



Vol #17 Feb 2008

Included in this issue....

- Upcoming events
- Gisborne Earthquake report
- CREP report

It's a pretty slim newsletter to start the year. Everyone was busy through the end of the year with training (for dogs and humans) and an end-of-year callout. And, looking at the calendar below, the next couple of months are promising more of the same.

Please be sure to send in any articles or stories or photos that you would like to see published in the next newsletter.

Keep up the training and see you on the rubble pile.

- Editor



2008 Event Calendar

February:

15th - Public info night Christchurch
23/24th - Auckland Regional Training

March:

15/16th - Central Regional Training

May: Early
Basic CREP

May: Late
Christchurch Regional Training

July:
National Training Weekend and the
AGM

As some dates are still not completely fixed, please visit the website for details as time nears.

8th National CREP Report

The 8th National CREP was held in Christchurch, 27th / 28th October 2007. It was the 8th assessment to the Basic Level and 5th Advanced assessment.

Assessors for this evaluation were:

Paul George (NZ Police) Head Assessor
Linda Pike Civilian Assessor
Jenny Waters (Vet) Element 5 Assessor

At this assessment the following teams were being assessed and certified:

Brenda Woolley and Easy - Advanced
Brenda Woolley and Boss - Basic
Sara Rad and Sasha - Basic
Janelle Mackie and Cairo - Basic

Organisation and Logistics

This CREP was organised by the Christchurch Team, (Graham Joseph, Brenda Woolley, Janelle Mackie and Linda Pike) working closely together to organise the time table, various locations, subjects, equipment and food.

Graham Joseph and Brenda Woolley

undertook the CREP coordination with Janelle Mackie and Linda Pike assisting with a lot of the work. Paul Davenport helped with transportation and subject management. Access to Task Force 2 resources and personnel was greatly appreciated through the use of the Task Force facilities at Woolston and their assistance building hides.

We again received support from Paul George, as head evaluator and Jenny Waters (Vet) Element 5 evaluator. The time and effort they continue to provide is invaluable and always appreciated.



Brenda with Easy and Janelle with Cairo provide distraction while Sara and Sasha work.

These are a few of my favorite things.

Oh to know such simple pleasures...

8:00 am - Dog food! My favourite thing!	3:00 pm - Kids are home! My favourite!
9:30 am - A car ride! My favourite thing!	5:00 pm - Dog food! My favourite!
9:40 am - Walkies! My favourite!	7:00 pm - Got to play ball! My favourite!
10:30 am - Tummy rub! My favourite!	8:00 pm - Wow! Watched TV with the people! My favourite!
12:00 pm - Lunch! My favourite!	11:00 pm - Sleeping on my people's bed! My favourite thing!
1:00 pm - Played in the yard! My favourite!	





Gisborne Deployment for Task Force 1 USAR Search Dog Handler's Perspective

I thought I was already busy with not a spare moment to fit anything else into my world when the 'call out came'!! Suddenly all the important Christmas shopping and decorating paled in significance and seemed quite unnecessary. YES, at last a USAR callout for myself and Nugget, with the 35 member Task Force 1.

December 20th at 2055hrs a 6.8M earthquake struck 40km off shore of Gisborne, New Zealand. It was bed time and as I shut my eyes while listening to the radio reports, thinking I could grab a power sleep in 5 minutes, whilst crossing my fingers for a 'call out'. Initial information reported building damage but no trapped or severely injured people. This seemed like the perfect deployment.

There was no surprise when the 'pager' beeped into life. Within 15 minutes of the call to attend Palmerston North Task Force (TF) Headquarters, 130km away, Nugget and I were ready to go and had sorted out car pooling with another TF member.

Within two hours of being paged we were in Palmerston North having had a teleconference in the car on the way. We were informed of the bigger picture including what agencies were doing what, level of damage, which task force would be deployed, which on standby etc., and what level of response was required from us. It was a very effective way to relay information directly from the National Crisis Management Centre to the team who would be on the ground the following morning.

