

AUGUST 2023



AREC.info is the newsletter of Amateur Radio Emergency Communications, the public service arm of the New Zealand Association of Radio Transmitters. AREC.info is published most months (except January).



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Cover: John Newson ZL2VAF received to Doug Gorman award from AREC CEO Don Robertson ZL2TYR at the 2023 AREC Forum.



The full AREC Contact List, including District Managers and Group leaders is here:
<https://arec.nz/arec-officers/>

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

National Officers:

ZK6EX Chief Executive Officer
 Don Robertson, ZL2TYR
ceo@arec.nz, 021 654 085

ZK6EXB Regional Manager North
 Andrew Brill, ZL1COP
RMNth@arec.nz, 022 354 6451

ZK6EXC Regional Manager Central
 Simon Osborne, ZL2TSO
RMCent@arec.nz, 027 206 6705

ZK6EXA Regional Manager South
 Lindsey Ross, ZL4KS
RMStth@arec.nz, 021 116 1686

ZK6EXZ Technical Advisor
 John Yaldwyn, ZL4JY
techadvice@arec.nz, 021 456 042

ZK6EXP Project Coordinator
 John Murphy, ZL2XJ
projects@arec.nz, 021 0807 5075

ZK6EXT Training Advisor
 Steve Davis, ZL2UCX
training@arec.nz, 027 436 1796

ZK6EXH Health & Safety Advisor
 Dave Wilkins, ZL1MR
hsw@arec.nz, 021 185 7903

ZK6EXR Risk Advisor
 Wilbert Goossens, ZL2WEG
riskadvisor@arec.nz, 027 451 9717

ZK6EIL Technical Innovations Leader
 Philip Sharp, ZL1PSH
techinnovator@arec.nz, 027 203 0428

ZK6EDM NZ IARU R3 EC Coordinator
 Steve Davis, ZL2UCX
nziaruecc@arec.nz, 027 436 1796

ZK6EXE Newsletter Editor
 Soren Low, ZL1SKL
newsletter@arec.nz, 021 813 541

Treasurer – Stuart Burns
treasurer@arec.nz, 021 972 535

Administration – Annalise Mokalei-Smith
admin@arec.nz, 04 939 2189

Waikato AREC Group

Branch 12 Hamilton have relinquished their AREC group, and a new group has been formed by Radio Electronics Group (Branch 89). Robert McMillan ZL2BRO has been appointed as Group Leader.

The new group will be known as the Waikato AREC group to reflect the fact that it will cater for people throughout the Waikato District who wish to be part of AREC, regardless of their NZART branch affiliations. This does not mean that other NZART branches cannot have AREC branches, but currently the only other group in the Waikato District is Thames, which has two members.

The new Waikato branch will welcome anyone with a desire to put their communications skills to use for the benefit of the community.

Existing members of the Hamilton group will be automatically transferred to the new Waikato Group, unless they indicate that they wish to opt out. If you **do not** wish to be part of the Waikato Group email rmnth@arec.nz, otherwise you don't need to do anything and will be included in the new group.

Robert will be taking on the role of organising the new group and getting some activity underway and will be supported by the AREC national team. We hope to be able to arrange an AREC weekend roadshow in the near future to provide some initial information and training for both new and existing AREC members.



I am pleased to announce the appointment of **Simon Osborne ZL2TSO** to the paid Regional Manager Central position and took over from **Don Wallace ZL2TLL** on the 7th of July.

Don has taken on the newly established voluntary role of Emergency Communications Coordinator covering civil emergencies and AREC's response and continuing to caretake the National Volunteer Support Officer volunteer role until it is filled.

I would like to thank Don for his significant contribution in the regional role over the last few years.

Other Positions

We have recruited a paid Regional Manager, Northern who is expected to start in October. More on this closer to the time. We will also soon be advertising for two new paid roles, these are National Support Manager and part time administrator. The investment in paid roles is to ensure we have support for you, our volunteers so please reach out if you would like to discuss any aspect relating to AREC.

You will also see an advertisement in this issue for Independent Trustee on the AREC Trust.

AREC Summit and AREC Forum

You will read about these two events, held in Palmerston North on the NZART Conference weekend, in this issue.

The Forum in particular is where we get to engage with our members and the wider NZART membership and I always enjoy meeting our people. It is also a reflection on what we have achieved over the last year, I hope those of you who joined in person or online enjoyed the session.

