



AREC **info**

Monthly newsletter of
Amateur Radio Emergency
Communications

MARCH 2020

Steve Mercer ZL2YD - SK



Photo courtesy Wellington LandSAR

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Steve Mercer, ZL2YD.

Steve recently took on the AREC Health & Safety position before having to stand down due to ill-health.

He was an active member of NZART Kapiti Branch, and previously with Upper Hutt Branch. As well as his amateur radio interests, he was involved with LandSAR and the Cross Country Vehicle Club. Professionally, Steve was a dive instructor at NIWA and spent several seasons at Scott Base diving for fisheries research projects.

ZL2YD was originally his father's callsign and Steve was pleased to keep in in the family.

Don Robertson, AREC National Director remembers Steve as "a friendly, cheerful chap with a cheeky sense of humour. He readily combined his radio, 4WD and community interests and ably supported AREC, LandSAR and enjoyed joining in with community activities. He will be sorely missed".

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Welcome to another newsletter.

There has been a fair bit going on this month which I am pleased to share.

Firstly, Steve Davis ZL2UXC is leading completing the AREC Competency system and is working through how we can deliver training to our people. This is a big void and Steve's leadership in this space is appreciated.

You would have read previously about the Health & Safety induction that David Wilkins ZL1MR has developed, we are starting to see this rolled out within groups. This is an important first-step and group leaders should be planning how to deliver this locally. Full details are available from Dave.

We continue to work with SAR NZ. Firstly, on the funding submission that will help us build AREC's capability. And secondly, NZ SAR are looking to collect standard membership data across the sector. This will likely mean that we will be asked to collect more information on our members, such as age and length of association with AREC.

Finally – many of you would now be aware that Conference has been cancelled in light of the emerging COVID-19 situation. It is likely that the NZART and AREC AGM's will take place later in the year with final dates and locations to be confirmed in due course. Stay tuned.

Until next time, stay safe and 73's.



Don Robertson ZL2TYR, AREC National Director

Jock White Field Day 2020

NZART Branches from around the country again took part in this year's Jock White Field Day over the weekend of 22-23 February 2020.

This annual contest is named to honour Jock White ZL2GX (NZART Contest and Awards Manager for over 40 years) for the service he gave to NZART over that time and encourages operation from temporary HF stations.

Don Robertson, AREC National Director, comments "the Jock White Field Day draws upon key skills we need to build within AREC. Setting up a temporary station and keeping it operating for a couple of days is a great way to test your groups preparedness for activating at short notice."

Branch 22, Marlborough Amateur Radio Club JWFD Station.

Photos: Grant Simpson, ZL2BK



Branch 22's operating tent with operators preparing for their time behind the radio.



Graeme McKay ZL1BDS operating.



Bill Cousins ZL2AYZ hard at work.

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Further information about AREC, including regional contacts, can be found online at arec.info

Tararua Mountains Race 2020

By Don Robertson, ZL2TYR

Attracting around 100 competitors, and recently described as “one of the classics of the New Zealand calendar”, the TMR is a walk or run that crosses the rugged Tararua range, north of Wellington.

The race is held across what is called the Southern crossing from Kaitoke (just north of Upper Hutt) heading north to Otaki Forks, the race transforming the 3-day hard tramp into a 1-day mountain run of epic proportions. In distance, the track is 35.4km and the total ascent is 2,250m. The total descent is 2,475m track over some very mountainous terrain. See this URL for more information: <https://www.tmr.org.nz/Home/>



The event is a key fundraiser for LandSAR Wellington, who work with AREC to provide support across the route. LandSAR volunteers and race marshalls deploy across the track on Friday night, ready for the Saturday start to monitor competitors and respond to SAR incidents as required. A doctor is located mid-course and at the end to provide medical expertise to competitors and support teams.

Following a favourable weather report, runners start from 0600 in batches every half hour through to 0930. This year there were 100 runners on the course. The fastest runners start last and they get through the course between 4.5 to 5 hours.

AREC provide and man three communications stations across the course at Race Start, Kaitoke, Race End Otaki Forks, and at SAR Base which is located at the Lower Hutt Police Station (LHPS).

