
NZLSAR News

Volume 9 Issue 6

December 2003

CONTENTS

Chairmans Christmas message
Report on Avalanche Course
Harris Trophy SAR Competition

Assistance with training costs
Dog news

Chairman's Christmas Message

As another year draws to a close we can look back and reflect on the year that has passed. There were three operations, in particular, that hit the headlines during the year; the searches for a person with dementia at Pleasant Point in January, Coral Burrows at Featherston and the two trampers in Nelson in November 2003. All three searches were quite extensive and involved many hours of effort in quite difficult conditions for both police and NZLSAR volunteers. A big thank you to everyone who took part in these searches and also to all those who have been involved in training and SAR operations across the country during the year. Without your continued dedication and efforts we would not be able to offer this essential service to the wider community.

A very successful combined meeting of the national committee of NZLSAR and the Regional Chair and Secretaries was held in August at the Police College. Traditionally this meeting has been held every two years. However, the meeting decided that these meetings should now be an annual event as they provide an excellent forum for views to be aired and issues to be discussed and resolved.

There have been some major changes in the way that nationally funded training is now delivered. The EML structure was not sustainable long term and through an initiative from Tasman SAR, Tai Poutini Polytechnic [TPP] is now offering a range of courses as part of its recently developed search and rescue programme. This change will enable training to be done on a more as required basis and not restricted by funding as it was in the past. SARINZ is currently still the main provider of courses for this programme.

Other highlights for the year included Wairarapa SAR celebrating its 75th anniversary at a series of events and functions in March and Motueka SAR and Volunteer Coast Guard's official opening of its recently completed SAR operational Base building in October.

After the tremendous success of the first NZLSAR conference, which was held at Lincoln College in November 2002, the second NZLSAR conference will be held in the North Island at Hopuhopu, north of Hamilton, on the 16/17 October 2004 (weekend before Labour weekend). A number of pre-conference workshops, involving both local and international SAR experts will be run in the week prior to the conference. Planning is well advanced for

what, I am sure, will be a very informative and successful event.

At the end of this year we say farewell to Inspector Paul Brennan who, after 35 years with the Police, is retiring and taking up a position with AustAid in Samoa. Paul has been involved in SAR, initially at a local level in Taranaki and more latterly nationally as Manager of Emergency Management at the Office of the Commissioner, for most of his Police career and has been very supportive of the volunteers involved in Search and Rescue. We wish Paul and his family all the best in his new role.

Roscoe Tait

Chairman, NZLSAR

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone who has made some contribution, no matter how small, to SAR over the last year. Each of us has our own time constraints in our busy lives, but each contribution is welcomed and appreciated. It all adds to the high standard of service that our organisation, of which we can be justifiably proud, provides to the New Zealand public.

On behalf of the National Committee I would like to wish everyone a happy and relaxing Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Report on the Otago Polytechnic Avalanche Safety Management Stage 1 course

For several years the Otago Polytechnic has most generously sponsored a NZLSAR nominated person on their Avalanche Stage 1 six and a half day course. Below is a report from Pim de Monchy on his attendance at this years course.

When Tric Moller phoned me with word that my nomination for the LANDSAR position on Otago Polytechnic's Avalanche Safety Management I course was successful, I was delighted. The course I attended was held at Mt Cheeseman from 3 – 10 August and instructed by Matt Wilkinson and Kem Johnson.

Upon arrival I thought the course was doomed. Mt Cheeseman's snow base was very thin and there had been no significant new snow for weeks. Add to that the fact that their day lodge/classroom had burnt to the ground in July and things were off to a mediocre start. However, the theory of avalanches can be taught in any conditions. Terrain, weather, snow and human factors that influence the likelihood and scale of avalanche activity were covered in some detail using slides, OHTs a whiteboard and several good references on the topic. Matt's experience as chief ski patroller at

nzski.com and Kem's job as a heliski guide in Methven provided contrasting perspective's on a complex matrix of influences. Matt's approach at the Remarkables is very conservative – he needs to guarantee that clients anywhere inside the ski area boundary will not be caught in avalanches and will therefore close or trigger any detected instabilities. In contrast, Kem commented that even when snow stability is rated "poor" he will still take clients heliskiing, provided their ability and the available terrain allow him to limit exposure to risk.

The course is delivered to an audience of varied academic experience and therefore attempts to balance the theoretical components with extensive fieldwork and practical testing. The tested elements during the course were meteorology, taking weather observations, digging snow profiles, keeping good records, evaluating snow stability and forecasting avalanche

hazard, terrain analysis, individual and group rescue scenarios and a written test.