Until next month, stay safe.

Don, ZL2TYR

Chief Executive Officer, AREC



2023 AREC SUMMIT & FORUM

An annual event in the AREC calendar is the management summit and forum. These events are held on the same weekend as the NZART AGM and Conference, with the management summit on the Friday and the forum after the NZART AGM. The forum is open to everyone, and is an opportunity for us to update those present on our activities.

AREC Summit

The summit is an annual planning day for the national and District management team, it is the opportunity for a face-to-face workshop to collaborate and jointly work together on projects and initiatives to drive our organisation forward.

This year, we had Bridget Hesketh from NZ SAR and Matt Ellingham from LandSAR join us. As most will be aware, AREC receives funding from NZ SAR so it is always good to hear about how we are performing against expectations and where they see us, and the wider sector, heading. She also spoke on the SAR sector communications strategy, which is currently in draft, this seeks to achieve a more joined-up approach across SAR partners in relation to radio and communication technologies.

Matt gave us an update on LandSAR and talked about how they are solving communications challenges. He talked about the rollout of Starlink terminals (loosely aligned to Police districts) and how these are available to all agencies if needed. There was also an interesting discussion about the emerging technologies that will allow greater connectivity in the backcountry, however concluded that taking a PLB is still the best advice.



Organisational Target Operating Model

Caravel are helping us build an Organisational Target Operating Model, the purpose of this is to help guide our future vision and work through ways to put this into action. It is important that we stay close to changes in both technology and our customers' expectations to ensure we remain relevant into the future.

This is a piece of work that has been underway for a little while now and is really coming together to help provide clarity for our future planning.

Thank you to Bridget from NZ SAR, Matt from LandSAR, and Pat and Jim from Caravel Group for spending time with us.

Civil Defence

A topic of conversation was our role in support of Civil Defence, given the recent weather events in Auckland and the Hawke's Bay where AREC and the wider Amateur community pitched in as part of the response. There were a number of learnings that came out of this, as well as a desire to try to develop a stronger relationship with this sector. Don Wallace is developing a Civil Defence emergency strategy to pull these threads together and help our engagement with the sector.

Above right: Don Roberston and Bridget Hesketh from NZ SAR.
Left: Matt Ellingham from LandSAR.

AREC Trust

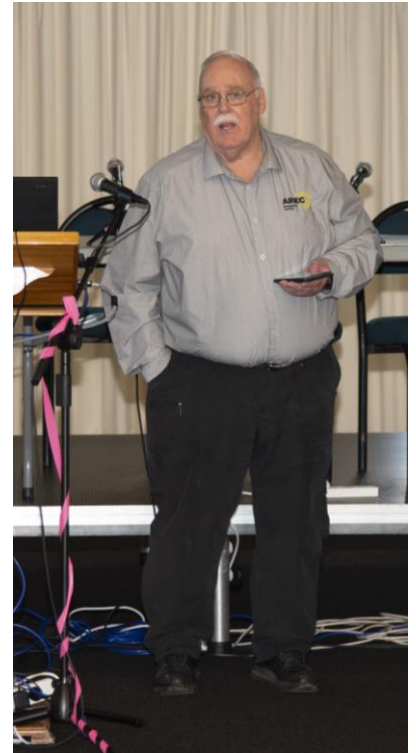
AREC Trust Chair Murray Milner ZL2LB and member Nick Coyne also joined us and talked about their role and view of how the organisation was going. Also on the trust is Don MacDonald ZL3DMC, with Michael Gousmett standing down part way through the year. Mark Gooding ZL2UFI stood down at the NZART AGM, being replaced with Daniel Vandenburg ZL2DRV.

AREC Forum

The forum is held every year after the NZART AGM, and provides an opportunity for our national team to provide an update to the wider audience about what we have been up to, and our plans for the next year.

A significant focus of this year's forum was the significant involvement of AREC in the Auckland and Hawke's Bay weather events. Andy Brill ZL1COP, Regional Manager North and John Newson ZL2VAF, District Manager Easter, provided accounts of the events and our involvement.

