
NZLSAR News

Volume 3 Issue 4

August 1997

CONTENTS

Barry Shepherd QSM
Training SubCommittee news
SAR - The Dunedin way
Around the Regions
Smoke flares testing
Identity Cards

Well Deserved Award for Taupo Policeman

Taupo SAR members were delighted to learn last Queen's Birthday weekend that their Police Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Barry Shepherd, had been awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to SAR.

The members of the group could not think of a more deserving person for this particular award. Since becoming involved in SAR about eleven years ago Barry has been totally committed to the good of the group, far beyond that required by his appointment as SAR Liaison Officer. He has willingly assumed the responsibility of Secretary/Treasurer and has been the catalyst for the fund raising which has led to the accumulation of the quality assets which the group now owns.

The Taupo SAR plan has been developed and maintained by Barry and is widely recognised as the "model" against which others are assessed. Barry is also a crewman on the local rescue helicopter and this association has helped mould a very tight

and effective working relationship between the SAR team and this valuable resource.

It is generally recognised in the North Island that the Taupo SAR group has something special going for it. They do not have a Police SAR Squad, yet have a higher than average number of callouts with a very enviable success rate. The close working relationship which the Advisers and volunteers have with the police members is seen by the group as being the reason for its success. The dedication of officers such as Barry Shepherd is an example of what can be achieved given the right attitudes and a willingness to get on with it, and do as good a job as can be done with the tools available.

Well done Barry.

Dave Comber
Adviser
Tokoroa District

Training Subcommittee News.

Advisers Standards

In the last two years some 239 people have attended one of these two day Workshops. Land and Underground Advisers, Police and senior SAR personnel have been introduced to the performance Standards expected by NZLSAR of its Advisers and have worked through the Job Description. They have also been given some “tools” to assist in the task.

At this time, 70 Advisers have not been to a Workshop. With these people spread around the country, the challenge is to find an economical method of bringing them together in groups of about 25 and introduce them to the Standards.

Field Controllers Standards

These have now progressed beyond the advanced drafting stage. A pilot Workshop was held at Auckland for the local and Northland Advisers and persons who would fill the role of Field Controller. A good days work saw the draft further modified and will now be introduced to the rest of the country. Like the Advisers documents the Standards

will provide a Job Description that notes the key aspects of the task and a measure against which the individuals performance can be assessed.

At this early stage, the planning is to hold one day Workshops in the following Districts and to the timetable shown.

*Nelson District - Saturday 13 September
Nelson District (Blenheim) - Sun. 14 Sept
Gisborne District Sunday - 11 October
Hawkes Bay District Saturday - 12 October
South Canterbury Dist. - Saturday 15 Nov.
Otago Dist. (Dunedin) - Sunday 16 Nov.*

As mentioned, planning is still at an early stage. Liaison with the respective senior SAR personnel needs to occur as to the suitability of the proposed dates and once finalised the details of the Workshop in your District will be advertised.

Roscoe Tait

Chairman Training Subcommittee

Cooperation the key to good SAR or SAR - “The Dunedin Way”

Getting the right people, skills and gear in the right place at the right time could mean the difference between life and death.

There are so many things to consider. How good is the crystal ball today? Have the wounds healed from the last debrief? Are your missing people just late or in a spot of bother, clinging to the thought that help is not far away? When someone’s life depends on your decision, the responsibility is enormous.

The Dunedin SAR Committee has addressed these issues over the last three years, changing the way we manage SAR in both peace time and during operations. The process is ongoing and has required a lot of time and effort, problem solving and innovation. It has strengthened the

cooperation between the groups that make up Dunedin SAR.

Our SAR land committee meets every two months and has three subcommittees; one for training; one for equipment; and the all important fund raising subcommittee.

Our First Response system revolves around two important concepts. Firstly the use of Alpha numeric pagers for callouts, and secondly the setting of pre-determined responses for starting a land search, a land rescue or a marine rescue. The three First Response groups include our most skilled and committed volunteers. A roster system spreads the load and keeps a larger number involved, thus avoiding the creation of a small

elite group and keeping everyone enthusiastic.

