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Cover:

Charlie Morris ZL2CTM running "Race Control" at the Porirua Grand Traverse in March.
 Photo: Don ZL2TYR.



AREC Administration – Debbie and Annalise
admin@arec.nz, 04 939 2189

Newsletter Editor - Soren Low, ZL1SKL
newsletter@arec.nz, 021 813 541

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

National Officers:

Chief Executive Officer
 Don Robertson, ZL2TYR
ceo@arec.nz, 021 654 085

Regional Manager North
 Andrew Brill, ZL1COP
RMNth@arec.nz, 022 354 6451

Regional Manager South
 Lindsey Ross, ZL4KS
RMStH@arec.nz, 021 116 1686

Project Coordinator
 John Murphy, ZL2XJ
projects@arec.nz, 021 0807 5075

National Training Manager
 Steve Davis, ZL2UCX
training@arec.nz, 027 436 1796

Health & Safety Advisor
 Dave Wilkins, ZL1MR
hsw@arec.nz, 021 185 7903

Treasurer – Evan Sayer
Treasurer@arec.nz, 021 612 164

District Managers:

Northland/Auckland – Richard Gamble
DMAuckland@arec.nz, 021 729 270

Bay of Plenty – Karl Hunt
DMBOP@arec.nz, 021 167 0477

Central – Brian Purdie
DMCentral@arec.nz, 027 321 4470

Eastern – John Newson
DMEastern@arec.nz, 027 230 3642

Wellington – John Murphy
DMWellington@arec.nz, 021 0807 5075

Tasman – Paul Rennie
DMTasman@arec.nz, 027 458 9740

Canterbury – Geoff Chapman
DMCanterbury@arec.nz, 021 246 9128

Southern – Lindsay Eunson
DMSouthern@arec.nz, 027 432 5136



Kia ora and welcome to my column for another month.

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to the members of Kapiti Branch 69 who hosted me for an AREC update. As always, it was great to meet everyone and have the opportunity to discuss AREC now and into the future.

This month I also had the opportunity to attend the NZSAR Health, Safety and Wellbeing workshop in Wellington. I was joined by David ZL1MR and AREC members Shaun ZL2RSA and Hamish ZL4ERU. There were a wide range of participants covering most organisations who participate in search and rescue.

There were very insightful presentations from Police, RCCNZ and Dr. Karyn O'Keeffe (who is a Senior Lecturer at the Sleep-Wake Research Centre at Massey University covering Fatigue and Sleep). There were other speakers on topics including good decision making, Aviation SAR Ops, Safety in training, the Surf IRB project, High Performance teams, Reducing uncertainty Wellbeing in the Frontline, Risk Matrix and a number of case studies. A very worthwhile workshop.

All the AREC project plans have been completed and the projects are now in full swing. AREC ID Cards have been sent out to the Group Leaders to be dispersed. The PPE clothing is ready for ordering and final arrangements are underway to identify the AREC SAR Responders who will get access to this clothing first. Implementation meetings for the Xero financial system and the new Membership systems are underway.

Lindsey ZL4KS and I are attending monthly meetings with the other volunteer organisations involved with SAR operations where we are sharing and collaborating on volunteer strategy enabling all to learn from each other.

It was good to meet up with all the Police SAR Coordinators at the National SAR Coordinators annual meeting over a day and a half in Wellington.

Look out for the AREC annual report and the Remit in the just published Break-In.

