



# Overview

2003 has been another year of significant progress for the USAR Project. This newsletter summarises the highlights, and brings you up to date with the activities of the Task Forces, Registered Response Teams and working groups of the Steering Committee. There is a new range of USAR Fact Sheets explaining various components of the project, visit the website for further information.

**Task Force Update.** The very successful November Category (CAT) 2 USAR Technician course has led to the formal establishment of NZ-TF3 based in Auckland. New Zealand now has three operational task forces trained to the international USAR *Medium* level. At this stage only NZ-TF1 is equipped to the *Medium* level. Each of the teams is capable of working independently or combining as a single operational unit.

NZ-TF 1 was again heavily involved in the preparation and delivery of the November CAT2 course, and have been undertaking improvements to their base of operations. A number of NZ-TF1 personnel were involved in the Queen's Birthday weekend exercise, organised by the Upper Hutt City Council and the Greater Wellington Regional Council, held in Upper Hutt (Exercise Awaha).

NZ-TF2 also conducted a full mobilisation to Exercise Awaha and have been involved in regional exercises. They have developed their USAR vehicle to a fully operative standard. Leader Paul Burns was the overall project manager for the November CAT2 course, putting in a tremendous amount of effort to ensure the success of the course and was also able to attend the international Team Leaders' meeting in Korea in November.



**Left/Above:** Task Force 3 Technicians carry out confined space exercises as part of the November CAT2 course in Palmerston North. New qualifications in confined space response and rescue are currently under development.



**Above:** USAR's effective multi-agency approach was evident at Exercise Awaha. NZ-TF1, Upper Hutt Community Rescue and Central Search Dogs are featured (Upper Hutt, July 2003). **Right:** Environment Canterbury's Rescue And Technical Support (RATS) Team [NZ-RT1] carries a patient to safety during the Cliff Dale Rescue Competition held in Christchurch.





## Training & Standards

In addition to updating the CAT2 training package, a new course for task force support personnel was completed and delivered in conjunction with the November 2003 CAT2 course.

A group of 20 people comprising the skill sets of administrative, logistics, equipment, communications, Hazmat, medical, canine search and structural engineering with representation across the three task forces experienced this two day induction course. Upon completion of the course, they then participated in the 72 hour exercise at the end of the CAT2 Technician course.

It was readily apparent that the experience on the induction course, which was led by task force representatives Anton Daish, Roy Breeze and Steve Glassey, equipped participants well for the realities of functioning with a deployed task force.

Other major activities of the Training & Standard Working Group led by Tom Roche have included:

- Drafting new national qualifications in rope and confined space rescue.
- Running an Assessment Tool Design workshop in October for the National Training Providers to develop common assessment tools for General Rescue and USAR Awareness Trainer Assessments.
- Development of a General Rescue exemplar video in association with Dunedin College of Education for use as a training resource for CDEM Groups holding assessment workshops for potential General Rescue Instructors. This package is now available in DVD, VHS (Tape) and QuickTime™ (CD) formats.



**Above:** New Lesson Exemplars are now available from the RNZ Police College Library CDEM Collection.

A presenters guide for this resource is available from the website.

## Regional Activity



**Above:** Taupo CD Rescue and other agencies also participated in the Rescue 3 International Swiftwater First Responder ® Programme.

**Auckland:** Waitakere Civil Defence Initial Response Unit were designated as NZ-RT3 and continue to develop their capability.

**Waikato:** Taupo CD have completed their CAT1A, CIMS and General Rescue assessments and most members now have their Orange Cards.

**Manawatu-Wanganui:** Palmerston North Civil Defence also seeks Response Team Registration in 2004 as well as furthering their rope and swiftwater rescue capability. Wanganui Civil Defence plan to put their rescue volunteers through CAT1R training.

**Wellington** continue to develop capability with three teams intending to undergo Response Team Registration in 2004. Upper Hutt Community Rescue completed their Rope Responder Course and responded to the Paekakariki Civil Defence Emergency. Exercise Awha also was a great success.

