
NZLSAR News

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Chairmans Christmas message

December 2000!! Where has the last year gone? It only seems like yesterday when I had Chris Sharp in Gisborne on my back making sure we had things in order for the millennium celebrations. Well those celebrations have been and gone and without any real dramas for SAR. Well done to those of you who put in the effort to ensure things went smoothly over that period.

We now move into another festive season and a new year that some would claim is more correctly the true millennium. It looks like we could again see a range of activities around the country that could place our systems under stress. The key is early planning to ensure you have your call-out lists updated for the holiday period and the necessary logistics in place where you can get hold of them as and where they may be needed. It is unlikely that there will be the same media hype that was associated with last year's occasions but it can be expected that trips to see the sunrise and the New Year from some of those special vantage points will be repeated again this year.

Looking back on the events of the past year has been quite satisfying, with all areas actively involved in SAR activities and positive reports coming in from all parts of the country. From the operational point of view it is clear that the combination of improved skills and better equipment are playing their part in ensuring we continue to get a high

success rates, but what do we call a successful operation? Is it sufficient to have found and/or rescued someone or is it more than that? Should we, as a volunteer organisation, continue to strive for perfection? There is a balance to be achieved.

A team (which includes support from EML) is currently working on our reporting systems because the P130's in their present form have insufficient information to make detailed assessments of the success of each operation and provide the answers to the above questions. In the meantime, I rely on the feedback reports that are provided by Advisers and Field Controllers at the end of each operation and debrief. These reports are showing an improving trend in search and/or rescue times and a reduction in the total length of operations. Keep them coming in. They give a good insight to our activities and help us to determine your needs and requirements for future training and equipment.

With the holiday break getting closer I will be looking forward to a chance to sit back for a while and get some of that much needed relaxation. If all goes well maybe I will manage the odd day in the hills, but looking at the way the "in tray" is piling up I may have to exchange some of that time to make a dent in the backlog. Perhaps a swap between the day and night jobs might solve some of the

problems but the CEO may have something to say about that.

This is an important time for giving and sharing and I hope the majority of you will get the chance to make the most of the holiday period to join your family and friends doing the things you like best. On behalf of the National Committee and the NFO at our Wellington Office I would like to thank

everyone for an outstanding effort managing and supporting Land SAR over the past year. Our best wishes go to you and your family for the festive season. Have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year and we will look forward to working with you in 2001.

Graham Thorp
Chairman NZLSAR.

Ferno stretcher equipment suppliers

I have been asked on a number of occasions where Ferno stretcher equipment can be purchased. Just to hand is a letter from an Auckland firm, Frontier Medical who are "proud to announce that they have recently been appointed as the sole New Zealand distributor for Ferno stretchers". The firms contact details are:-

Frontier Medical (NZ) Ltd, PO Box 101-715, NORTH SHORE MAIL CENTRE. Unit A 13 Ride Way, Albany, AUCKLAND. Ph 09-414-5640. Fax 09-414-5642. email frontmed@ihug.co.nz

John P Tristram NFO

SAR Observation Exercises - Instructor Notes

SAR training emphasises the importance of clue seeking and searchers are taught to be "clue aware" and learn the basic elements of "man tracking". Unfortunately, knowing that there are numerous clues to be found, and understanding the importance of finding them, does not necessarily guarantee that in practice they will be located! Painstaking "step by step" techniques demonstrate that most clues can be found but this involves a concentrated and time consuming effort in a very small area. This may become absolutely essential work but needs to be directed at specific locations.

The first three exercises outlined below are aimed at searchers travelling as they normally would during hasty or recce searches, or when engaged in more intensive, but still comparatively fast moving techniques such as "purposeful wandering", "sound sweeps", etc. The aim of the fourth exercise is to test the ability to "see" clues from a distance. This involves scanning an open face, or even sitting on a ridge looking down or across a large clearing or river flat and preferably using binoculars. It includes

some compass work and map reading as a bonus!