I was already reasonably familiar with meteorology and weather observations, but the formal profiling of snow and recording of resistance, temperature, crystal size and shape, density and testing for weaknesses was new and fascinating. For example, snow at ground level has a constant temperature

of 0° C while the surface temperature is often much colder. If the temperature gradient is greater than 10° per metre then a process known as faceting occurs, whereby snow grains lose water vapour to the colder grains above and form square, loosely bonded layers. This means that a shallow snow pack is often more unstable than a deep one because the shallow pack has a shorter distance for the temperature difference between air and ground to be spread.



Interpreting compression, shovel shear and Rutschblock test results was also a good lesson for me. I had performed the tests before but never really knew how applicable they were to assessing slope stability. Having said that, we dug numerous pits and the results were sometimes quite different as little as two metres apart – providing a real reminder that snow deposition in New Zealand's windy climate is so variable that we need to be constantly evaluating conditions.

The course was pitched at the right level for me. I enjoyed the split between practical and theoretical exercises, and the camaraderie established in the group of 12 students. The instructors also found the right balance of casual story-telling and formal instruction or testing, even though our 'classroom' was separated from the Mt Cheeseman lodge's lounge by only a blanket!

Many thanks to Tric Moller and John Tristram from LANDSAR for approving my nomination, and to Murray Cullen from the Christchurch ACR team for nominating me. I will offer a seminar to all Christchurch ACR members with the aim of assisting those who have not yet

completed Avalanche Safety Management Level I and updating those who studied it more than a few years ago.

Pim de Monchy
Canterbury ACR Team

Harris Trophy SAR Competition

This annual event in its 19th year was held near Oxford in the Ashley River and surrounding countryside on Sunday 2nd November 2003. Each year it is organised by a different Canterbury SAR Sector and it fell this time to Arch Fidler and Oxford SAR to bring it all together. With nine Teams competing, the number was down slightly on some previous years but there was no lessening of the competitive spirit.

Of special note was the entry of the Hamilton SAR Team. NZLSAR in an effort to encourage SAR competitions had agreed to fund up to a \$1,000 to the winners of the Waikato and Canterbury competitions to travel to each other's events. The Hamilton team as the winner of the Waikato competition with some fund raising "went south". They even did a deal with the Ace car rental company in Christchurch who loaned them at no cost, two cars for the weekend



The Christchurch Police SAR Team. Paul Beaver, Gary Bombay, Dave Garlick, Steve Hoare, Paul Hughes, Craig Prior, Tom Savage and Alistair Sim

The scenario was an injured (shot) rabbit shooter who the teams had to find, treat, radio report on and carry back by stretcher. Points were assessed on SAR skills including navigation, search methods, TCA, 'team spirit and leadership', patient first aid, communications, river crossing correct pack content and observation skills. And so just after 1010hrs the gun went off, a nominated member raced for a bag of instructions, these were read and digested and the teams disappeared into the countryside. Gorse, blackberry and broom and a swirling norwester that Canterbury is famed for. It was this last feature, dust laden as it was, that nearly killed the laptop that was used to calculate the scores and possibly did some serious damage to the attached printer.

The first team with patient reappeared an hour and a half later and the last team was back by about 1430hrs. After a long wait the announcement was made - the winner is **Christchurch Police SAR Squad.**

Methven SAR was second, Hurunui SAR third followed by Hamilton SAR, Red Cross – Timaru, Oxford SAR, Red Cross –Christchurch, Hanmer Springs SAR, Rakaia SAR, and Ellesmere SAR.

The day finished with a very enjoyable social hour with a barbecue and a few cold drinks

The provisional date for 2004 is Sunday October 31 with Rakaia –Ellesmere as the host sector.

Peter Summerfield
SAR Coordinator Canterbury

Assistance with training costs

Since its inception, NZLSAR has been encouraging Districts and Regions to undertake what is termed "new" training for their SAR members. The national committee of NZLSAR, through the national NZLSAR Training Subcommittee, has encouraged this by providing financial assistance in the form of funding for the instructor costs for courses that have been approved by the Training Subcommittee. While up until recently this has been essentially with one provider – Ross Gordon of Emergency Management Ltd, it does not preclude other provider's courses being approved. With the formation of SARINZ and the relationship it has developed with Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP), the costs of the trainer for most of the existing courses are now funded through TPP. However, there have always been other costs (food, accommodation, venue, etc) associated with running these courses. These costs have been met either by the

District or Region or the course participants themselves.

The national committee of NZLSAR at its meeting on 31 August 2003 agreed that NZLSAR would assist with the funding of these associated costs up to the level \$30 per person per day and to a maximum of \$7,000 per Region in any one financial year for approved courses.

This funding will apply from 1 September 2003 and is only available on a financial year to year basis as it is dependant on the grant we receive from the Police each year as well as other funding priorities. Any funds not used in one year will not be carried over to the next year except in special cases, which will need to be argued on a case by case basis.