Don, ZL2TYR, Chief Executive Officer, AREC

Meet the Team

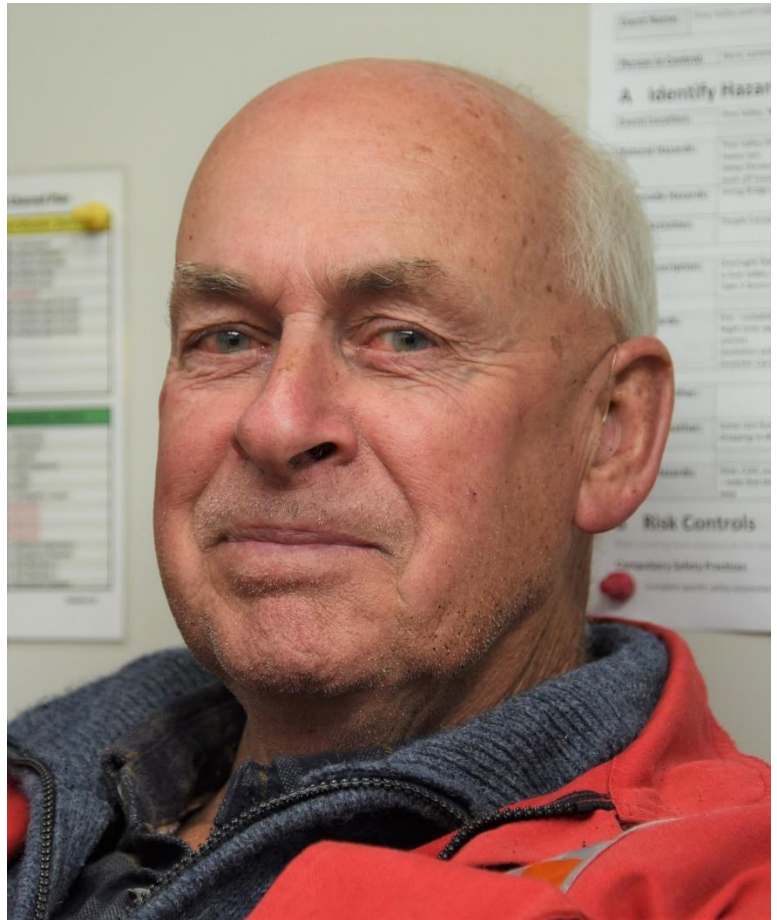
This column is to introduce you to the real AREC, that is the individuals that share a common interest and passion that make up our organisation.

This month we feature Tasman District Manager Paul Rennie ZL2RE.

Paul was first introduced to radio when he joined the Navy in 1967 where he was part of a generation that had to be proficient in Morse code. "Radio wasn't what I wanted to do in the Navy" explains Paul, "but it was all that was on offer and I soon found it was something I had a passion for".

After leaving the Navy, getting married and settling in Blenheim, he soon got involved in emergency communications. "I've done it for 44 years" he says, "and I've only been a Ham for the last 30 or so".

Search and Rescue has played a big part of Paul's life, having been both in search teams as well as providing communications solutions. "We have some quite rugged terrain in our area, knowing what fixed repeaters will give us good coverage, where we can put up portable repeaters and where we need to use HF are the skills that our local partners look to us to provide".



We are lucky in Blenheim in that we have very good relationships with our local Council, Civil Defence, LandSAR, Rural Fire and others. "Our local Council have invested in an excellent communications room and mobile comms truck – these resources are freely available to AREC and our partners and really help us to mobilise quickly when we are needed" says Paul.

Like most areas, the "jobs" Paul and his team support have changed over the years. "The events have certainly reduced" he explains, "we don't see the multi-day rallies anymore, but there are still a handful of community events including bike races and walks that we provide communications for". He talks about the long-standing relationship with LandSAR fondly, and has anecdotes from searches going "way back". "We work closely with LandSAR and it is great to see them getting onboard with SARTrack locally".



Above: Marlborough Emergency Management Communications Unit.

"We have a number of LandSAR groups across the Tasman District – we are more active with some than others" but he notes that some groups don't have local Amateur Radio operators which can make it challenging. "But we are here to help" he says, "and we have a great team in our district who do what they can to provide a worthwhile service to our community".

When asked about the future, Paul talks about the need to bring new people into the hobby and keep abreast of technology. "Things are changing fast – and we need to always be challenging ourselves to do better. We need to make our hobby attractive and accessible to new blood".

“Established in 2006, the Porirua Grand Traverse was created to showcase the region's awesome outdoor resource and active lifestyles. It is a non-profit event organised locally by the Porirua Grand Traverse charitable trust.

From the Arena 9k Fun Run/Walk, through to the 56k Multisport and 48k Duathlon events, to simple Paddle, Mountain Bike and Mountain Run options, this vibrant festival of fitness has something for everyone.

Since day one, our goals for this event has remained the same...

All Ages: *We're about participation for everyone from retirees to kids!*

All Abilities: *Options for rookies to experienced endurance junkies!*

All Amazing: *Showcasing Porirua's hills & harbour, bush & beaches!*

www.poriruagrandtraverse.co.nz



Above – *The first of the mountain bikers emerge.*

On March 28th 2020, Branch 74 AREC coordinated 32 Radio marshals from Branches across Wellington to assist with the communications requirements for this year's Porirua Grand Traverse.

This is a major event for us, particularly as the organisers requested an additional eight marshals over the number we supplied last year. We nearly made it. As you might imagine with such a large number it is a bit like herding cats!! In the end we were two short of the 34 requested. Solutions were found to cover the two remaining positions.

