

Welcome to the fact sheet series....

The fact sheet series has been developed to provide information on various facets of the national urban search and rescue programme.

Fact sheets are publicly available for download from the official website:

www.usar.govt.nz

New fact sheets are added to the series to address commonly asked questions and to raise awareness of the programme.

If you have any suggestions for a new fact sheet, please let us know by contacting us.

What is USAR?



Left: Emergency service workers from Task Force, Civil Defence, Ambulance and Search Dogs exercise together.

Bottom: Task Force Technician checks a void space for victims using a search camera.

An overview of the need to establish the capability

What is USAR?

An integrated multi-agency response, which is beyond the capability of normal rescue arrangements, to provide initial medical care and removal of trapped persons from damaged structures or other environments in a safe and expeditious manner.

USAR combines the capabilities of New Zealand's emergency services and specialist technical task-forces with local community volunteer rescue teams.

Why do we need a USAR capability?

A variety of emergencies or disasters in New Zealand may give rise to structural collapses requiring urban search and rescue (USAR) response. Such events include earthquakes, land slips and subsidence, hurricanes, typhoons, storms and tornadoes, floods, technological accidents and hazardous material releases, terrorist activities, construction accidents.

For planning purposes, the USAR Steering Committee has established three broad scales of disaster:

- Single site collapse
- Local emergency with a few collapses
- Multiple structural collapse resulting (for example major urban earthquake)

In our next **Fact Sheet #2 National USAR Project Overview**, we will explore the agencies, committees and working groups contributing to the development of a national USAR capability.





USAR History

- 1989 Federal Emergency Management Agency (USA) launched USAR Task Force System to establish domestic capacity to respond to major structural collapse incidents.
- 1991 United Nations formed International Search & Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) to coordinate international disaster rescue.
- 1995 New Zealand Fire Service first established USAR capacity in Palmerston North, forming New Zealand Task Force 1.
- 2000 Joint Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM) and New Zealand Fire Service propose to Government the establishment of a national USAR response system.
- 2000 National USAR Steering Committee established with representatives from MCDEM, NZ Fire Service, NZ Police, Ambulance and Local Government.
- 2001 National USAR Task Force System launched in New Zealand, funded by MCDEM, NZFS and Central Government.
- 2002 National training and response tier system developed including multi-agency incident ground certification system, and standards for first responders, technicians, engineers and canine search specialists.



Above: NZ Task Force Technicians practice their shoring techniques.

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Fact: Following a major structural collapse...

- 80% of victims are rescued by by standers.
- 15% of victims are rescued by emergency service workers.
- 5% of victims require specialist (Task Force) rescue.

This is why New Zealand's USAR programme targets both the general public, and emergency service workers and provides for the establishment of Task Forces using a tiered response system.

Website

The official website for New Zealand urban search and rescue can be found at:

<http://www.usar.govt.nz>

It is regularly updated to provide those involved and interested in USAR information on our capability and initiatives.

Many resources are available for download, including all of the fact sheet series.

The website also has numerous links to both domestic and international organisations involved in urban search and rescue.

www.usar.govt.nz