This year, the Doug Gorman Award was handed to John Newson ZL2VAF for his leadership and personal contribution to the Hawke's Bay event. The Doug Gorman award was created to acknowledge amateur volunteers for their contributions to all that is Amateur Radio. (cover photo)



NZ Police Dip Flat SAR Course 2023

Gary Lodge ZL1GA and Greg Barton ZL2GBX

“Dip Flat” is the annual Police national Search & Rescue training course, held at the Royal New Zealand training facility near Saint Arnaud. AREC attends to provide communications support to the event, including for the SAR exercise in week two.

This was a combined exercise involving NZ Police, Civil Defence, LandSAR, NZ Army, RNZAF and AREC. The exercise was based at the RNZAF Training Base at Dip Flat. At an altitude of approximately 900 metres above sea level the camp is 16 km up the Rainbow Road and lies between the St. Arnaud and Raglan Ranges (1800 to 2000m above sea level). Rugged bush that is unforgiving to lost tamperers. Even the names of some of the creeks sound scary; Misery Stream, Lost Creek, Hellfire Stream.

AREC provides communications for the exercise, and this year we had one member from Wellington (Ross Pedder ZL2UAC, three members from Marlborough AREC (Paul Rennie ZL2RE Greg Barton ZL2GBX, Gary Lodge ZL1GA) and two from Christchurch (Steve Davis ZL2UCX and Tony van Poppel ZL3TVP).





This was my first practical experience of SARTrack having attended a course run in Christchurch two weeks previously. The course was presented by Steve Davis AREC Training Advisor and Don Robertson CEO of AREC.

A key component of the exercise is SARTrack, a computer-based search and rescue tool.



As we had completed training on the system in Christchurch a couple of weeks earlier, it was decided that we would “tag-team” with Greg helping with the setup and operations for the first three days, and Gary doing the latter part of the week and pack-down.

On a grey and drizzly Saturday, Paul picked up Ross from the airport and drove the Marlborough Emergency Management EOC truck up to Dip Flat, followed by Greg in Paul’s 4WD. There are several fords on the road up the valley and some of them were showing the impact of a week of rain. After a quick induction at the headquarters we set up the truck and HF antennas at the far end of the flat.

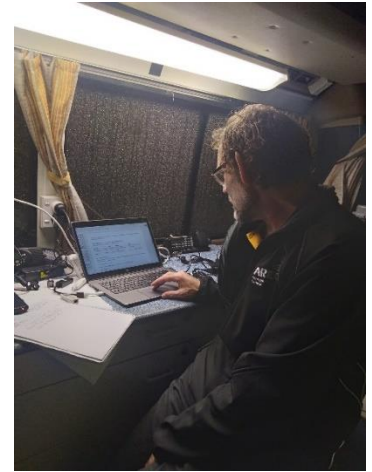
During the afternoon, mostly between showers, we set up two dipoles for HF; one for the “Day” frequency and another for “Night”. We also set up a long wire with remote tuner for backup. Later in the afternoon, Steve and Tony arrived from Christchurch and set up near headquarters to operate VHF. We established Wi-Fi links between headquarters, the VHF and HF trucks and connected to SARTrack.

The 50 or so Police staff who were the students on the course had already spent a week on classroom theory and practise and were getting into the practical field exercises with a group of senior instructors in charge. While the instructors (and our comms team) slept in cabins, the trainees lived in tents nearby and endured two weeks of nearly non-stop rain.

On the Sunday the trainees, in six teams, did a practise walk up and over the Saint Arnaud Range down to Lake Rotoiti. This was a chance to check comms. The conditions were not good for HF – the teams could hear us with 100 watts, but we found it hard to pick them up with just 5 watts on field dipoles strung mostly under or near wet tree canopies. The last team finished at 7.30pm in the darkness. It is traditional for most teams to take a “quick dip” in the lake on completion of the exercise, but most felt they had already had enough exposure to water!



Left: Greg, Ross, Tony and Paul wait in front of SARTrack screens for the last of the field teams to check in.



Right: Steve coordinates comms while the rain persists outside

Monday was a quiet day; the trainees being briefed on the main exercise and the afternoon was allocated to helicopter training. While the fuel tanker and support truck arrived and set up, the very low cloud base meant that the NH90 chopper couldn't get up the valley, so to much disappointment, the winch training was cancelled. We used the time to do some tests with the HF field radios and our antenna systems/

The main exercise involved a party of 4 community volunteers who had entered the bush a few days previous and then split into two teams, and they became "the lost parties". The students were allocated to either the Incident Management Team (IMT) or one of the six search teams and had to locate the "lost parties" using their new skills.