We use Civil Defence and DOC repeater for tactical communications, with the AREC UHF ZK DMR network being used for back-channel communications between the AREC team. Due to the terrain across the course, this was the only way to communicate between our sites.

Of interest due to the location of LHPS direct comms to the Race End and Doc repeaters isn't normally possible. However, from early morning through to about 1030-1100 hrs we have communications between LHPS to the DOC23 VHF repeater on Shoulder Knob just north of Otaki. Once the sun comes up VHF propagation



drops off for the rest of the day and the UHF DMR ZK network is used. The DOC23 repeater is linked to DOC09 VHF repeater located on Cone Ridge. This provides coverage across the top of the mountains down to the race end and the CD VHF repeater located on Mt Climie Upper Hutt was used for race start and LHPS communications.



Don Robertson ZL2TYR, provided comms at the LHPS from 0545hrs.

Equipment used was two VHF TM3900 connected to laptops monitoring two repeaters (all connected to SARTrack) plus a Motorola UHF DMR handheld.

Geoff Graham ZL2JG arrived to take over from Don around lunchtime. He finished about 2030hrs as the race finished once all runners, marshalls and SAR Teams are off the mountain.

Gavin Smith ZL2ACT, provided comms at 0545hrs at Race Start. Equipment used, VHF TM9300 running on batteries with a VHF TP9300 handheld plus Motorola UHF DMR handheld. Ray Harkness ZL2RAY took over from Gavin around 1000hrs and stayed until about 1600hrs to ensure a returning runner made it out.

Don Wallace ZL2TLL, Lynne Wallace ZL2LKW, Peter Preston ZL2TD provided comms at Race End from about 1030hrs through until the last runners, marshals and SAR teams come off the mountains. Equipment used VHF Mobile, VHF TP9300 handheld, UHF DMR handheld on ZK via Mt Field AREC DMR repeater.

AREC provides an essential communication service without the race could not be run. This is just another public community service with AREC as well as supporting our SAR partner LandSAR.

A great effort by all involved, many returning each year to provide this excellent service.



AREC Membership Cards

An Update from David Wilkins, ZL1MR – AREC Deputy National Director

As you will all be aware, the AREC cards have all expired. The original intention was to have had the Health & Safety training induction rolled out, along with the competency categories, however these have taken longer than first anticipated to finalise.

Therefore, we are about to do a re-print of the cards for all of the members who are showing as active on our database. We need all members to advise their group leaders of any changes in their details (callsign, NZART membership number, mobile phone number, e-mail address, local NZART Branch etc.)

Over the next 12-months, group leaders will need to ensure that everyone in their team has completed the HSE induction and had their competency assessed (this will be communicated in due course).

REMINDER! REMINDER! REMINDER! REMINDER!

Call for Applicant to assist AREC at Police National SAR Course

We are looking for an experienced AREC member to attend with Christchurch and Marlborough AREC at the Police National SAR Course at Dip Flat in May.

We provide a small team to assist with communications for the practical exercise portions of the course. This helps Police, and other attendees, attending to get to know a bit about AREC capabilities and see typical SAR Comms in action. As attendees, and trainers, come from Police SAR from around the country it is advantageous to have some AREC presence from other centres. Attending will also give you some experience with providing SAR Comms in a challenging environment and see how other Groups work.

While there are no costs involved, catering and accommodation is covered during the course and AREC will cover travel costs. You will need to be available at a minimum from Saturday 2nd May until Friday 8th May (if possible, a day or two earlier may be advantageous). Suitable travel will be arranged and paid for depending on location of the applicant.

Expectations of the applicant are that they will participate and learn while working with Christchurch and Marlborough AREC Groups and take back some new ideas and skills to their own Group. AREC National will also expect a short report suitable for publishing in the AREC-Info Newsletter (or Break-in) from the successful applicant after the course on how they would use that experienced gained for AREC in their Group.

Applications with a brief experience background need to be sent to manager@chc.arec.net.nz by 31st March

Steve Davis
Christchurch AREC Group

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.

As required – STOP again and then re-Think, re-Plan, Communicate & re-Act.