Exercise Objective

To demonstrate in a practical way just how difficult it can be to find clues, with the consequence that searchers appreciating the need to be particularly vigilant, will be encouraged to practice, practice, practice!

Method A. Static Line Exercise

Select an area that is typical of the terrain and vegetative cover in your district and enclose the area with tape or string. A rectangle with a base line of 10 to 20 meters and a depth of about 20 meters is sufficient. Within the area and visible from the front or base line, place twenty items that may range from a shop dummy (or part thereof!) to red coloured pins to represent blood droplets. Use things that are likely to be left by the subject of a search. Note that footprints and damaged vegetation should not be used as "objects" for exercises A, B or C due to the need to walk through the area when setting up and at the end of each five minute session when disclosing the location of items.

Pointing out items from the base line is not as easy as it may sound!. Have some highly visible items and some that are difficult to see such as a knife embedded in a tree, a length of rope hanging above eye level and at least one object on the ground, right at the base line. A bunch of keys or a cigarette butt at the feet of an observer is often overlooked! Remember - outline, shape, contrast, colour, texture, and maybe movement if it can be arranged!

Take five to ten persons to the line and tell the group - "There are a number of items within the area bounded by the tape. You may walk up and down the base line, but not around the other three sides. You may not enter the area and you have a set time to list all objects you see that are foreign to the area. A description is sufficient if an item cannot be exactly identified - i.e. -" a bit of blue rag" is quite acceptable when the article is "a pair of man's blue underpants". Do not list any prints or damage to vegetation. Please do not point to objects, compare notes or talk to other participants." At the end of the allotted time collect the lists, mark the lists then go into the area and point out each item. Discuss results with the whole group and as the scores can be quite humbling so take care not to embarrass people. Explain that the groups success rate may mean that in a real search, vital clues could therefore be overlooked. Emphasise the point, that the score obtained was the result of several minutes of intense concentration. Ask what sort of a success rate could be expected from tired, cold, wet searchers!

B. Walk Through Exercise

Use a slightly bigger area. Boundaries need not be marked but a well defined track wandering through the area is necessary. The length should be based on a slow walk of five minutes. Place twenty items on either side of the track and within about twenty meters of it. Participants are taken through individually by an instructor who keeps a tally of items pointed out to him. Use a check form. The instructor must adjust the pace to complete the course within the allotted time. Discuss the results with the group and again

remind them that they have experienced ideal conditions.

C. Walk Through Exercise (With a mean twist!)

As for B above but instead of pointing out items to an instructor, let the participant complete the course and then ask him or her to sketch the route taken and mark the location of each item seen.

Alternatively B or C can be done as a team exercise.

D Distant Scan.

In an area typical of the country you search such as the mentioned river flat or tussock face, place 15 to 20 items that are "foreign" to the area. Distance and size of items should be such that they are difficult or impossible to see with the naked eye. Use radios to ensure that they all visible from the observation point. Define the observation point/base line using tape or sticks.

Each participant will need binoculars, writing materials, compass, map and radio. Explain the rules and define the boundaries of the area to be scanned. Tell each group of four to six, that they have ten minutes working alone, to locate and record items with a description, bearing and grid reference. Then as a team, compare notes and radio consensus to "FSHQ".

Suggested observation course objects.

- General. Coloured pins, keys, tea bags, match packets, utensils, cartridge cases, apparel, food packets, toilet paper, body parts (pretend!) etc. Use your imagination!
- Movement. Waving arm - battery powered and works well! (Canterbury Land SAR has the plans for this. Balloons or streamers blowing in the breeze. Smoke (if safe).
- Contrast. Rope between two sticks/branches. Knotted tussock or bent ferns. (Route marker). Broken branch. Tracks - distinct - across shingle, clay etc. Clothing. Pack.

- Shape. Silhouette or dummy. Straight pole. Tent.
- Shine. Plastic bag, a bottle or a mirror.
- Light. A flashing cycle light is ideal.
- Sound. Lots of possibilities - "help" at regular intervals! Bird Scarer (see your local Fish and game people!) sounds like shots fired.