On Tuesday morning the IMT set up and ran a SARTrack Operation and equipped and dispatched the field teams to begin the search.

SARTrack is a New Zealand developed computer system which logs and captures all communication between the field teams and the IMT. Location and progress of each team and any clues they have found are shown on a real-time map which is available on big screens or laptops. This allows the search controllers to quickly assess areas of interest and focus the search teams.

We began logging calls to and from the field teams as they started and completed tasks, did sitreps and reported any clues. As the choppers were still grounded one of the first tasks was for the teams to set up and test a VHF repeater system along the road to improve coverage up valleys to be searched. This comprised two repeaters and a linking repeater and was completed during the morning. Ideally the repeaters would have been positioned on high points with the helicopter.

At lunchtime Greg left Dip Flat to return Paul's vehicle to Blenheim. It was still raining steadily, and the fords were getting "interesting" to say the least. After a damp trip (wipers on full till Renwick!) the swap with Gary was completed around 2pm, and he set off for the return journey.

The trip to Dip Flat was not without some excitement, heavy overnight rain had caused many of the fords to become impassable. Even the Unimog drivers were surprised at how quickly small streams had become raging torrents. The Surf was left to be picked up later and the rest of the journey was completed in a more capable police vehicle, finally arriving at camp around five o'clock.

The next morning after a good sleep (very warm cabins) and breakfast (catering all week was excellent) operations commenced at 7.30am. There had been a dusting of snow overnight and heavy rain resulting in more impassible rivers. The six teams were out in the bush with their allocated tasks.

As radio operators we logged all responses during the day from the teams, recorded requests, grid references and actions from search coordinators, helicopters, Unimogs etc. through to the final wellbeing checks at the end of the day.

Our communications were on HF channels using both day and night AREC frequencies. The Marlborough Emergency Communication vehicle is extremely well set up with space for radio operators and equipment and a separate area at the rear of the vehicle for search co-ordination.

Thursday dawned very cold and wet, teams who had been out since the first day reported that there was light snow still falling. By late afternoon teams had completed their tasks and were told to make their way to specific points either to be picked up by a Unimog or airlifted out.

After final wellbeing checks and assurances that all teams were out of the bush we packed up our antennas and gear and made our way back to camp as it was getting dark. Far preferable to packing up frosty poles in the morning....

The exercise concluded with the organisations and teams involved holding their own debriefs followed by awards and a bonfire.



The next morning our group returned to Blenheim, we held our own debrief at the Runway Café - everyone's phones going berserk after a week with no cell phone coverage.

All the teams I spoke with said that as an exercise it was as close as possible to the real thing, driving rain, wind, snow, no cell phone coverage and dense bush. It was a great learning experience and a privilege to be able to observe the expertise and professionalism of all the sectors involved in the exercise.



North Shore Community on Disaster Response

Andy Brill ZL1COP, AREC Regional Manager North

Following the recent flood and cyclone events in Auckland, AREC was invited to join Police, Fire and Emergency NZ, Neighbourhood Support, North Shore Community Patrols, Auckland Emergency Management and the Takapuna-Devonport Local Board at a public meeting to give an overview and answer questions about our role.

The meeting on 25 May was organised by the Auckland North Community and Development (ANCAD) trust.

After each of the organisations outlined their experiences during the response the various representatives took questions from the floor.

There was considerable interest in the AREC role, and a growing awareness of the need for an alternative to phone and internet communications for community groups during disaster situations. There was also a clear desire for more support for community groups in civil emergency response and better coordination between the community volunteers and CDEM authorities..

The meeting provided valuable publicity for AREC and a forum to highlight and explain our role.

Participants in the meeting were the Area Commanders from Fire and Emergency and Waitemata Police Districts. Leaders of the North Shore Neighbourhood Support Group, North Shore Community Patrols, Auckland Council representative and Master of Ceremonies Mike Alofa, Takapuna- Devonport Local Board Chair Toni Van Tonder. AREC was represented by North Shore AREC Group Leader and Northern Region Manager Andy Brill ZL1COP.

