA with **Emergency Management Ltd** as the NZ agent. Copies are sold throughout the western SAR world, and while it is US based, the principles of modern search management apply internationally.

Copies available for \$35 each plus \$4 package and courier per order. Orders for four or more are \$30 per copy and free courier. Cheques payable to **Emergency Management Ltd, 15 Jackson Street, Methven** or phone/fax Ross Gordon on **03 302 8840**.

### Some Reflections on 1997:

A year of top people, thirty courses, 57 packets of Minties, some hard but enjoyable work and many funny moments.

The key reason why New Zealand will eventually be among the leading edge nations in SAR is the calibre of our people. Generally intelligent, high outdoor skills, dedicated, and above all a sense of humour.

The people on courses range from top flight academics to the unemployed, college students to seventy year olds, absolute cynics (they are changing or will never change depending which camp you are in) to dedicated followers of best international practice. The common thread is a wish to help some anonymous person who could be in trouble.

How close are we to the leading edge? Difficult to say as that edge will keep moving out. However once all the best ideas internationally are being used in New Zealand and systems are in place to continually upgrade then we must be near the edge. Many SAR folk are making good progress.

The calibre of our people is highlighted by some of the funny things that have happened on courses.

One volunteer was so keen that he left his wife at the Maternity Hospital for a weekend

with their newly born baby and went to a course. I am not sure whether he deserves a medal for dedication or his wife for her tolerance?

On a TCA course in Auckland with Roscoe Tait and John Walsh we saw dedication and stubbornness personified. We had been tracking all Saturday and it was now 11.30 pm but one of the volunteers would not give up. He was going to sleep leaning on his tracking stick!

Not all searchers are mature however. A favourite trick, observed on a number of tracking courses is to get another groups minties, remove the lolly and rewrap it with a stone, deer or possum faeces. Humour has an essential place in SAR and there is plenty of it about.

SAR attracts its fair share of eccentrics as well. One of the DoC SAR guys carried a bike to the top of Mt Cook, rode it over a set of crampons, got a flat tyre and carried it back down. Imagine that tenacity on a search, just great!

You cannot win in all situations though. Imagine 16 searchers lying on a dead end

public gravel road in the middle of the country with no traffic looking for minute sign of pre-laid track. The next minute the farmer from the end of the road arrives and tells us off for lying on the road. Well, maybe he felt better afterwards!

Imagine the public toilets in the camp ground at Mt Cook on a cold wet miserable day. Fifteen DoC people are crowded in for a toilet examination. In blunders a member of the public desperate to relieve himself. We assured him we were quite normal and he was welcome to use the Ladies next door. It would be interesting to know his thoughts as he left.

SAR personnel have to be able to manage danger. One TCA course was a classic where a mature member attended and at the end of each night's work produced some superb home concoctions and invited younger members present to imbibe and give their honest opinion. He drank very little himself and watched several people who should know better suffer!

Maybe we should seek sponsorship from the Blind Society. People must think it is great when they see groups of people are walking around the countryside with white tracking sticks.

On a TCA course, the caterers had swept up after a superb evening meal and I was demonstrating how low angle light shows up dust, dirt, prints and other minute items on floors. The kitchen floor was great except under the tables and chairs where the caterers had not swept. So if you want to check on the quality of the housework at home use a torch!!

With human nature we always look for the easy way while track and clue awareness courses teach and expect tight discipline. People have to hold back and produce quality work. One dark night I was monitoring groups tracking, without them knowing. One potential tracker was heard to say "bugger all this stuff, lets cheat!!!" without realising who was standing behind him - at least he was being honest!

In all seriousness last year Emergency Management Ltd ran thirty courses sponsored by a combination of NZLSAR,

Police, DoC, local businesses and the likes of Trustbank. Thanks to those organisations.

Thank you to the course participants in 1997 for the humour, effort and loss of your own personal time. It is your efforts which are taking us closer to the leading edge.

**Ross Gordon**  
Managing Director  
Emergency Management Limited

## Snippets

Those who have attended the second stage of Ross's TCA course will recall the lesson dealing with the value of faeces and urine as clues. Then before leaving the area, and with a certain amount of scepticism, we all piddled (discreetly) and marked the spot. We returned the next morning to investigate the results and most of us were relieved (no pun intended) to note little effect on the vegetation. However there was one patch of very shrivelled and definitely dying weeds. The owner, who proudly admitted that he was the culprit, is now known to his mates as "Roundup"

One nameless Canterbury Adviser really appreciates his new NZLSAR ID card. Being keen to put his tracking skills to good use and in a hurry to find a suicidal chap before he "did it", the Adviser noted with interest that a

Police car with lights flashing and siren wailing had appeared alongside his vehicle. Must be one of the SAR squad, he thought and gave a friendly wave. The look returned wasn't exactly as friendly and next thing it was necessary to stop or drive up the bum of said Police car. Turned out that the speed limit had been ever so slightly exceeded and a ticket was in the offing. Lightning fast thought processes (he was an Adviser!) led to the truth about the urgency being told and an ID card being produced. "Carry on but drive carefully" was the response and a grateful Adviser did just that.