Comment

There are various ways by which people can improve their ability to scan. Other than suggesting that areas be visually divided into sections and that most people are more thorough when scanning from right to left, specific training has to date, not been tried.

An obvious improvement has however been noted for people who have participated in several observing sessions. Increasing the time for each exercise has a corresponding increase in the success rate. These exercises are challenging and informative but have proved popular with SAR people at all levels! Something to do later in the day - ask participants to describe the clothing worn by the instructor who took them through the course.

Dave Saunders

Adviser. Canterbury District

SAR Statistics 1999/2000

The Police Search and Rescue Annual Statistical report on search and rescue has been completed for the 1999/2000 year. Copies of the report have been forwarded to NZLSAR for distribution nationally.

Of interest is that the South Island recorded 44% of reported incidents nationally.

There were 81 class one land search and rescue operations and 319 class two land operations. Class one are searches where the Police alone carry out a search and rescue incident with their own resources and class two are where Police call in the services on volunteers groups, principally NZLSAR.

The following is a breakdown of the reported land incidents by Police District, from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South Island.

Northland	4
North Shore/Waitakere	7
Auckland City	7
Counties/Manukau	2
Waikato	23
Bay of Plenty	71
Eastern	12
Central	54
Wellington	44
Tasman	45
Canterbury	55
Southern	76

NZLSAR members can be proud of the 19,061 hours recorded towards search and rescue. This is an increase from the 1998/1999 years where 14,368 hours were recorded.

Gerard Prins

Coordinator Search and Rescue

Reflecting on the last 5 years

How refreshing it is to have a break from something and then hopefully slide back into an activity, which you think is the same as one left off. How times have changed. It was 1994 when New Zealand Land SAR was established and SAR had

previously been under the Federated Mountain Clubs Umbrella.

Being out of the SAR action for only 3 years I have found it necessary to become acquainted with TCA methods, learn the new lingo such as sign cutting, sound sweeps etc.

Where would we be today if Ross Gordon had not had the foresight to find out what search techniques were currently being used overseas. I hope the other Advisers (old hands) around the country have found the time to similarly upskill themselves.

Also moving from a big city (Wellington) to the Central Volcanic Plateau has been enlightening, as it is interesting to see how a small locality deals with SAR. The Police here for example don't have such luxuries as SAR squads but those few tasked with the SAR portfolios are enthusiastic and do their utmost to support and encourage the volunteers.

Some recent highlights from this busy area are: -

Search Operation for missing hunter Scott Morrissey in the Northern Kaimanawas on the 11/12 July 2000

Scott Morrissey became separated from his two hunting companions after he had gone for a hunt. He had misinterpreted the direction of a particular river and ventured away from the Mangamingi Hut where they were based. He subsequently spent 2 nights out in below freezing conditions with only a space blanket in which to gain warmth from each night and a volume of water from his camelback to drink. He eventually found his way out to Oamaru Hut some 12 kilometres from his camp and where containment had been placed. Some useful points which came up from the search debrief were:-

- The hunters were helicoptered into the area, which meant their knowledge of how to walk out to a road end may have been limited.
- They were using a map, which was a blow up of the immediate area where they were based and it did not extend to showing adjacent country and tracks out from the area.
- In the first few hours of the search footprints were found using TCA techniques and they were confirmed as being of the missing person. A direction of travel was established.

- A helicopter equipped with FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) heat detection equipment was used in an effort to locate the missing party. In the semi darkness of the first morning of the search it picked up a moving torso which also showed a head, shoulders, upper body and two legs in a front on view. The observers were genuinely convinced it was a person but it turned out to be a deer.
- Communications were not good on this 21 hour search. Both HF and VHF sets were used. One of the newly issued repeaters was placed by a party who were helicoptered in on a central hill top but unfortunately it was found later not to have been accurately tuned to the appropriate channel.
- It was also recognised that if search teams are going to continue tracking for clues into the night then it is essential a continuous listening watch be maintained by the radio operators.
- Some teams were operating on different channels as the radios had a Department of Conservation channel four as well as a normal channel four.
- Containment was used successfully at key exit points.
- The search management team were fortunate to have the father and brothers of the missing person brought into Base which meant they could obtain first hand information on Scott.
- A RNZAF Iroquois helicopter was deployed on this search and 27 volunteers were involved along with additional police personnel. A police dog was also brought in and was transported successfully in the helicopter. It was not sufficiently tested however.
- The missing person was in reasonably good shape when found apart from having badly blistered heels and was somewhat fatigued.

