

USAR Search Dogs in New Zealand

USAR has gained momentum over the last few years with the development of three National Task Forces, and currently 15 local Response Teams.

The development of USAR Search Dogs has mirrored this growth with the establishment of National Standards, based on the US FEMA system, introduced in 2003.

The NZ USAR Search Dog Association is an Incorporated Society established to support the the development of USAR Search Dogs in New Zealand. It provides training opportunities, newsletters, administers the national standards and represents handlers at a national level to ensure the effective and appropriate use of USAR Search Dogs.

Evaluations to the Basic and Advanced Standards are undertaken by Civilian Assessors and New Zealand Police Dog Section Evaluators.

We are aiming for 24 certified handler/dog teams spread throughout the country. Training is focussed on three centres of excellence that correspond with the National USAR Task Forces: Auckland, Christchurch and Palmerston North.

Many handlers belong to a local search dog training group in their area to assist with regular training opportunities. Often USAR Search Dogs are also cross-trained, along with their handlers, to be a resource for New Zealand Land SAR Wilderness search.



For more information:

USAR in New Zealand
www.usar.govt.nz

USAR Search Dogs
www.usardogs.org.nz



A Certified USAR Search Dog Team (handler and dog) is an invaluable unique resource for the location of people buried or trapped in collapsed structures.



NZ USAR
Search Dog Association

USAR Search Dogs in New Zealand





What is so special about USAR Search Dogs?

Humans shed up to 40,000 skins cells every minute and it is these tiny particles floating in the air that USAR dogs are trained to locate and indicate by barking. The fast and effective location of trapped victims has a strong influence on their chances of rescue and recovery.

These amazing animals must be healthy, energetic, agile, high drive dogs who can cope with the stress of being around many other dogs, handlers, rescue workers and the noise and confusion of a rescue site. They must be non-aggressive and possess the ability to work in very difficult conditions. It is estimated that only about 10% of dogs have the attributes required for this type of work.

The USAR Search Dog Association actively work with handlers to find suitable dogs to train. There is no certain breed, and many of our dogs come from dog shelters. Once a dog has been selected to be trained it becomes the sole responsibility of the handler - it is their dog, and it lives at home with them.

What about the handlers?

USAR Search Dog handlers in New Zealand are all volunteers. They come from all sorts of background from firefighters to computer programmers. What they share is basic fitness, ability to work in a team, the desire to serve the wider community and a dedication to the development of USAR Search Dogs.

All those involved with USAR are required to undertake some basic training to ensure they are safe and useful on a USAR site. This training combines to qualify the person as a USAR Responder, and they are identified by an ID card called the USAR Orange Card.

The courses required for this are:

- General Rescue - introductory rescue work
- First Aid
- USAR Awareness- basic work on the rubble pile
- Introductory Co-ordinated Incident Management System (CIMS)



How can I be involved?

Being a USAR Search Dog Handler is very rewarding and a great experience, but it also a large amount of hard work.



If you are thinking about becoming a USAR Dog Handler you should ask yourself some questions?

- Do I have time to train a dog for a minimum of 10 hours week? (both organized and other training)
- Am I a team player who is keen to help others train their dogs?
- Am I prepared to spend time developing my own skills?

If you already have a dog we are happy to have a senior handler work with you to assess whether it would be appropriate to train as a USAR Search Dog. Please note that dogs already identified as a dangerous breed will not be accepted as a search dog.

There are several other ways you can be involved in USAR in New Zealand.

- Help in the training by hiding for the dogs
- Join a USAR Response Team



Urban Search and Rescue or USAR is defined as:

An integrated multi-agency response, which is beyond the capability of normal rescue arrangements, and it involves the location, initial medical stabilisation and rescue of victims trapped in confined spaces of a damaged structure, or other environments, in a safe, quick and efficient manner.