We began by identifying the skills needed to respond to our most common incidents. We then did a comparison of the skills available and where we found a gap we initiated and coordinated training.

Our funding comes from three sources; Police training money, NZLSAR allocations and fundraising (mainly from the applications to the Hilary Commission).

A donation by the St Patrick's Masonic Lodge in 1995 made the purchase of 32 alpha numeric pagers and an Alpha mate keyboard in the Dunedin Police Control Room possible. The Alpha mate is a keyboard with a screen connected to the Telecom paging network and is used to send messages to the pagers.

As a backup, Ambulance control can also send messages to our pagers using a programme called "notify" on a personal computer. Ambulance and the rescue helicopter also get the pager messages. Everyone knows what is happening at the same time. There are no more arguments.

Controllers would normally page an Adviser, who rings in and determines if a response is needed. Every pager gets every message so the First Response search team members are automatically put on alert. This also keeps costs to a minimum since we only rent one line from Telecom.

A second page which calls out the search team on duty for that month will soon follow when a search is necessary. The page will give information about the meeting point and other details. Members ring in to confirm they are responding and any gaps are filled by telephoning other search team members not on duty. Pagers are swapped at the end of each month between three teams.

Each search team consists of a Field Controller, Police SAR Squad Sergeant, search dog and handler, AREC person, four searchers and two 4WD vehicles and drivers. One page gets the lot, saving time and the possibility of overlooking a key resource.

Each member has attended a *Track and Clue Awareness* course and a *Search Methods* course. As well many have attended a *Managing Search Operation Course*. These three courses were provided by Ross Gordon from Emergency Management Limited.

Night searches, using tracking skills and sound sweeps, are common for first response callouts. As time passes the possible search area grows and valuable clues are lost. In these cases, a small skilled team is quick to respond and easy to manage, gathering quality information and passing it back to the control room where the Adviser will decide what further resources are required.

The Police SAR Squad Sergeant has a 4WD Hilux sponsored by the local City Council and equipped with a Police radio, cell-phone and VHF radio for both land and marine channels. The vehicle also has a winch, a Stokes Basket stretcher and other gear for starting a search and rescue job. As well as Police signs, it is covered in the names of sponsors, providing advertising for the organisations that have helped us.

Our communications system for the First Response team consists of five VHF Tait hand held radios which talk to a base set in the Police Control Room (all bought with sponsorship funds). In the initial stages a field headquarters is not needed with consistently good communications provided by the AREC, which will soon install a cross band repeater where coverage from local defence repeaters is lacking. An HF radio is carried for backup.

Stand-down pages are sent when an incident is completed or when a decision not to make a callout is made. Land and marine SAR receive each others pages. It is always good to know what the other half is up to, which make combined operations better coordinated.

The key elements in setting up this system have been great people, a spirit of cooperation and a dedication to providing a quality service. The main obstacle to surmount has been the lack of money which

we overcame by planning ahead, swallowing our pride and filling out a few forms.

26 Mosgiel, Ph: 03-489-3534 or Fax: 03-489-3323.

If you are interested in more detail on how we manage SAR in Dunedin contact Sergeant Brian Benn, Mosgiel Police Station, PO Box

Brian Benn
Otago District Police SAR Coordinator

Around the Regions

A number of Regions have recently had their AGMs which has resulted in some cases in a change in office holders.

In **Region One** the office holders are Chairman **John Walsh**, Secretary/Treasure is **Roscoe Tait**. The position of Regional Representative was up for re-selection and Roscoe retained this task.

Region Three had their AGM on Sunday 20 July. **Derick Matthews** continues as Chairman, **Guy Te Kahika** is Secretary and the Treasurer's position is to be confirmed.

In **Region Five Otago/Southland** **Brian Ahern** has agreed to take the Chairman's role and **Chas Tanner** continues as Secretary/Treasurer

To all these people we give thanks for stepping forward to carry some of the NZLSAR management load.