Notes:

The figure of \$7,000 includes any GST that is payable.

The Financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June in the following year.

Definition of Approved Courses:

An Approved Courses is one that is deemed by NZLSAR as meeting certain criteria in terms of content, relevancy, provider, etc.

The current approved courses include:-

- Track and Clue Awareness 1 and 2
- Search Methods
- Urban Search
- Team Leader
- Managing Land Search Operations
- SAR CIMS
- Foundation Rope courses
- Refreshers for any of the above
- 4 Wheel Drive.
- IMAN and GMAN course
- TUMONZ. Course
- SAR First Aid

A full list of specific courses and approved providers is available on the NZLSAR website www.nzlsar.org.nz.

Other course will be considered and added to the approved course list as they are evaluated and deemed to be appropriate.

Definition of Associated Training Costs.

The following costs are considered to be associated training costs.

- Venue costs.
- Accommodation costs.
- Catering costs.

NB: Original GST receipts (or invoices) are required.

Procedure for Payment.

- The training course must be one that is part of the Regional Committee's Training Programme.
- The course must be a NZLSAR "Approved" course and run by a NZLSR approved Training Provider.
- The "course organiser" completes the provided **"PAYMENT CHECKLIST FOR ASSOCIATED TRAINING COSTS FOR APPROVED SAR COURSES"** and sends it to the Regional Secretary or Training Officer with the original GST receipts and/or invoices
- The Regional Secretary or Training Officer approves the payment claim and forwards the form and all supporting documentation to the NZLSAR national office in Wellington.
- Payment cheque(s) will be sent to the Regional Secretary who, with the Regional Treasurer, makes/distributes the appropriate payments to the course organiser(s) and/or suppliers or reimburses the Regions SAR account.

Note

The amount paid to the Region, as associated course costs, will be the smaller of the amount claimed by the Region or the claimable amount calculated to a maximum of \$30 per person per day.

This information along with the **"PAYMENT CHECKLIST FOR ASSOCIATED TRAINING COSTS FOR APPROVED SAR COURSES"** has been sent to all Regional Chairmen, Secretaries and Representatives so see one of them for further information.

Roscoe Tait
Chairman NZLSAR

North Island training weekend. Rachel Heywood organised over the weekend 26 to 28 September a training course for the North Island dog handlers. It was held at Riverlands, an Adventure Camp just off the Napier/Taupo highway at the end of McVicar Road and about 40 km from Napier. The area was

regenerating bush, tall pine forest, grassy river flats and bordered by the Mohaka River which looked difficult to cross but the dogs appreciated for a swim. NZLSAR assisted financially and flew up Linda Pike, a dog assessor from Christchurch.



Trainee dog handler Grace Griffin allows Bella a reward of a play with her toy after finding a well hidden Linda Pike

The course started on Friday morning and as well as Linda assisting with the training was Dean Hughes (Sergeant, Dog Section, Hastings/Napier), Grant Cooper (Assessed Dog Handler Waikato District) taking the tracking dogs and

Ian Watson (ex Police Dog Handler) the air scenters.

For the 15 dogs and handlers attending plus others providing the training and support it was a fun, relaxed weekend although the training showed intense

and enthusiastic dogs and handlers, giving positive results all round. Many thanks to Rachel for bringing it all together. The photo above was taken during this weekend.

NZLSAR South Island Training and Assessment Course 2003. This was held over 26 to 30 November at the ex Forestry Camp at Tapawera. With some 25 handlers and 30 dogs (or was it 30 handlers and 25 dogs?) it was another hugely successful event. While it was pleasing to see the number of teams that achieved operational status, of equal or even greater importance was the numbers who through dedication and hard work are progressing through the trainee and novice steps. There is a

real depth in the South Island dog handlers and a fuller account of the course will be in a future News

NZLSAR North Island Training and Assessment Course 2004. Some initial arrangements have been made for this course. It will be held at the Waitapu Forest School Camp Trust situated some 20 minutes drive south of Rotorua. **And the date is 12 to 16 May 2004.** North Island Dog handlers may wish to note these dates in their diary's now. More information on this will be sent out nearer the time.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer.

Editors Comments. A very big thank you to **Roscoe, Pim and Peter** for their articles and **Peter Weir of MSC** for the avalanche photo. Copy for the **February 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.

Finally all the best for the holiday break and may the New Year festivities treat you well. Our family celebrated the winter solstice on June 28th so while not a lot has been organised for the end of the year I am sure it will include a few days in the hills. So may the good times for us all include a big high over the country and settled weather everywhere. All the very best. **John P Tristram, National Field Officer**