Annual SAREX 2-3 September 2000

Location - Paradise Valley Road in the Army training area off the Desert Road, Southern Kaimanawas.

The area comprised tussock and beech forest in the restricted access area of army land. An HSE briefing was given by the army because of the possibility of teams coming across old ammunition in the area. We were very fortunate in that the Taupo Tramping Club volunteered to be the missing parties and we had 13 live victims to find.

The group of 50 attending the weekend spent Saturday morning on revision of TCA, Search Methods and observation skills. Members were invited from adjoining areas and we had representation from Waitomo, Waimarino, Rotorua and our own resources from Taupo, Tokoroa and Turangi.

By midday on Saturday the Search Management team had been presented with the scenario and in the early afternoon search teams were tasked and each group was prepared for camping the night out in the changeable weather conditions. The objectives of the weekend were:-

- To practice and test the deployment of the Field Base.
- To practice and test the deployment and operation of Field Base communications.
- To revise the search teams in observation, TCA, and SM including sign cutting from vehicles and camp sites.
- To practice Advisers in the management of a search using TCA and SM
- To practice and test teams in communication and navigation.

- To test search teams in first aid stretcher carrying and rescue of a patient in steep terrain.
- To test individual SAR members clothing and equipment in winter sub alpine conditions.

Outcome

The missing party's vehicles were left at the road end to allow the search teams to sign cut and determine the number of people leaving each vehicle. Nine left one vehicle and the search team confirmed that up to five persons had left it. Three of the missing six groups of people had been found by Sunday. Communications were excellent. Two repeaters were positioned, one for the missing person and the other for the search teams as different channels were used. The Turangi Cliff Rescue Team successfully extracted a patient up a steep cliff. Two teams successfully carried out an injured patient on a one and a half hour stretcher carry. A laptop was used at Field Base for preparing task sheets and keeping the log. Rifle shots were fired to test the search teams in observation and direction. At times the weather became testing as visibility was minimal and snow flurries were encountered. Feedback from the debrief indicated that the weekend had been successful and the objectives had been achieved.

Roger Bates

Adviser. Bay of Plenty District

Taranaki SAR Competition 2000

Earlier in the year I attended the Taranaki SAR Competition. I wrote the following article but am not sure if I published it. At the risk of repeating articles and an apology to Taranaki for its lateness, hear it is.

On Sunday 11 June the Taranaki SAR Organisation held their tenth SAR Competition. It was based at the Fish and Game Lodge at the end of Toro Road in the part farm land, part native or exotic forested, steep papa country of East Taranaki. Although the weather cleared as the day progressed, the heavy rain squalls in the morning made the Lodge a much appreciated place to work from.

This year only five teams entered which is down on the usual turn out, a point the organisers are considering. However with six to eight persons in each team, plus Advisers, Police and a couple of much appreciated cooks, there were nearly 50 people in attendance.

The Teams entered were from New Plymouth Tramping Club, Central SAR, Orienteers, Kahui Outdoor Pursuits and Alpine Club (KOPAC) and Egmont Tramping Club

This year it had been decided to test each team at a series of scenarios, which the SAR Squad had set up. Usually the Squad is also a competitor so the organising precluded them

from entering and explained why the numbers were down, at least by one team. The reason for the change from the past of finding a patient, treating their injuries and carrying them home was firstly to test a wider range of skills and secondly to try and get a more consistent marking procedure. On this second point, fairness and consistency is a real difficulty and needs careful planning. Marking also can be a useful training needs analysis tool as it shows areas of weakness in Teams performance.

