



At the heart of sea, **24**  
air and land rescues **7**

**RESCUE**coordinationcentre  
NEW ZEALAND



# WHAT WE DO

- Co-ordinate major maritime, aviation and land-based search and rescue operations (**SAROPS**) in New Zealand.
- Cover a **30 million** square kilometre search and rescue region (SRR) from mid-Tasman Sea to halfway to Chile, and from Antarctica almost to the Equator.
- Provide search and rescue (SAR) services **24** hours a day, **7** days a week, **365** days a year.
- Respond to approximately **1,200** SAR incidents annually.
- Employ a team of Search and Rescue Officers trained to international aviation and maritime **SAR** standards.
- Bring together over **100** rescue services and related agencies nationwide plus **10,000** SAR personnel and volunteers.



# SEARCH AND RESCUE REGION





## CO-ORDINATING RESCUES, SAVING LIVES

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) can be called upon to co-ordinate a maritime, aviation and/or distress beacon-related search and rescue mission at any time, on any day.

They co-ordinate search and rescue services for what is known as **Category II** sea, air and land incidents throughout New Zealand's search and rescue region.

This region is one of the largest search and rescue areas in the world.

Category II incidents are co-ordinated at a national level and typically involve missing aircraft or vessels or the activation of an emergency distress beacon.

NZ Police are responsible for co-ordinating **Category I** incidents.

Category I incidents are co-ordinated at a local level and typically involve land-based search and rescues and marine SAR missions closer to shore, ie within 12 miles.

In addition, RCCNZ has some secondary roles that include:

- medical advice and assistance to mariners
- maritime assistance service
- Ship Security Alert System
- marine accident reporting
- aviation accident reporting
- oil spill reporting
- bomb and security alerts on aircraft
- migrants trying to illegally enter New Zealand on vessels
- search area determination on request from Police and Coastguard
- tsunami alerts.

**Speed is crucial in any search and rescue response**



A SAR response may start with a telephone call, a radio message, a distress beacon alert, an email or a request from the Police.

As the information comes in, the team of Search and Rescue Officers (known as SAROs) at RCCNZ will swing into action.

The first steps are to gather and sort the information, analyse the incident and then plan the response.

The SAROs determine the area to be searched then plan the search strategy and, if necessary, consult with specialist aviation, defence force, marine, Police and land SAR advisors. They will then task the aircraft, helicopters, ships, Coastguard or other groups and agencies to carry out the plan.

With the search and rescue underway, the SAROs:

- monitor the progress
- update the plans as new information comes to hand
- manage all the activities to get the best possible result.

A SAR incident only ends when all the people in distress have been accounted for and all the searchers returned safely home.

## PROVIDE SAR SERVICES 24/7

RCCNZ is staffed by a team of highly-trained search and rescue officers, trained to international standards, who work a roster system that provides SAR services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The staff has a wide range of experience in marine, aviation and land search and rescue.

RCCNZ is part of Maritime New Zealand (MNZ), which is a Ministry of Transport crown agency.

RCCNZ is based at Lower Hutt. Located alongside RCCNZ is the Maritime Operations Centre (MOC). The MOC is the radio service that provides VHF and HF radio services for New Zealand's coastal waters and the South Pacific, including around-the-clock monitoring of radio frequencies for distress messages.



## Facts and figures

In 2007 RCCNZ dealt with 1,191 incidents:

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| • 354 maritime | • 310 aviation |
| • 63 land      | • 464 other    |

Of these incidents, 693 involved distress beacons, with:

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| • 77 maritime | • 105 aviation |
| • 39 land     | • 472 other    |



# WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG

The right communications are at the core of being well prepared for an emergency – be it sea, air or land. If you cannot make contact, then how will you be rescued?

Always remember, before you leave:

- leave your trip details with a responsible person
- check the weather.

If there's an emergency, in any environment – if you have telephone coverage and a working phone – **call 111**.