Hobsonville Emergency Response Group

Andy Brill ZL1COP, AREC Regional Manager North



As a result of the Flood and Cyclone events earlier this year The Hobsonville Point Community in West Auckland are in the process of establishing a Community Response Group to safeguard the community during future emergencies.

AREC are providing advice on setting up a local communications network for the community using UHF PRS radios and linking this network to the AREC comms base at Sunnynook on the North Shore via the CDEM ESB band comms network.

AREC will be providing Tait TM8200 base stations programmed for PRS (donated to AREC for community use by Firth Concrete).

On 13 May the new group had its first exercise, setting up an emergency Community Hub in a local hall. North Shore AREC members Kieran Robottam ZL1GER, Alan Campkin ZL1TUQ and Andy Brill ZL1COP took part and provided a PRS base station and six hand-held radios for the participants to try out. AREC had provided a number of comms related injects for the exercise to give the participants a hint of what is required to run a comms operation.

As expected for a first exercise, there was quite a lot of confusion, and the fog of war was much in evidence. However, it was a valuable tool to indicate to the group what training and practice will be needed in the future and provided some important learnings on how an emergency response should be structured. Hopefully AREC will be able to provide ongoing training in comms procedures and give some advice on how to set up an effective local comms network.

We look forward to working with the people of Hobsonville as they develop their capabilities.

Manawatu Communications Exercise

Ryan Warner, ZL1RKW

Manawatu Amateur Radio Society's AREC group ran a comms exercise in Palmerston North on the last weekend of April, using as many club members as possible.

Scenario was that a natural disaster has occurred in and around the city. Infrastructure was down, no mains power, phones, or repeaters, the only comm's will be VHF, UHF, HF simplex and relaying and power of batteries and generators.

We wanted to collect as much information and status of different places in most of the 23 suburbs in Palmerston North, showing in an event we can get information moving around the city using no middle infrastructure (i.e. no fixed repeaters).

Because we haven't done an exercise like this for many years our main goal was to collect information to a central hub at the club rooms and cover all 23 suburbs in Palmerston North.

This was simulated with the idea that this information was asked for by civil defence and we would feed as much as we could.

For operators outside of the city in the Manawatu, Rangitikei, Tararua and Horowhenua Districts we got them to report extra info on your areas if available.



We planned to have three roles:

- Club Operators - running radios, running power or sorting information.
- Mobile Operators - collecting information in their local area and around the city.
- Home Operators - providing localisation information and relay capabilities as needed.

On the day we had 9 Club Operators, 10 Home Operators and 8 Mobile Operators.

Our club operators put in 31 hours of combined time with our our home and mobile operators put in 26.5 hours of combined time.



We used 5 channels for the exercise:

- 2m FM Simplex
- 70cm FM Simplex
- 70cm DMR Simplex
- 80m LSB Simplex
- 40m LSB Simplex

We gave the mobile and home operators a simple briefing a couple of days before via email.

On the morning of the exercise, we started setup from 9am, gave the club operators a briefing and were running on the radios with people calling in from 10am.

The club issued and completed 32 tasks in the day, using about 80 messages. Messages were passed using paper forms between the radio room and IMT, with Google Earth and a spreadsheet to log this information.

We did have some difficulty on the day with so many channels, so we mostly ended up using 2m/70cm Simplex and using our mobile operators as much as we could to cover critical parts of the city.

Palmerston North is quite flat, this is very achievable, and we learnt that we could communicate to most parts of the city with simplex and some relaying.

Overall, a great day and starting point for future exercises.

Situations Vacant: Independent Trustee, AREC Trust

The AREC Trust has a vacancy for an independent Trustee to join the current board of trustees. Applicants are invited to apply to recruitment@arec.nz with CV and cover letter. Applicants must not be an officer holder of AREC or NZART.

A Trustee will be responsible for but not limited to jointly providing governance for AREC operations, in cooperation with the AREC Trust Chair, other Trustees, and Chief Executive Officer, promote subjects for consideration and help AREC meet its obligations and future vision, including management of risk and assurance of compliance with applicable standards and regulations.

The Trustee role provides independent governance advice to ensure that AREC Operations are conducted effectively. The full position description is available from recruitment@arec.nz. Applicants do not need to be members of AREC or NZART to apply.

Situations Vacant: AREC Webmaster

The Webmaster is a volunteer role, reporting to the AREC ICT Manager.