On arriving at TF1 HQ the truck was already fully loaded (thanks to those who live locally) with necessary equipment and ready to hit the road for the seven hour journey north to Gisborne. Early reports indicated all essential services in Gisborne were 95% intact and functioning. By using the local services for shelter and food etc. only one truck was required for tools and all necessary equipment. There was limited space for gear so in consultation with the team leader, Nugget's kennel was left at base and she travelled and slept with the team. This decision was possible as the bus was hired for the duration of the deployment. The bus driver was very happy to have Nugget on board and she happily settled herself on the floor.

The journey was very comfortable and spacious so most of us slept on and off through the night. That road from Hastings to Wairoa is tricky enough in a car - hats off to the bus driver who did a sterling job of the twists, bends, narrow bridges and hills in misty rain - whilst we continued to sleep!

We arrived in Gisborne and were ready for work at 8am - 11 hours since the initial quake. Meetings took place with TF team leaders and Gisborne City Council almost immediately and intermittently throughout the next two days. The engineers, with several TF team members started assessing the buildings in the CBD. Meantime 15 of us were based at Gisborne Fire Station awaiting tasking and being team support doing jobs such as finding local accommodation and food, finding a motel for the bus driver immediately, liaising with the local Fire Brigade and the imported brigades from Napier and Hastings and catching a bit of 'shut eye' here and there.

As a USAR Dog Handler it seemed from the early information that Nugget and I were unlikely to be used to search for trapped people. However, there was always a chance. The initial

quake de-stabilised brick walls 4-5m high, separated building walls and weakened gables. A big aftershock was a worry. I managed Nugget as if we were to be deployed, with my gear and Nugget's at hand all the time. I fed her often and little so she wouldn't work on a completely full or empty stomach and found a quiet and comfortable place where she could sleep and become familiar with her surroundings. When out for walks Incident Control knew where we were and when we would return. When out walking she wore a USAR Canine Search jacket, as I was also in uniform. All staff present at Gisborne Fire station were made aware where Nugget was and what her needs were in case I wasn't present.

After the engineers assessed buildings, tasks were allocated. I supported a team of technicians shoring a 5 meter high brick wall, so I left Nugget at the Gisborne fire station. All fire and USAR personnel were showing great interest in Nugget and volunteering to care for her while I was away. This highlighted why it's necessary for USAR dogs to be managed by people other than the handler and the handler be willing to allow others to handle their dog. I had radio contact and was only 5 minutes walk away, should canine search be required.

Although the CBD was cordoned off, the public were able to watch the work being carried out and were most appreciative. Many hadn't heard of the Task Force before and were thrilled at the level of support for their town. All the immediate work was complete within 28 hours of the Task Force arriving and then the Civil Defence Declaration was lifted.

The quake occurred 5 minutes before Friday late night closing only 5 days before Christmas. It was miraculous that no one was injured considering the structural damage that occurred. A 1913 war memorial 3 meters high was fine from ground to 1.5meters but the top 1.5meters which was tapered was now facing west instead of south! The TF members had the opportunity to chat with building experts who provided technical explanation as to why various damage occurred.

The bus ride home was pleasurable as this time we were awake to see the views on a sunny day and the driver fully revived after two nights sleep. There were lots of laughs and singing all the way.

In summary it was good to know that the 'call out' process worked smoothly from my and the Team's perspective. I felt fully informed at all times and the teleconference highlighted that I was an individual in a big team with lots of support. I only had to think about my small part and do it well. Our family members were invited to a telephone conference 24 hours into the response, which kept them up to date with what was happening and estimated time of arriving back at Palmerston North. Having Nugget integrated into the team and cared for by team members provided a relaxed feeling for all. Thanks to the fireman who brought the buckets and buckets of Gisborne oranges. They were the BEST!

*Sue Chesterfield:
Task Force 1 - Canine
Handler*

