

NZRT Capability and Competency Framework

May 2026 v4.0

Introduction

This framework outlines the minimum capabilities and competencies required of volunteer teams accredited as a New Zealand Response Team (NZRT) and provides an overview of the role of NZRTs working in the emergency management sector.

The role of NZRTs varies based on local needs, and the capability or capacity of emergency services, or other agencies in the team's home region.

The NZRT National Accreditation Process administered by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provides assurance that NZRTs are meeting the minimum standards outlined in this framework and the NZRT National Operating Guidelines. All NZRTs are audited every three years, with six monthly reporting occurring between audits and annual competency checks completed.

This framework is a living document that will have minor updates approved by the NZRT Steering Group and Governance Group as the sector changes. A full document review will occur every 3 years between accreditation cycles.

Capability Strands

This framework is divided into several capability strands, the Foundation strand is compulsory for all teams, whilst other strands are elective and based on local or regional need.

There is no expectation on NZRTs that they are required to become endorsed for elective strands if they do not wish to, or if the CEG determine there is no need for the team to hold that capability in their local area.

Ideally, teams will seek accreditation for elective strands at the same time as the Foundation strand to streamline the accreditation process into a three yearly cycle. However, additional capability strands can be added between cycles in consultation with the NZRT Secretariat.

Individual strands are outlined in the Appendices.

Coordinating Executive Group (CEG) Endorsement

The Coordinating Executive Group for the team's home area must ensure an evidence-based rationale exists for setting up and maintaining the team based on known gaps in current response capabilities. When assessing the case for a new team, the CEG should consider whether:

- There is a gap in existing capability which could be filled by a NZRT.
- Existing resources and usual response arrangements can be meaningfully supported by a NZRT.
- A NZRT could provide surge capacity during an emergency where usual response arrangements are overwhelmed or otherwise require additional support.

The CEG must ensure any endorsed and registered NZRT within its geographical area of responsibility is integrated into response and recovery arrangements at the appropriate level. Integration should be done in a way that avoids unnecessary duplication or uncertainty about roles and capability.

Minimum Standards

The required standards outlined in the capability framework are the **minimum** required for a team to be accredited and endorsed in a particular strand, however, teams are encouraged to build their capabilities and competencies above and beyond these minimum standards.

For operational team members to be considered qualified in the Foundation or any elective strands, they must hold the identified unit standards, skills standards, or an assessed equivalent. An assessed equivalent can include recognised prior learning (RPL), assessment of prior learning (APL), or cross-credit (CC) where appropriate. The national process will be contained within the NZRT Operating Guidelines and will acknowledge transferable skills that team members possess from their BAU role, or other relevant experience. Approval for this will be through the NZRT Steering Group.

Minimum Team Size

The minimum team size is the minimum number of operational team members 'qualified' in the respective strand available to respond to an incident at any time. For example, if a team is deployed to a light rescue incident, they must respond with a minimum of eight qualified operational team members.

If a team does not meet the minimum team size requirements, they are considered non-operational for that strand (i.e. cannot deploy when tasked) until the minimum team size is once again available.

Non-operational, in-training, or other support staff are not included in the minimum team size but may be utilised at the discretion of the tasking agency, or with specific prior approval from the NZRT Secretariat. A process for this is in the NZRT Operating Guidelines and should be reflected in team SOPs.

Composite teams can be formed from members of different NZRTs to deploy to a specified incident, but the composite team must still meet the minimum standards and requirements for the respective strand to which the team is responding.

Occasionally, requests for smaller NZRT numbers may be made by tasking agencies to support bespoke operations such as operation of a mobile facility (deployable cache including tentage), this will be at the discretion of the requesting agency and subject to the usual approval process.

Out-of-Region Deployment

Foundation and elective strands qualify NZRTs to undertake those respective roles and capabilities in their local or regional area. Only teams who hold an endorsement in the out-of-region deployment strand should be deployed out of their local area or region. This is to minimise the resource burden on the area to which the team is deploying.

Group-to-group arrangements may be made by exception during the initial stages of an event however, both the NZRT Secretariat and NEMA NCC (once activated), must be notified and the requested teams must be self-sufficient where required. Out-of-region deployments will be coordinated by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The NZRT Operating Guidelines and team SOPs must have guidance that stipulate that no team is to self-deploy.