And if you have a distress beacon, activate it and leave it turned on until help arrives.

## Sea

Maritime New Zealand recommends always carrying at least two forms of communications:

- 406MHz EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon)
- hand-held VHF radio – Channel 16
- red hand held flares
- cellphone (in a sealed plastic bag).

## Air

- Squawk 7700.
- Put out a Mayday on frequency 121.5MHz or any other frequency that is likely to be heard by Air Traffic Services (ATS) or other aircraft.
- Once down contact ATS, or if unable to, activate the 406MHz Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) if it hasn't activated automatically. Leave the ELT on until help arrives.
- If it is likely the aircraft may ditch, the ELT should be activated immediately while still in flight.

## Land

The Mountain Safety Council recommends you take a cellphone into the bush as a back-up to a mountain radio or a 406MHz Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).

Alternatives to a mountain radio include a satellite phone or a low-cost option such as a two-way UHF radio or walkie-talkie. Your choices of communications should depend on the trip you are planning.



00:43

01:25

12:55

15:30

19:05

“The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand has launched one of its longest range search and rescue missions to help an injured crewman on board a Spanish vessel hundreds of kilometres off the New Zealand Coast.

RCCNZ co-ordinated the medical evacuation of the man, who was suffering from a suspected stroke, from the Spanish-registered fishing vessel after receiving a request for assistance from its Spanish equivalent in Madrid...”

“Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand is this morning co-ordinating the search for a missing microlight in the Wairoa area with two people on board.

A friend of the pair raised the alarm about 4:40am after watching them depart Wairoa Aerodrome at around 3:15am and not return...”

“The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand is co-ordinating a search and rescue in the Mt Cook area after receiving an emergency beacon alert late yesterday.

A specialist alpine search and rescue team has been assembled and a helicopter is currently on standby at Mt Cook waiting for a break in the weather before taking off.

Land search and rescue teams are currently unable to get into the area due to the avalanche risk...”

## WHY BEACONS ARE SO IMPORTANT

New Zealand's rugged landscapes and wild, unpredictable weather can be deceptively dangerous. Each year RCCNZ responds to around 1,200 incidents, over half of which involve an activated distress beacon.

While radios and cellphones are important, they cannot always be relied upon. They may be out of range, have limited battery power or become water-damaged.

If you get into trouble, a correctly registered 406MHz distress beacon could result in a faster SAR response and save your life, or the life of someone close to you.

When you first buy a 406MHz distress beacon, it's vital that you register it with RCCNZ. This is a FREE service.

Key points if you obtain a 406MHz distress beacon:

- register your details free with RCCNZ
- keep those details up to date
- understand how to use it
- check the battery expiry date.

**Important:** From February 2009, 121.5MHz and 243MHz distress beacons will no longer be satellite monitored.

This change in the satellite systems means you need to replace your old analogue distress beacon with a new 406MHz distress beacon preferably with GPS. This is faster, more accurate and more reliable.

[www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)

# CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

## RCCNZ 24/7 freephone

**New Zealand: 0508 472 269 (0508 4 RCCNZ)**

**International: +64 4 577 8030**

## Management and administration – normal office hours weekdays

**Phone: (04) 577 8034**

## Free 406MHz distress beacon registration

**Freephone: 0800 406 111 or 0508 406 111  
or [www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)**

## Accident reporting – for reporting both maritime and aviation accidents

**Phone: 0508 222 433**

## Useful websites

[www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)

[www.nzlsar.org.nz](http://www.nzlsar.org.nz)

[www.beacons.org.nz](http://www.beacons.org.nz)

[www.nzsar.org.nz](http://www.nzsar.org.nz)

[www.police.govt.nz](http://www.police.govt.nz)

[www.caa.govt.nz](http://www.caa.govt.nz)

[www.nzcoastguard.org.nz](http://www.nzcoastguard.org.nz)

[www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)

[www.nzdf.mil.nz](http://www.nzdf.mil.nz)