We are seeking a skilled Webmaster to ensure AREC's websites and servers meet requirements.

Your responsibilities include enhancing user experience by creating user-friendly, visually appealing, and secure sites. Attention to detail and effective communication are essential, as you balance creativity and analytical thinking

A strong technical background would be useful and experience in WordPress is essential. Your ultimate goal is the seamless functionality and efficiency of the AREC web infrastructure.

For more information, please contact the Senior Administrator Annalise Mokalei-Smith admin@arec.nz.

MOTAT Telecommunications Live Day

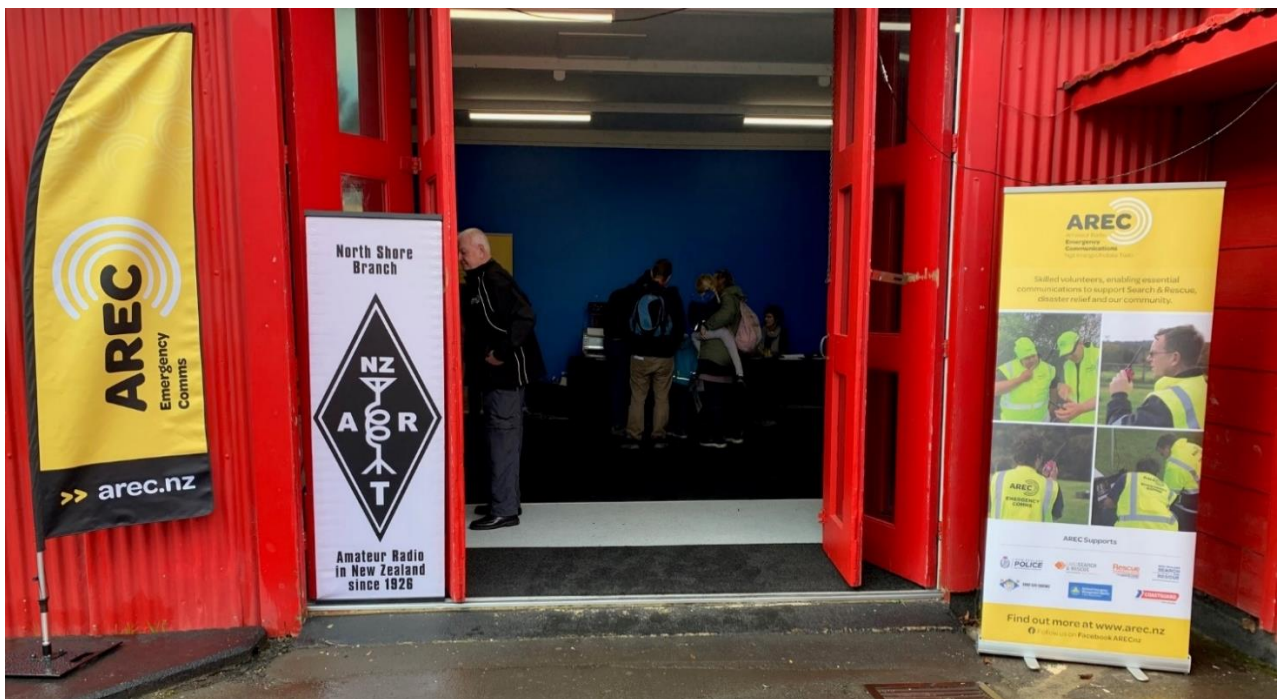
Terry James, ZL1HOG

On the 18th of June members of AREC Auckland attended Auckland's Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT) Telecommunications Live Day.

Attending were Andy Brill ZL1COP, Terry McCarthy ZL2TPM and Terry James ZL1HOG. We displayed equipment used for Search and Rescue and Emergency Communications. On display was one of the old Police SAR Repeaters, a Base Radio that could also be used as a cross-band repeater, a ESB164 emergency service liaison repeater, a box of PRS CB handhelds and base radio with power supply and aerial that is used for Community Groups to assist with training radio procedures and to show what could be used at a local level in an emergency.

There was interest shown in the equipment and many question were asked. AREC's involvement with the recent weather events were discussed and explained how we assisted on a local level and other AREC personal nationally.

Other communications-themed activities included Franklin Branch helping kids send morse code messages over HF, and an RNZAF communications vehicle.