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Appendix A - NZRT Foundation

Purpose

Foundation components are the minimum compulsory components required by any team wanting to become a registered New Zealand Response Team (NZRT).

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in civil defence or other emergencies within their home region where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Reconnaissance, survey, impact assessment and information gathering.
- Cordon & movement control.
- Assisting with public notifications and evacuations.
- Providing first aid.
- Providing general support and assistance to emergency services.
- Coordinating spontaneous volunteers.
- Assist with aircraft loading/unloading.
- Providing support or surge staff for Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs), and Emergency Coordination Centres (ECCs).
- Establishment of rapidly deployable facilities, caches and emergency communications (where these exist).

Foundation tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually CDEM Groups or Councils.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
6400 – Manage first aid in emergency situations or 41051 - Manage first aid during emergency situations	Compulsory	8
6401 – Provide first aid or 41052 - Administer first aid	Compulsory	8
6402 – Provide basic life support or 41053 - Administer basic life support	Compulsory	8
Psychological first aid (PFA) – Delivered by recognised industry provider or takatū module - NZRT Psychological First Aid	Compulsory	8
497 – Dko workplace health & safety requirements or 17593 – Apply safe work practices in the workplace or takatū modules - Health & Safety and NZRT Safety Officer	Compulsory	8
12355 – Describe strategies for managing stress or takatū module - Critical Incident Stress	Compulsory	8
17279 - Dko CIMS or 32158 - Dko NZ CIMS	Compulsory	8

or 40717 - Outline NZ CIMS or takatū module - ITF Foundation		
7332 – Control the movement of people & vehicles at a specified location during a CD emergency Or 40693 - Use cordons, checkpoints & roadblocks to manage people & vehicle movement during CD activities	Compulsory	8
4573 – Communicate in the outdoors using two-way radio or 40709 - Operate communication technology in a CDEM context or takatū module - Using 2-way Radios theory and practical assessment	Compulsory	8
20388 – Work safely with aircraft during emergency incidents or takatū module - Aircraft Safety theory and practical assessment	Compulsory	8
11099 – Communicate in a culturally diverse workplace or 1304 – Communicate with people from other cultures or takatū module - Mana Aki Intercultural Competence	Compulsory	8
40711 - Recognise the foundations of working in partnership with iwi Māori in the CDEM sector	Recommended	8
Team Leader requirements		
23690 – Conduct CDEM operational briefings & debriefings, & issue operational orders or 40860 - Lead emergency response teams	Compulsory	2
23698 – Dko leadership theory & use it in CDEM situations or 40859 - Lead a team during emergency response activities	Compulsory	2
22445 - Describe roles & functions of CIMS IMT at an incident or 29553 – Demonstrate operational knowledge of NZ CIMS or 40718 - Outline CIMS response operations or ITF Intermediate	Compulsory	2
29554 – Apply operational knowledge of NZ CIMS or 40719 - Use CIMS during a response or ITF Intermediate	Compulsory	2
7335 – Dko the role & powers of a Controller in a declared emergency or takatū module - Controller's Powers	Recommended	2
40861 - Build & lead a high performing emergency management team	Recommended	2
Team Medic requirements		
14473 and 25411 and 25412 - PHEC course standards or 29321 – Provide basic emergency care or First Responder, EMT or Paramedic current certification	Compulsory	2
Team Driver requirements		

23692 – Dko driving legislation & CDEM organisation's SOPs for driving or 40694 - Outline driving legislation & CDEM procedures for emergency driving or takatū module - NZRT Driving	Compulsory	2
17976 – Dko operating a light 4WD vehicle in an off-road environment	Compulsory	2
17978 – Operate a light 4WD vehicle in an off-road environment	Compulsory	2
20620 – Develop a recovery plan & safely recover a light 4WD vehicle	Recommended	2

Appendix B - Light Rescue

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in urban search and rescue (USAR) environments and other general rescue emergencies where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Reconnaissance, survey, impact assessment and information gathering.
- General rescue of casualties at heights of up to 6 metres.
- Surface search and rescue operations at USAR sites.
- Performing patient triage and establishing a Casualty Collection Point (when appropriate clinical support is not on scene/available).
- Providing first aid, patient packaging and extrication.
- Supporting USAR First Responder, Light, Medium or Heavy Classified USAR teams.
- Assisting integration of UNDAC, out-of-region, or international USAR teams using local knowledge.
- Providing a base of operations (BoO) and logistics support.