I am seriously grateful to those who made themselves available. For an event of this nature, the health and safety needs are paramount, and we play a large part in ensuring that any risks are kept to a minimum.

There were a number of course changes this year, especially on the mountain bike course where we had most of the new positions.

Most of these were in positions on the eastern slopes of Colonial Knob where we knew there were some really bad positions under the lee of the hill. There was no guarantee that the UHF DMR and the VHF EE122 DMR at our repeater site on top of Colonial Knob would work.

As a precaution we borrowed one of the Police portable SAR repeaters and sweet-talked a building contractor up on the Aotea subdivision to allow us to set it up on his site which over-looked the Tawa valley, Spicer Forest and up the Meridian Road past the Porirua Tip. I set it up on Saturday evening and as luck would have it, the contractor was planning to start work on Sunday morning at 6:30am. I pointed out the on/off switch for the repeater and asked if he would mind flicking it on when he arrived. Right on time the repeater came to life at 6:30am and performed flawlessly all day. We were quite surprised by its 5-watt coverage - even over into parts of the Pikarere Farm area, out on the coast.

We also borrowed the Kapiti Branch Emergency Radio caravan (many thanks to Dick Collins ZL2ARP for towing it down and back to Otaki). This enabled us to put a 70cm yagi antenna on a 7-8 metre pole pointed at Colonial Knob. We also had plenty of room to set up UHF DMR, EE122 VHF DMR, and ESB57 (for the Police portable SAR repeater). Rigs were mainly Tait TM9300 base stations.

Finally, we also set up SARTrack on two laptops each with additional 22 or 24 inch screens with a .kml file displaying a Google Earth map with all the marshal positions identified. This enabled us to zoom in on areas where we knew there was an issue and to keep the race controllers informed.

Charlie Morris ZL2CTM (featured on the cover) manned SARTrack in the race control area and logged the text messages to and from their marshals, while we logged the comms from the radio marshals. This meant that both Race Control and Comms Control had complete information from all the course marshals available on screen.



Ross ZL2UAC and Don 2TYR manned the Comms Caravan. We were also in direct Radio contact with Charlie which meant that our need to keep running back and forth between the two Control sites was no longer necessary.

Left – Radio and computer equipment in use.

It is fair to say that the Race organisers were blown away by the way the system worked and how it freed them up to deal with real issues rather than trying to write down a record of what was happening, and dealing with the issues. Charlie has a role for life in Race Control!!

As usual, everyone who participated enjoyed the day – it's what brings most of them back each year! Once again, my thanks to you all.

Ross ZL2UAC

Photos courtesy Ross ZL2UAC and Don ZL2TYR.



Above: Don ZL2TYR is supervised by Ray ZL2RAY.

When the North Shore Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Group (AREC) was invited to participate in the Snells Beach Neighbours day display it provided a great opportunity to practice setting up an emergency communications base.

Eleven AREC members were involved, some at the Snells Beach display site and others at the Auckland Emergency Management communications base in Sunnynook, Auckland.

We set up a variety of communications systems, which would be used in an emergency situation, including the Civil Defence and Emergency Management VHF radio network, Amateur radio repeater stations, local UHF communications around the site using the handheld Personal Radio Service (PRS) radios used by the Snells Beach Community response Group. A portable VHF repeater which allows for communication with other services such as Police, Ambulance and Fire Service was set up at the Snells Beach Police station.



Above: Philip ZL1PSH and Soren ZL1SKL setting up the display.

We also used up a High Frequency Single Side Band radio to provide long range communications with world-wide coverage. Setting up the antenna for this radio involved tossing a very long wire over the trees along the waterfront, much to the amusement of the visitors to the display who gave us some very odd looks!

Visitors were able to have a go at using the radios to talk to each other and to the operators at the Civil Defence base station at Sunnynook.

