



Emergency Rescue Services - who to call

You are out flying in the back country and you see another pilot crash or take a heavy landing. It looks serious.

Coastal ridge soaring you have a collapse and crash land, unhurt, onto an otherwise inaccessible ledge.

You receive a text message from a friend saying that someone has badly hurt themselves near the top of a mountain and a rescue helicopter is needed.

You should always consider the worst and hope for the best. It is far better to over-react and activate rescue services than to think things will be alright, which could result in a worse outcome.

So.... Who do you call, what do you do? The answer is not what you would think.

Calling in Rescue Services

Before we explain how rescue services work we want to clearly understand who to call or notify first when you see or are involved in a hang gliding, paragliding, paramotor or speedwing flying accident.

#1 The single best way to get an immediate response, with location and 'no questions asked' is to **ACTIVATE YOUR DISTRESS BEACON**.

#2 Call RCC (Rescue Coordination Service NZ) on 0508 ACCIDENT (0508 222 433) and state you have seen or have been involved in a paragliding / aircraft accident.

#3 Call 111 if you do not have normal reception but you do have emergency services reception and ask for the Police. (See below for further information on calling using 111).

Get a fast response by activating your beacon

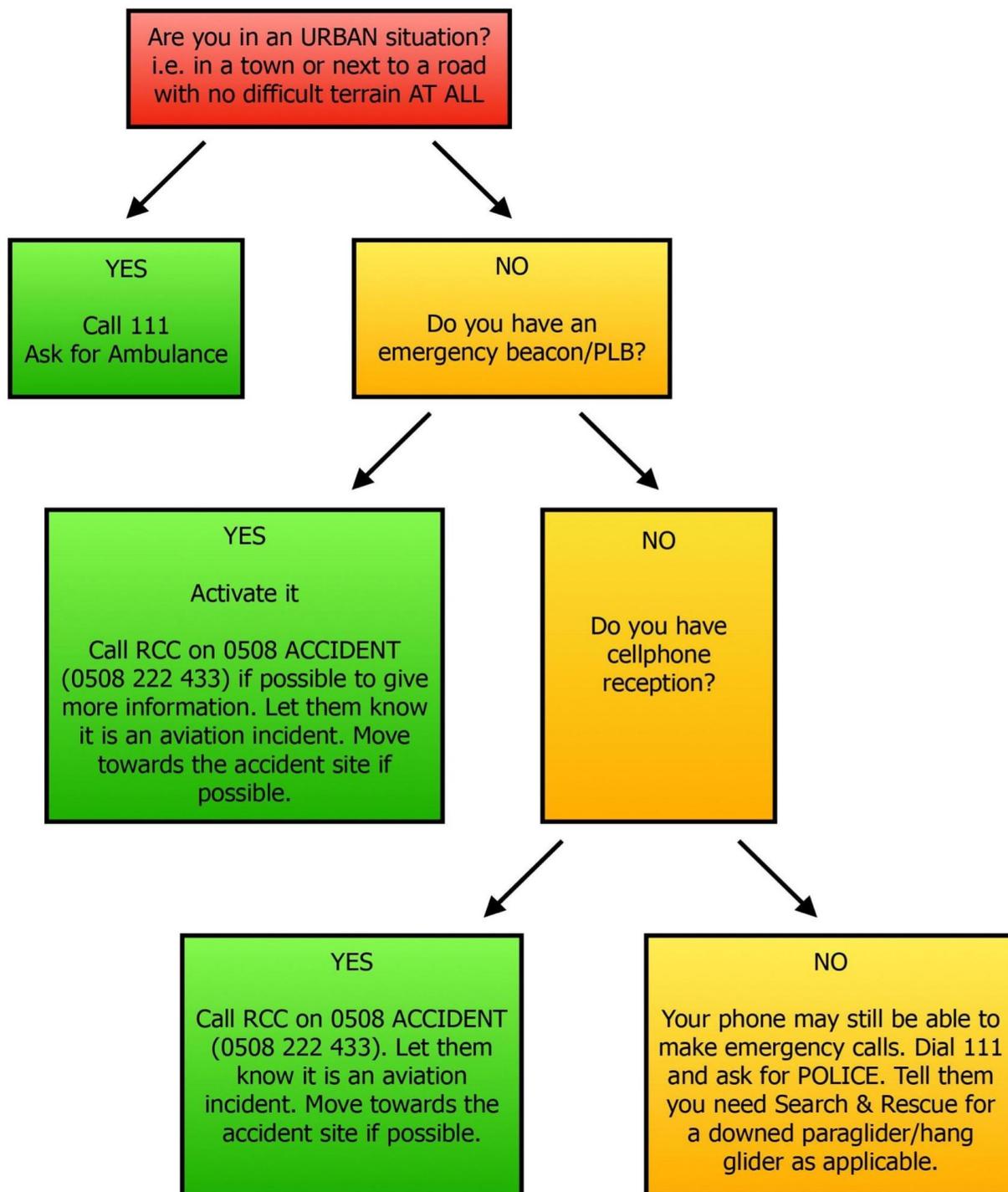
Beacon activations usually take less than a minute to come through to the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC), and give your location, details and any extra information you have added to your profile. SEND beacons (e.g. InReach or SPOT) normally take a little bit longer (up to 5 minutes) as they go through another (normally overseas) service that then directly contacts RCC.