**Dave Saunders**

Adviser Canterbury

## And another one

As a person who is the epitome of sensible level headedness, line dancing has always seemed a very strange practice to me. Perhaps its because I am not into dancing anyway. Here is a story that I repeat only because it comes from a senior Palmerston North Adviser and is for a good friend and Adviser, resident in Wanaka. It is hardly funny, has nothing to do with SAR and has no redeeming qualities but read on.

### **Bare essentials for line dancing**

Attend country line dance lessons in a small country town in Florida and you'll find instructors wearing cowboy hats, spurs and heaps of smiles. But nothing else. Now a federal judge is deciding whether the Silver Spurs Dance Studio staff need to be a bit more formal in their attire. The local authorities say the naked classes violate the health, safety and welfare of the community so have taken away the firm's operating licence. Popular dances taught at the school include the Achy Breaky Heart and the Watermelon Slide.

**John P Tristram for a contributor who best remain anonymous**

## National Cave SAREX, February 1998

Cave search and rescue is a small but essential part of NZLSAR. Unlike Land SAR we do not have a large pool of people to call on for rescues. We have a small group of people who work as Advisers or Field Controllers and then it is just assumed that if you go caving you are available to help if there is a call out. Call outs are not very frequent but require very specific skills and high state of readiness. Most cave call outs require a very fast response. The four yearly deep cave SAREX has become an important part of our training as it is the only event involving so many cavers.

This year we used Bulmer Cave, a large (40km+) multilevel cave on Mt Owen. Cavers came from as far afield as Auckland and Dunedin and we had a grand total of 80 people available to go underground. The exercise was based on a scenario involving 6 cavers being reported as overdue by more than 24hrs on a trip to part of the cave known as the Sisyphus Rift. This is a narrow vertical part of the cave involving a dozen pitches varying in length from 6 to 43 meters.

The assembled cavers were all transported to a campsite  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour's walk from the cave entrance using an Iroquois helicopter. An advance team was sent in to check out the

missing party's intended route. Several hours later four members of the missing party were located at the bottom of a 43 m drop, one of the party having supposedly sustained a broken tibia and chest injuries in a fall as the result of a rope breaking. In past exercises the victim had been bundled into the stretcher and carried out of the cave but in this case an evolving medical scenario had been included to give the doctors some experience in handling underground injuries. The patient was stabilised and preparations commenced to haul the stretcher out of the cave, a process that would have taken at least 24 hrs if everything had gone smoothly. Things however, did not go smoothly. The top of the pitch was sloping, constricted and loose with few good anchor points for setting up a haul system. After several hours and much discussion it was decided that in the interest of safety hauling on this pitch should be abandoned.

The other two members of the original party had decided not to go down the Sisyphus Rift but instead to do a "tiki tour" around the upper levels and had not yet emerged from the cave. A small party was dispatched to search their intended route but apart from one large fresh looking boot print no sign was seen of the two missing men. Further search teams were dispatched to search the upper levels and the missing party was eventually located cold but unharmed having become "stuck" when a traverse line around a large drop pulled free.

The remainder of the exercise was spent retrieving people and gear from the Sisyphus

Rift and every one was out of the cave about 30 hours after the exercise started.

Most of the objectives of the exercise were met. Eighty cavers; many of them with limited deep caving experience; were exposed to a rescue situation. For some this was the first time they had been involved in SAR so it was a valuable learning experience. It was also a first time experience for four people as Field Controllers and two people as Advisers and the exercise highlighted the training needs for these people. Some Land SAR personnel and the ACR team from Christchurch were also involved in the exercise. The sharing of expertise with other groups involved in SAR was very useful. Although the rescue phase of the operation was unsuccessful it was a valuable learning time for almost everyone involved. We have identified several areas to work on, in particular rescue rigging, search techniques, the communications interface between under and above ground, training for Field Controllers and Advisers and better definition of the role of Underground Controller.

It was also of interest that most of the cavers in New Zealand who are capable of deep caving were on the exercise and everyone went underground. Most emerged tired and not very keen to return underground for at least 24 hrs – maybe we need to encourage more people to take up caving!

**Sarah Brewer**  
Cave SAR Adviser  
Tasman District.

#### **Editors Comments**

To **John, Ross, Dave and Sarah** a big thank your for your articles. To those who proof read and check the spelling and grammar, thank you also.

Copy for the **June News** is most welcome and the close-off date is **Friday 22 May**. 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** . Regards **John P Tristram** National Field Officer