**Nelson-Tasman:** NZ-RT2 has been busy supporting several Police Search & Rescue Operations.

**Canterbury:** Over eight rescue teams participated in the Cliff Dale Rescue Competition (congratulations to RATS NZ-RT1 for taking top spot). A local rescue exercise was held and integrated NZ-TF2. Teams have also been kept busy providing operational support at recent rural fires.



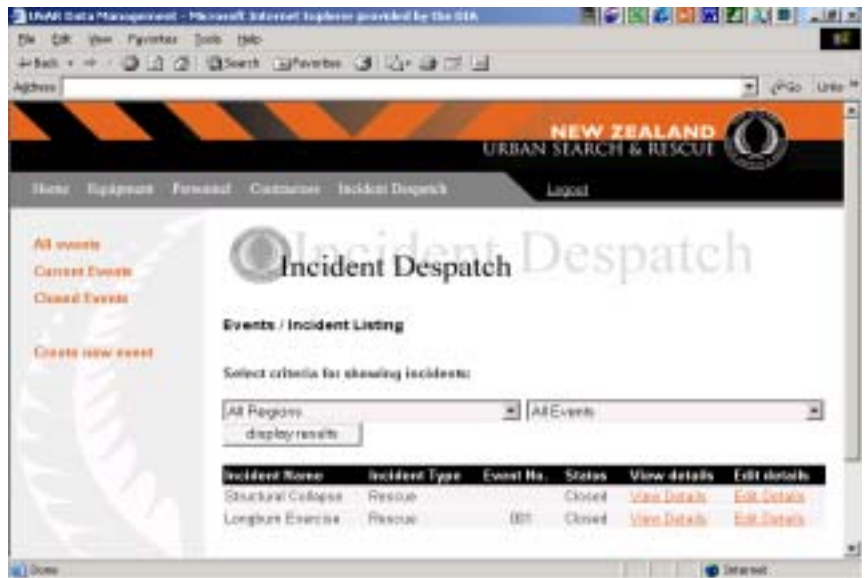
## Response Operations

In addition to the formal establishment of NZ-TF3, the November CAT2 course featured an audit of the national USAR system by the Chair of the FEMA National USAR Training Group, Ernesto Ojeda.

Ernie has been travelling to New Zealand conducting USAR training since 1995 when the first pilot USAR course was run and has had a major influence on the development of our Task Force training programme. New Zealand's training has achieved the standards required for international recognition. In addition, Ernie signed off five CAT2 instructors as competent to FEMA USAR Senior Instructor level – Graeme Mills, Bryce Coneybeer, Mark Cooper, Royce Tatham and Gary Richardson.

A separate peer review of our national capability was undertaken by Peter Smalley who was in New Zealand to give a presentation on the United States perspective on linkages between USAR capability and Weapons of Mass Destruction security programmes. Both Peter and Ernie have highlighted the challenges in maintaining our capability given the “part-time” inputs from a range of people.

Roy Breeze has co-ordinated the web-based development of a database of resources (human and physical, team members and key contractors). As well as keeping a general record of resources and their location, this task force operated database has been set up to record the deployment of resources in a response situation.



**Above:** The new on line USAR Task Force database was recently tested with excellent results at the November CAT2 Course by TF Support Personnel.

The Leader of the Response Operations Working Group, Bernie Rush, has had a very busy year, but is immensely satisfied with the positive peer review outcomes and general progress in terms of overall response capability, training package, training system and instructor s.

## International

New Zealand has continued to play an influential role in the Asia Pacific region of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). John Lovell has been leading the process of updating the INSARAG Guidelines to reflect both practical international experience and New Zealand's down-to-earth approach to working across national and international agencies.

John was also asked to give a presentation in Australia in July on how a USAR response integrates with the emergency services in the event of an incident relating to a breach of national security.