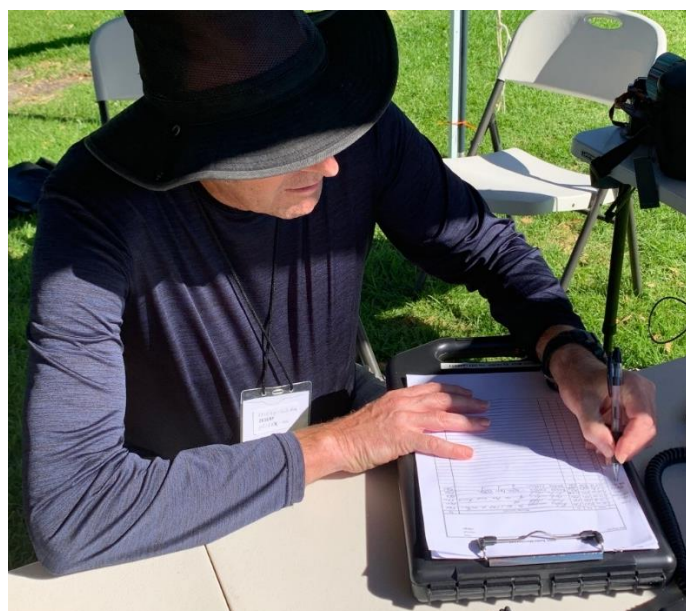
The High Frequency radio, as well as providing communication to Auckland allowed direct communication with amateur radio station callsign R9MM in Omsk in Asiatic Russia, a distance of 14,000 km, where the operator Serge was taking part in a radio contest.

Everyone from AREC had a great afternoon, and it was good practice for some of our newer members. Many thanks to Chip Babott and his team at the Snells Beach community response group for inviting us along, and organizing the site for us. We are looking forward to working closely with the group to provide them with communications support and training in the future



Above: Terrance ZL1BTS, Andy ZL1COP, Kevin ZL1KG, Philip ZL1PSH, Julian ZL1ABX.





Philip ZL1PSH logging calls.



Andy ZL1COP answering questions.

Health, Safety & Welfare

David Wilkins ZL1MR

HSW - Injury follow up:

In the previous HSW update I mentioned a person suffering a head knock on a trailer. He isn't a current member of AREC but did report the incident through the LandSAR HSW system. He has since sent me an update about the long-term effects of what that knock to the head has actually meant –

Our mobile HQ is a covered trailer, with opening flaps, which are top-hinged, on each side and at the rear. While working on the radio installation in the trailer I managed to walk into the rear edge of a flap which was not fully opened (because the trailer was in a shed, too close to the wall to allow it to open all the way up). To keep things even, I walked into the front edge of the same flap half an hour later! Each time I hit my head I was looking down at the screen of the NanoVNA in my hand while walking from one side of the trailer to the other. (I guess at 76 I am becoming a slow learner!) I was bare-headed, but there were no lacerations, just a bit of a lump.

The result was mild but long-lasting concussion, and a neck displacement which my chiropractor is still having fun with. The after-effects included a marked deterioration in cognitive function—I do the Herald's cryptic crossword each day, and I can usually knock it out in less than twenty minutes. After the knocks it started taking me a couple of hours, which really annoyed me. My eyesight went a little bit furry around the edges, too, though at least I was not seeing double. Those after-effects have gradually tapered off, and now, four months later, I guess my brain is about back to whatever "normal" is at this age, though my neck is still not right. So the effects of what I considered at the time was merely a minor stupidity have proved far more long-lasting than I would have thought.

The edges of the flaps will shortly be marked with retro-reflective tape (we are often out at night, and in wet weather the flaps have to be partially lowered to keep the rain off the computers, putting them at head height) and bits of dangly stuff at the corners.

So guys/gals if you think that 'minor injuries' are no big deal, well they can be. Knocks to the head can have long lasting effects, especially as we get older and our brains shrink. This is a natural part of aging but means brains are able to rattle around a lot more in our heads and get more severely damaged. That is why ambulance officers will usually take anyone over the age of around 70 to hospital for a possible CT scan after what sometimes seems to be a minor car crash but likely involved a head knock or a whiplash type event.

I know most of us aren't rugby, league or football players but we can suffer injuries. How many of us wear glasses? They obscure your view of that overhead hazard that can give you a good belt to the head as you walk around base or through the bush.

The learning is that we need to remove the hazards that can be fixed and mark those that can't be altered to ensure we and those around us will all be much safer. If it isn't an AREC created hazard go have a talk to the person responsible and offer to help them fix their problem.

Please remember to report any incidents, injuries or areas for HSW improvement to HSW@arec.nz so we can all learn from each other how to stay safe.



Reporting

If you have any feedback from the frontline that may help others please or have an incident, near miss or injury to report please email the details with your contact number to HSW@arec.nz

Health and Safety is the responsibility of us all

Remember to:

STOP – In your mind you need to be constantly pausing and evaluating no matter the task or the location.

THINK – You need to think about what you see. Identify Hazards and associated Risk (the chance of it going wrong)

PLAN – Talk to others, compare notes, make a plan

COMMUNICATE – Brief the plan and plan to brief others as they arrive.

ACT – Execute the plan, monitor and review progress.