There were six scenarios at which each Team had 15 minutes to show their competency and then five minutes to move onto the next. While 15 minutes was adequate for some scenarios, to complete others put pressure on the competitors.

I went around the course as an observer with the Orienteer Team and we started with the "medical scenario". It was situated in a room of the Lodge and upon entering the Team was confronted by a tramper fully dressed for the outdoors, lying in a crumpled heap in the middle of the floor. The props consisted of an electric hand lamp swinging above the prone patient, a broom and a full pack lying on the floor. After getting rid of the lamp with the broom handle, going through the pack, finding identification in a wallet, a cellphone with a home number and medication which was given, it was finally ascertained the patient had two injuries sustain in a fall just behind the Lodge.

Scenario two and the Team was given four GPS's, four sets of co-ordinates, asked to enter one on each GPS, follow the direction to the point given and return with information from an object there. Probably the two biggest problems with this were the GPS instructions were written very small (I didn't have my glasses) and one person with chubby fingers had real difficulty in pressing only one button at a time. I am not sure how any of us would have coped with gloves on.

Scenario three was an observation course. A right angle bend in a fence line was used with contestants able to walk along 15 and 10 metres of the L looking into a rectangular of pine trees in which a number of objects were placed or partially hidden.

Scenario four and the Team was given a situation of being on a search for a known drug dealer and generally "unsavoury character". It was indicated to the Team his campsite and then left to it. They had to approach, find a very dead person (a large sign on the body said so) see a firearm, deal with a nosy member of the public and inform base of happenings. They then had to set up a cordon and guard the scene until the Police arrived. This is all a little foreign to volunteers but is entirely possible for us to be involved in a similar situation. We did not handle it terrible well which is not a reflection on our team. SAR organisations may need to think about the likelihood of such an event in their area and work up a suitable training programme. Module 9.3 Sudden Death Scene in the NZLSAR Course Workbook would be a good start to gaining the competencies required in this area.

Scenario five required the Team to appoint a leader and carry out an interview of a missing person's next of kin. This again was not familiar territory for the Team as usually this is done by the Search Base staff. However if a search party finds one member of a missing group out in the field some initial digging for information may have to take place.

Scenario six required the Team to appoint a person who acting as a communications person at a base, had to brief the rest on installing batteries in the VHF radios, channel selection and radio procedures. They then had to take a VHF repeater to a suitable site close by, erect the aerial and call back to base.

The event finished with a barbecue lunch, a few drinks and the presentation of the shield.

And the winner was – **Central SAR**

An observation. The SAR Team Member Course Workbook I mentioned above has a number of competencies required of search parties. The modules make suitable competition scenarios and the notes for each can be expanded into a check list of attainment for each Team. Each component could have a scaled mark, 5 for very well done to 0, not done at all. Totalled up this would give each teams competency level and after the event the people involved in the training for the

organisation could take the results and analyse for an indication of needed training.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer

Reminders, Reminders, Reminders, Reminders, Reminders, Reminders, Reminders, Reminders

16/17 February 2001. An Advisers Standards Workshop will be held in the South Island. For those Advisers who have not been able to avail themselves of this opportunity, new Advisers and those who may be Advisers in the future. See your District Committee for more details. Venue yet to be decided.

16/17 March 2001. NZLSAR Committee meeting is to be held on Friday night and Saturday. All papers to be in the NFO's hand by 16 February for circulation. Papers deadline.

Mayish 2001. Following on from the highly successful Search Dog and Handler courses run in the South Island, a similar course will be run in the North Island. Further details will be in the February News.

Editors Comments A big thank you to **Graham, Dave, Gerard and Roger** for your articles. To those who proof read and check the spelling and grammar, thank you also. Copy for the **February News** is most welcome and the close-off date is **Friday 26 January 2001**. 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.

Finally to all those who contribute so much to search and rescue whether it be in the field, in its management or as a supporting partner, thank you so very much and have a safe, happy Christmas and prosperous New Year. Regards **John P Tristram**, National Field Officer