If you are flying above a crash site but are not involved in the incident directly, activate your own beacon if the downed pilot is:

- not able to do so themselves due to injury
- not able to respond to you on radio

Note there is no issue if multiple beacons have been activated.

Rescue Activation Flow Chart



RCCNZ 24/7 Emergency

NZ Toll Free 0508 ACCIDENT (0508 222 433)

Enter this number into your phone NOW!

Note: If you are the pilot's emergency contact person and you have been notified via a notification from a SEND device of the emergency please call this number to provide them with additional information that may assist the rescue helicopter. If Calling from outside of New Zealand: +64 4 577 8030.

Understanding who is in charge

There are three main bodies who can take responsibility for the response to accidents and incidents involving free fliers: –

- Police
- Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ)
- Ambulance

Police Search and Rescue

The Police are responsible for coordinating searches and rescues that involve land, inland waterways, caves and close-to-shore. These searches and rescues are termed 'Category One' incidents.

Police respond to nearly 2,000 land and marine search and rescue incidents each year, and these are coordinated at a local level.

The call will go through to a single Police officer holding the on-call phone, who is probably out doing their day-to-day job.

Police bring in whatever SAR assets are needed for the job, including helicopters, SAR volunteers and medical teams etc.

Rescue Coordination Centre NZ

RCCNZ is responsible for searches and rescues involving aircraft, off-shore and emergency locator beacons. RCCNZ's primary job is to coordinate:

- searches for missing aircraft or aircraft in distress - this includes HG/PG free flyers!
- off-shore marine searches within New Zealand's search and rescue region
- searches for emergency locator beacons that have been activated.

These searches and rescues are termed 'Category Two' incidents.

RCCNZ also assists with other rescues when required, and provides search and rescue (SAR) coordination services from a fully staffed operations room in Wellington, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Note: RCCNZ is the best set up to provide the fastest response for free flight accidents.

Ambulance

The ambulance services (St John's and Wellington Free Ambulance) are not directly involved in searches and rescues. Their role is to collect injured people from known locations.

Calling 111 – what you need to know

When we call 111 you normally are asked if you need Police, Ambulance or Fire. Your response directs where the operator sends you. If you say somebody has had an accident or is injured you will typically be sent directly to AMBULANCE. This is a crucial area for us to understand. Ambulance is not able to initiate a rescue response. To call in Search and Rescue you must ask for Police and then state specifically that you need a SAR response.

Not all beacons are the same.