Meet the Team

Simon Osborne ZL2TSO is the newly appointed AREC Regional Manager Central. In this column, he tells us a bit about himself. Welcome to the team Simon!

Kia ora my name is Simon Osborne. I am the new AREC Regional Manager for the Central Region (Wellington, Central and Eastern). Originally from Australia, I am a safety, firefighting and emergency management specialist who lives in Central Hawkes Bay with my wife Janice, and children Curtis and Jasmine.

My amateur radio journey began back in 1971. I was about 7 at the time, when my next-door neighbour in Liverpool, New South Wales, Australia invited me into his Ham Radio Schack as he knew I had been fascinated by radio after building a number of crystal radio sets and other projects using a Tandy 101 electronics kit.

After many visits to his shack, he gave me a valve shortwave receiver. As the set's glowing valves warmed up, short wave signals from around the world filled my bedroom. Then, at 14, I purchased a Cobra 138XLR CB radio (AM, SSB) and joined the State Emergency and Bushfire Service as a volunteer radio operator and rural firefighter.

Over the years I got a great deal of satisfaction from learning how to build electronic kits, and aerials for different purposes and installing and repairing automotive electrical systems as an automotive engineer.

In 1982, I joined the Royal Australian Navy and after Fitter and Turner phase training, I worked for the Fleet Intermediate Maintenance Authority out of Garden Island and HMAS Stalwart. On promotion to an Able Seaman MTP2 (Stoker), I was posted to HMAS Townville and HMAS Swan as a watchkeeper and tanky.

It was during my time as a member of HMAS Townville (Freemantle Class Patrol Boat 205) ships company that I rekindled my interest in HF Radio and purchased a Yaesu FT-757 GX II HF all-mode transceiver and Chirnside Tri-Band Vertical Antenna.

After leaving the Navy in 1987, I joined the Eastern and Mountain District Radio Club and enrolled with TAFE Victoria, to study towards attaining an Amateur Operator's Certificate of Proficiency and in 1989 I gained my call sign **VK3XSJ**.

Over the years I spent a lot of time regularly participating in various VHF and HF DXpeditions at Mt Stirling and Mt Buller using my trusty 1947 Series One Land rover from which the club station VK3ER was activated collecting call signs.

Later on, I spent three decades teaching and managing emergencies in various leadership positions and operational roles as a volunteer Fire Captain, Crew Leader, Forest Firefighter, Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer, and Civil Defence Officer.

Fast forward to 2023, I now hold a General Amateur Operators Certificate of Competency as **ZL2 TSO** and have held this call since moving to New Zealand in 1991. Whilst I haven't been active due to my other hobby, building Amateur-Built Aircraft and being a volunteer forest firefighter, my over-riding interest in Amateur Radio is in emergency preparedness.

As you will appreciate, I am very enthusiastic about the future of AREC, and I am looking forward to working collaboratively with Amateur Radio operators, AREC members and other stakeholders to help make amateur radio and AREC functions thrive within the Wellington, Central and Eastern Districts.



Group Leaders - AREC Activity Reporting

It is important that your groups time and effort volunteering for AREC is recognised

SAR Operations – most cases Cat 1 Police events

To be reported to the Police SAR Incident Controller within 5 X days of the search taking place.

- i. AREC Group
- ii. type of use (standby or deployed) by Group.
- iii. total volunteer numbers by Group.
- iv. total volunteer hours by Group.
- v. any health, safety and wellbeing incident that occurred during the SAR operation.

This information goes into SARdonyx, the SAR Sector operations reporting system and is the method for which NZSAR can see all your good work when helping with SAR Operations.

AREC Activity Reports

To be used for reporting all activity. involvement with SAR operations, Meetings, Training, Community Events etc. This information provides AREC National with visibility of your activity across New Zealand in one place. We also provide NZSAR a quarterly report on your non-SAROP activity.

AREC Activity Reporting form

- You can log the activities either by an internet browser on your pc/laptop or mobile phone.
- Please take the time to report the good work you are doing.
- Any questions or if you need the activity reporting password contact.

Lindsey Ross, RMStH@arec.nz, 021 116 1686

How are you going this week?

Wellbeing of members and family is a key consideration for AREC, if you're not doing well you need to be able to sort things out.