Light rescue tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually CDEM Groups or FENZ USAR.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
10618 – Rescue casualties using rescue techniques or 20473 – Rescue casualties at ground level using CD general rescue techniques and 24500 - Dko & use CDEM rescue equipment & techniques, & rescue casualties at height or 40695 - Perform ground level rescue in CD emergencies and 40720 - Rescue casualties at height using CDEM general rescue techniques	Compulsory	8
18516 – Dko & provide support at urban search & rescue operations or 40699 - Provide support at urban search and rescue operations	Compulsory	8
takatū module - Mass Casualty Incident Triage theory and practical assessment	Compulsory	8

Appendix C - Flood Response

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in flooding emergencies where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Working safely around flooded environments.
- Reconnaissance, survey, impact assessment, and information gathering.
- Providing access to isolated communities for delivery of essential items or personnel.
- Installation of temporary water diversion and flood protection systems (e.g. sandbags or flood barriers).
- Undertaking pumping operations to remove flood water from properties.
- Assisting property owners to protect properties and move valuables to safety prior to the onset of a flood.
- Assisting property owners with salvage of damaged property, during or following a flood.
- Assisting with evacuation of residents and companion or domestic animals from flooded areas (refer to NZRT Operating Guidelines for further guidance).

Flood Response tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually CDEM Groups or Councils.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
22297 – Provide initial response at flood incidents or 40697 - Respond to flood incidents	Compulsory	8
22298 – Protect personal safety & the safety of others at flood incidents or 40696 - Work safely at flood incidents	Compulsory	8
takatū module - Landslide Awareness	Compulsory	8

Appendix D - Storm Response

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in severe weather and storm related emergencies where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Making temporary building repairs for the purposes of public safety, debris clearance, and property protection including the temporary repair of windows, doors, cladding, roofs, and chimneys.
- Performing basic salvage to prevent further damage to property.
- Assisting in the clearing of roadways and other access routes impacted by storm debris.

Teams endorsed in Storm Response may also undertake temporary building repairs or salvage operations during non-storm events such as earthquakes, where these skills are also applicable (e.g., securing chimneys).

Storm Response tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually CDEM Groups, Councils or FENZ.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
17600 – Explain safe work practices for working at heights or 23229 - Use safety harness system when working at height	Compulsory	8
19359 – Inspect & maintain height safety equipment	Compulsory	8
23694 – Undertake storm damage operations in a CDEM emergency or 40698 - Perform storm damage operations	Compulsory	8
takatū module - Landslide Awareness	Compulsory	8
Chainsaw Operator requirements (optional capability)		
6917 – Demonstrate basic chainsaw operation	Compulsory	2

Appendix E - Civil Defence Centre & Welfare

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to establish, work in, or manage civil defence centres (CDCs), and carry out welfare tasks which may include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing and setting up a CDC.
- Staffing an existing CDC.
- Conduct welfare needs assessments of affected individuals and communities.
- Outreach activities including door-knocking, phone calls or accessing isolated communities.
- Providing support for the management of companion animals or other animal welfare in temporary housing facilities adjacent to evacuation centres.

CDC and Welfare tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually CDEM Groups or Councils.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
7336 – Dko welfare centre functions during an emergency or 40684 - Support the operation of a CD Centre during an emergency and 40691 - Conduct needs assessment in an emergency management context or equivalent CDEM Group training	Compulsory	8
7330 – Supervise a welfare centre during an emergency or 40692 - Lead a CD Centre during an emergency or equivalent CDEM Group training	Recommended	2
23695 – Provide companion animal welfare during a CDEM emergency or 40685 - Determine care & handling requirements for companion animals during an emergency or 40689 - Provide shelter for domestic animals during an emergency or 40690 - Determine care & handling requirements for stock animals during an emergency or takatū modules - Animal Welfare in Emergency Management	Recommended	2

Appendix F - Swift Water Rescue

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in swift water environments where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Shore-based rescues.
- Raft-based rescues.
- In-water rescues.
- Support to technical rescues using rope systems.
- Support to powered boat rescues.
- Support to searches and body recoveries.

Swift water rescue will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of one of the NZSAR coordinating authorities (NZ Police or the Rescue Coordination Centre).