Smoke Flare Test

Each year the Wellington, Kapiti Mana and Hutt Districts hold a weekend long first aid course for their SAR participants, which generally has an emphasis on injury or illness assessment and the provision of ongoing care in a remote location. On this year's course, time was taken to test and see how effective a smoke flare would be in identifying the location of a SAR party to a helicopter or other search party.

The flares trialed were named "Comet", priced at a recommended retail cost of \$46-69 per flare and are readily available from **Quality Equipment Limited** with outlets in Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington and Auckland.

When lit, they give off a bright orange smoke which would contrast well against snow, but may not show up so well against tussock or long grass especially in the autumn when it is dying off. We tried them under a thick bush canopy which, with the need for the smoke to push through and rise above the tree tops and be clearly visible at a distance, was seen as a severe test. The result was excellent.

On a later operation a helicopter being used was able to see the smoke from some distance away and was able to home in and rendezvous with the persons setting off the flare.

I would recommend that search teams carry two each.

There are some conditions that Advisers, Controllers and Search Teams need to be aware of.

- The flares are simple to operate but personnel need to be trained in their use. There are simple safety precautions that people may well forget! One example is never point the end that is activated towards you, always pull the cord out (away from you).
- The object or persons you are trying to signal to, need to be within a reasonably close vicinity. This is because the flare does not last a very long time. In compensation for this they do put out a large quantity of smoke that lasted some considerable time.

- It appears that the heat output of some other flares, both smoke and non-smoke types would make their use in a SAR situation far more dangerous. Igniting some of those types of flares and throwing them on the ground could result in setting the bush alight and announce your position in a big way.
- They were not trialed at night for the obvious reason that the smoke is not likely to be seen. Having said this, I am hoping to

do some work at night with other non-smoke types. If anyone has done extensive trials or has other information on this subject I would like to hear from you.

Andy Warnes

Wellington Region SAR Coordinator

NZLSAR Advisers Identity Card

During SAR operations key NZLSAR personnel normally make use of the local Police Station. We sometimes turn up in the middle of the night, and often Police Staff on duty at the time are not personally known to us. The name SAR is mentioned and the door is opened. There will come a time when even the Police will require some form of identification before access into the non-public areas of their buildings is given. As well, during Field Operations the identification of key personnel is sometimes poor. If the Advisers wore ID cards during an operation they would be more easily identified by those seeking assistance. To provide a more professional image and for the reasons mentioned above, NZLSAR will provide to all its Land and Underground Advisers a national standard ID card. This will be only available to those who have attended an Advisers Standard Workshop.

What you need to do to get a card.

- Be a NZLSAR Land or Underground Adviser.
- Have attended an Advisers Standard Workshop
- Fill out the form as attached to this edition of NZLSAR News. If you need more forms ring, write, fax or email the **NFO at PO Box 12081 Thorndon Wellington or fax 04-474-9568 or email at tristram.nzlsar@xtra.co.nz**
- Provide **two professionally taken** "passport" photos.
- Send the completed form with the photos to the NFO at the above address

Your application will be entered into the data base and you will be provided with an ID card and clothing clip shortly thereafter.

A sample is shown over the page but note, it is not to scale.

Ross Berry

Chairman Aviation Subcommittee

PO Box 12-081
Thorndon
Wellington



NZ Land
SAR Inc.

NZ Police

Exp. Date 31/12/1999



Assisting NZ Police

Ross Berry
Adviser

Hawkes Bay Police District

Editors Comments

To **Dave, Roscoe, Brian, Andy** and **Ross** a big thank your for your articles. To those who proof read, checked the spelling or grammar, thank you also.

I am going to be away from the Office on leave until 7 October. My wife and I are going on a walking tour in the Austrian and Italian Alps and then travelling to England and across to Wales to spend some four days with an international SAR expert. On our way back to NZ, I have had an invite to meet some of the Hong Kong people involved in the management of SAR there and attend a day exercise with their Mountain Rescue Unit.

Consequently as the October News will come toward the middle (hopefully) of the month I would apologise in advance for its slightly late circulation. What will be of immense help to me in producing it, would be for my "in-tray" to be full of articles upon my return. 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**