

OC250876

16 October 2025

Tēnā koe

I refer to your email dated 18 September 2025, requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*“I would like to request information about call-outs for Land Search and Rescue operations for the last 5 years, broken down by year.*

*Specifically, how many times Search and Rescue is deployed for land-based rescues per year, the highest cost per callout, the lowest cost per callout, and the average cost across all callouts.*

*Also if it is stored, the activities that required search and rescue to be deployed; Hunting, tramping or others. Also were they due to PLBs being triggered or other means that were used to escalate these to search and rescue. Also how many fatalities occurred per year in the outdoors that search and rescue were called to but did not arrive in time, and how many fatalities occur while people were enjoying adventure recreation such as hunting or hiking and, the recorded cause of death.”*

On 29 September 2025, we reached out to invite you to refine the scope of your request but did not receive a response.

We advised that New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) has a system called SARdonyx which captures some of the information requested. It collects data from NZ Police, Maritime New Zealand and some other agencies such as Land Search and Rescue. We advised that more information on SARdonyx could be found on the NZSAR website (<https://www.nzsar.govt.nz/training-resources/start/sardonix/sardonix-introduction>) and that while we would be able to extract the information the Ministry holds and consider this under the Act, we did not hold all the information you are requesting.

We followed up with you on the clarification sought on 6 October 2025 but did not receive a response.

Therefore, we have responded to your request with the information that the Ministry holds. Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

I have responded to your questions in turn below:

***How many times Search and Rescue is deployed for land-based rescues per year***

The table below provides a total of Search and Rescue Operation (SAROP) incidents each year that were on land.

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
721 Land responses from 1341 SAROPs	767 Land responses from 1363 SAROPs	932 Land responses from 1610 SAROPs	1136 Land responses from 1814 SAROPs	1038 Land responses from 1734 SAROPs

***The highest cost per callout, The lowest cost per callout, and the average cost across all callouts.***

The figures presented for the maximum, minimum, and average cost of callouts are indicative only. They are based on estimated costs and not derived from actual financial data. These values should not be interpreted as definitive or precise. Actual costs may vary significantly depending on the nature and complexity of each callout.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Highest cost of a Land SAROP	\$ 133,960	\$ 154,470	\$ 151,160	\$ 274,870	\$ 152,200
Lowest cost of a Land SAROP	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Average cost of a Land SAROP	\$ 3,012	\$ 3,469	\$ 3,080	\$ 3,311	\$ 3,193

***The activities that required search and rescue to be deployed; Hunting, tramping or others.***

We do capture callouts based on the activity classifications of the circumstances that required a callout provided it was recorded accurately by the responders.

Please refer to the table below for a yearly breakdown of the requested activity classifications.

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Hunter	32	59	57	76	63
Tramper	157	179	227	285	253
Other	529	526	641	760	707
Yearly total	718	764	925	1121	1023

***Also were they due to PLBs being triggered or other means that were used to escalate these to search and rescue.***

We do hold this data if a PLB was activated and the call out was captured in SARdonyx. Please refer to the table below for a yearly breakdown of number of beacon activated callouts that were on land.

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
149 Land SAROPs as a result of a beacon activation	248 Land SAROPs as a result of a beacon activation	269 Land SAROPs as a result of a beacon activation	326 Land SAROPs as a result of a beacon activation	288 Land SAROPs as a result of a beacon activation

***Also how many fatalities occurred per year in the outdoors that search and rescue were called to but did not arrive in time, and how many fatalities occur while people were enjoying adventure recreation such as hunting or hiking and,***

Information on individuals who are perished or assumed perished during the course of a SAROP is sensitive in nature. Providing numbers of SAROPs where individuals are perished or assumed perished could affect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons. The above parts of the request are therefore withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

***The recorded cause of death.***

We do not hold this information. Cause of death is a matter for the Coroner, and this is recorded sometime after a callout.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

The Ministry publishes our Official Information Act responses and the information contained in our reply to you may be published on the Ministry's website. Before publishing we will remove any personal or identifiable information.

Nāku noa, nā



Andrew Greig  
**NZSAR Secretariat Lead**