FENZ may task NZRTs where an urgent need arises however, one of the NZSAR coordinating authorities must be notified as soon as practicable.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
Swift water Responder certification at recognised industry standards	Compulsory	8
Swift water Technician certification at recognised industry standards	Compulsory	8
Swift water Advanced certification at recognised industry standards	Recommended	2
Rescues from Vehicles in Water	Recommended	2
Boat Operator requirements (optional capability)		
Flood Rescue Boat Operator certification at recognised industry standards	Compulsory	2
Swift Water Rescue Boat Operator certification at recognised industry standards	Recommended	2

Appendix G - Rope Rescue

Purpose

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in rope rescue environments where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Access and stabilisation of patients in low, steep, and high angle environments.
- Extrication of patients using techniques such as pick-off or stretcher-based rescues.
- Providing access to patients for emergency services or other agencies.
- Support for searches and body recoveries.

Rope rescue will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of the relevant tasking agencies, usually FENZ or NZ Police.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
20536 – Demonstrate awareness of rope rescue operations & hazards or 40864- Support rope rescue operations or FENZ Lines Rescue L1	Compulsory	8
20537 – Provide initial response at rope rescue incidents or 40865 - Respond to rope rescue incidents or Rope Rescue Responder/Operator certification at recognised industry standards or FENZ Lines Rescue L2	Compulsory	8
20538 – Perform descender-based rope rescue or 40866 - Perform technical rope rescue or Rope Rescue Technician certification at recognised industry standards or FENZ Lines Rescue L3	Compulsory	4
20539 – Perform specialist rope rescue or 40867 - Use specialist rope rescue techniques in complex environments or Rope Rescue Specialist certification at recognised industry standards or FENZ Lines Rescue L4	Recommended	4

Appendix H - Out-of-Region Deployment

Purpose

Accredited New Zealand Response Teams (NZRTs) are required to meet certain criteria to be eligible to deploy outside of their home region.

These requirements ensure teams are self-sufficient and can undertake response or recovery operations out of their home region (for the strands in which they are accredited) whilst not placing an undue resource burden on the region to which they have been deployed.

Depending on the type of deployment, self-sufficiency may not be required, however, teams must maintain this capability and capacity to be eligible for out-of-region deployments.

In certain situations, and under specific circumstances such as the forming of a composite team, the need for personnel only, or specific agency requests, these conditions may be exempted when specifically permitted by the NZRT Secretariat.

Requirements

- Teams must be endorsed for out of region deployments by the Coordinating Executive Group (CEG) for their home region.
- Minimum team size is determined according to the purpose of deployment.
- Teams must be able to provide an NZRT Liaison Officer to the local EOC/ECC if required.
- Teams must have access to vehicles suitable for transporting sufficient personnel and equipment required for the deployment.
- Teams must be fully self-sufficient (or have resupply arrangements in place) for at least 72 hours (3 days) for the below:
 - Establishing and managing a Base of Operations (BoO).
 - Accommodation and sanitation (including toilets and wash facilities)
 - Food and water
 - Power and lighting
 - Fuel

Appendix I - USAR First Responder

Purpose

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) First Responder provides a rescue capability within the USAR environment at a level above the Light Rescue strand.

It fits within the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) methodology to provide an effective layer of response prior to the arrival of a full USAR team.

These requirements allow teams to safely and competently work in USAR environments where tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Reconnaissance, impact assessment, survey, and information gathering integrated with a USAR coordination cell (UCC) where established.
- Application of INSARAG guidelines and concepts.
- Basic USAR search techniques.
- Basic initial hazardous materials (hazmat) procedures.
- USAR surface and near surface operations, including cutting/lifting/moving surface debris, and basic cribbing or wedging to stabilise loads.
- Basic breaking and breaching techniques.
- Supporting Light, Medium and Heavy Classified USAR Teams as required.
- Assisting integration of UNDAC, out-of-region, or international USAR teams using local knowledge.
- Support in establishment and operation of a United Nations Reception Departure Centre (RDC).

USAR First Responder tasks will be undertaken by NZRTs under the direction and control of FENZ USAR.

Minimum Standards

Unit standard, skills standard, takatū module, or other equivalent	Compulsory or recommended	Minimum qualified numbers
takatū module - USAR First Responder Pre-course and Quiz	Compulsory	8
FENZ USAR First Responder course	Compulsory	8