[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)



## Specialist Skills

### *Medical*

A Medical Advisory Group chaired by Charmaine Tate has been set up to develop a position paper around the operational roles and training requirements of USAR medical personnel. A workshop in June saw medical representatives from each of the Task Forces get together for the first time to discuss these issues and begin the process of adapting international approaches to suit New Zealand's needs and constraints.

### *Canine Specialists*

The formation in May of the New Zealand USAR Search Dog Association represented a significant step forward in terms of providing a focal point for this vital search skill capability. The Association is led by Matthew Dodd (pictured below with his dog *Sara* as President) and Janelle Mackie as Association Co-ordinator and is an incorporated society. In addition to promoting the development of USAR K9 capability around the country and how this capability should be utilised, the Association is assisting the overall USAR Project to co-ordinate and deliver training and search dog evaluations.

There are now eight search dogs trained to Basic (type II) level, with six of these also having successfully completed the Task Force Support Personnel induction course. Arrangements for these six canine specialists to be formally assigned to task forces are now being established. A tertiary education programme aimed at providing the necessary information as a stepping stone up to the Advanced (type I) level has been prepared in association with Otago Polytechnic and is sponsored by the Project. This training includes veterinary first aid, preparing animals for domestic and international travel, emergency transportation, ethics, legislation and dog care.

### *Engineers*

In October, the Level 1 USAR Engineer training course was completed by Des Bull and Dave Brunson, and a pilot course successfully delivered to eight engineers from across the upper North Island. This course is open to professional engineers across all disciplines and levels of experience and has attracted considerable interest from Australia. Work is now proceeding to prepare the more advanced Level 2 USAR Engineer course, which is aimed at experienced structural engineers capable of working with Task Force Technicians in confined spaces.

The key operational feature for the medics, canine specialists and engineers who are part of or assigned to task forces is that they are regarded as a flexible national resource – that is, they may well be asked to deploy with any of the task forces and not just with the team with which they are formally affiliated.

## Marketing & Promotion

A new group led by Jim Dance (NZFS) has been established to convey the message around the scope and operational capability of the USAR Task Forces and Response Teams more effectively across territorial authorities and the emergency services. It remains a challenge to express the potential of our local and national USAR capability appropriately – as a multi-skilled, multi-agency specialist rescue capability that typically supports a wider rescue operation organised and managed by local emergency services or controllers, depending upon the scale of the incident.

A brochure and information to support this message will be made available early in the New Year.





### 2004

Overall, good progress is being made towards the goal of having three operational Task Forces equipped to the medium level INSARAG standard in place over the next two financial years. The overall emphasis of the USAR Project will move from building capability to consolidating sustainable systems and processes.

In addition to the ongoing developmental work by the Working Groups, the following activities are planned:

- In order to improve the understanding of the operational interface between Incident Controllers, local Response Teams and USAR Task Forces, a project group was established in December to map out more clearly how the Task Forces and local Responder Teams would be co-ordinated by local Incident Controllers. This group will be providing information to Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups in the first half of 2004.
- Exercise Pegasus04 to be held in Christchurch in September will integrate the bi-annual UNDAC exercise with a USAR and regional CDEM exercise. Unfortunately budget limitations are likely to see major participation limited to NZ-TF2 and Canterbury regional teams, with only minor involvement from NZ-TF1 and NZ-TF3.
- The Fourth National Canine Readiness Evaluation, including the first Advanced Evaluation, is planned for late 2004 and the project plans to bring a specialist evaluator from the United States of America to assist in the evaluation.



**Above:** New Motorola 9505 Iridium Satellite phones came into service with NZ-TF1 and NZ-TF2 in 2003 providing voice and email communications capability anywhere in the world. More info at [www.iridium.com](http://www.iridium.com)



**Above:** Taupo CD Rescue execute the alternative four point lower during their general rescue assessment.

### Website

The website continues to be a critical part of informing our stakeholders. All approved Best Practice Guidelines and Fact Sheets are available for download.

Stakeholder updates are also emailed out regularly, to receive these updates simply send an email to [join@usar.govt.nz](mailto:join@usar.govt.nz).

The website has had over 100,000 hits since its launch.