A distress beacon is an electronic device which, when activated in a life threatening situation, assists rescue authorities in their search to locate those in distress. Free flight pilots can use Satellite Emergency Notification Devices and/or Personal Locator Beacons:

- Satellite Emergency Notification Devices (SENDs) include devices such as InReach and SPOT. A SEND works by getting a GPS fix, then transmitting your location via communication satellites. This could be with routine messages, tracking points or a distress message when you press the Emergency/SOS button. Routine messaging can reduce battery life available if an emergency occurs, and they have limited waterproofing. If this is your only emergency device you carry, fully charge your device before flight and consider additional spare batteries or for internal fixed batteries a backup battery with a charging lead.
- Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) can only send a distress signal, but they do this via two methods - transmitting an analogue distress signal on 121.5MHZ as well as digital distress information (GPS position information and beacon registration number) on 406MHZ. **Any** powered aircraft (including Air NZ at 40,000') will detect 121.5MHZ, and SAR helicopters can home in on your exact spot using this signal. **This is specifically relevant** when the terrain might prevent a SEND or PLB from getting a good GPS position, but a SAR helicopter close by could still receive and track the 121.5MHZ signal. PLBs are manufactured to an international standard of ruggedness and battery life.

Because SENDs and PLBs work quite differently, carrying both devices for free flight pilots will significantly increase the chances of urgent medical assistance and rescue.

Beacons work best whether an urban or remote location

According to Mike Ambrose (LANDSAR NZ) the best way to get the fastest possible response to free flying accidents is to activate your distress beacon. This applies to both:

- Urban Locations where phone reception is available.
- Remote locations where no phone reception is available.

In both situations the FASTEST way to get a response is to ACTIVATE A BEACON (PLB or SEND).

If you have cell phone reception and you have activated your beacon about an accident, you should then also CALL RCCNZ to give them information about what has occurred and let them know that you are not directly involved in the accident yourself. There is no charge or fault for activating a beacon if you are not directly injured yourself.

When to call 111 vs Beacon activation or calling RCC NZ directly?

Essentially you should only call 111 if the incident has occurred in an urban setting and you only need the medical services of an Ambulance. Examples include

- Queenstown rugby field
- Pembroke Park, Wanaka
- An urban situation IMMEDIATELY accessible / beside a road with no technical assistance required

- If caught in an urban tree or somewhere where an ambulance can help directly. They will use the Fire Service to assist them in these situations.

If there has been a crash, it can be helpful to tell the Ambulance operator that there has been "a fall from height".

Most of our take-offs and flying areas can be considered to NOT be in an urban situation ie no house number or road address - so trigger beacon and/or call RCC and be prepared to provide GPS coordinates. Any GPS format is ok, provided you say the numbers and all the coordinate names slowly and clearly. Eg. 44° 41.0425' FOUR FOUR DEGREES FOUR ONE DECIMAL ZERO FOUR TWO FIVE MINUTES. **Practice** with the devices you take flying so you can quickly find your current coordinates, and learn how to approximate the coordinates of a pilot you can't reach, by dropping pins or other methods.

Finally - all incidents / accidents / injuries / rescues can often create a high stress situation. One of the first points of rescue / emergency response is to not create a larger problem or put yourself in danger. Take the time to assess and move slowly. Don't allow your ego, perceived embarrassment or thoughts that the pilot is telling you that they are not injured to assume that rescue services are not needed. Rescue and emergency services are fault free. Get the help you need - don't add to the incident.

Emergency Pocket Card  -----  -----  -----

CALLING IN RESCUE
<p>Assess Situation</p> <p>Are you in an urban situation? E.g. in town LZ If so, call 111 - ask for Ambulance If not:</p>
<p>Activate Beacon</p> <p>After beacon activation: Call RCC NZ if possible to give more information Specify it is an aviation accident Let RCC know if you are responding to or involved in an accident Move towards accident site if safe to do so</p>
<p>If No Beacon</p> <p>Call RCC NZ if you have cell reception 24-hr number 0508 ACCIDENT or 0508 222 433 Follow instructions in box above</p>
<p>If No Cell Reception</p> <p>Your phone may still be able to make emergency calls Call 111 - ask for POLICE Tell the Police you need Search and Rescue for a downed aircraft (hang glider or paraglider)</p>
<p>RCCNZ 24 hour emergency numbers 0508 ACCIDENT or 0508 222 433</p>

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