AREC can now provide free access to professional and confidential advice and support through EAP Services. You can contact EAP via 0800 327 669 or

<https://www.eapservices.co.nz/request-an-appointment/> to request a confidential appointment.

Staff/contractors/volunteers will need to say they are from Amateur Radio Emergency Communications or AREC and will be asked for their name and phone number (these details remain confidential to EAP – not shared with AREC).

Hi Everyone,

Winter

We are well into the colder parts of the year. Not sure about the fate of skiing in the North Island due to financial problems with Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ltd going into receivership. Looks like I may yet be able to directly face a hazardous environment out of choice, and if there is any snow I can have some fun. Having already broken a leg back in 1995 I am aware it is a hazardous activity.

I think that illustrates the conundrum that humans face. There are hazards everywhere and we need to face that fact, ensure we protect ourselves as best we can, and move on. If we don't, then what is the alternative? Do we stop doing anything just in case we may get harmed in some way?

When is it time to retire?

The nature of voluntary service is that we are prepared to offer our skills and go out of our way to help the community. We must be mindful though that we take a balanced approach. After all we don't want to become another victim of the ongoing disaster! That is why we must understand what we can do, but more importantly understand what we can no longer do.

A couple of years ago I realised my fitness was no longer what it used to be, so after 27+ years as a LandSAR Team Leader and front-line searcher it was time to step back and let the younger guys and girls get dirty, tired, wet and miserable, and to go back to my roots as an AREC person. Strangely that involves working in a relatively comfortable environment operating radios and SARTrack, sleeping on a stretcher, and only occasionally having to walk in the field to install, recover, or repair a repeater.

When will I need to step back from my AREC role? I'm not sure. Do I need to go blind, deaf, and be incapable of walking? Not really, as each person will be different and in some way we can always continue to contribute to AREC, maybe just not in the manner that we used to.

Whatever we do we must realise that we should retire from key roles before we become a liability, not after we have driven everyone to distraction. I am sure when I finally retired from my day job back in December 2022, I prevented my grumpiness and short patience across a range of topics from preventing others from feeling challenged or depressed from any negative energy that I may have been emanating.

Of course, whilst a whole lot of people thanked me and said kind words for what I had done over the years, what were they secretly thinking?

Keeping a positive outlook

When I retired it was a great relief to not have the regular daily workload. However, I needed to keep focussed on the future, not just looking back at my wonderful achievements of the past.

To that end I try to look forwards and plan ahead, so I volunteer for AREC, St John, and the local Radio Club. That way I keep a positive focus on contributing, not just taking the pension and partying up! I also see working around the house as a team effort though I am not allowed to cook! That means mowing lawns and other tasks like: hanging out the washing, making the bed, and some house-cleaning duties. They all end up in my 'To-Do' list that strangely seems to be more cluttered than when I was actually working!

I'm sure at some point I'll have to retire as a St John Ambulance Officer, but will I then be able to switch over to become a Friend of the Emergency Department (FED), bringing cups of tea or coffee to the sick and afflicted who have no-one else to talk to? There are always alternatives when it is time for a change. Also, whilst I am still hoping for someone with an interest in accounting to take over my role as radio club treasurer, that role keeps my brain whizzing along.

As a result of my volunteering, I am making sure I maintain activities that keep me busy and ensure I have a reason to keep a positive outlook on life.

So are you a person with a glass half-full attitude and looking positively at life going ahead? Or, are you more of a glass half-empty type of person and need to make that extra effort to keep positive?

Either way, your wellbeing will be much improved if you focus on the good things in your day. Just write off the negatives as an experience for learning but make sure that they don't rule your life.

As one lady said when I asked how her day was going 'The afternoon is going to be great!'

Keep smiling, but if you are struggling to get your head around things remember to talk with those you trust, a problem shared is usually a problem half solved. And if nothing else works consider talking with your GP, or EAP Services, the AREC support services provider. Their details are in the orange box in this Newsletter.

Contact me if you need any information about AREC HSW services via HSW@arec.nz.

David Wilkins ZL1MR
AREC Health & Safety Advisor



AREC members have a duty of care so we must not place ourselves or others at risk in regard to Hazards. We must always plan what we are about to do.

If any change takes place regarding People, Equipment, Environment, or Process/Task (PEEP) then we need to:

STOP – THINK – PLAN – COMMUNICATE – ACT