

Carrying a personal locator beacon: what do I need to know?

Te Araroa Trust recommends people walking the trail carry a personal locator beacon (PLB). Do not always rely on your mobile phone as there are many areas of the trail where you will not have phone coverage.

PLBs are small electronic devices that can be activated in an emergency to alert the search and rescue authorities that you or someone else needs help. They can be hired from [various suppliers](#) in New Zealand, if you prefer not to purchase one outright.

The New Zealand Search and Rescue Beacons [website](#) recommends a PLB with GPS capability to greatly reduce the time it takes to obtain a location for the beacon.

Before you go

- Know that a distress beacon (PLB) is an emergency device to be used when assistance is required in a life-threatening situation or when a serious injury has occurred. It is not a taxi service.
- Registration of a New Zealand coded 406 MHz distress beacon is a legal requirement in New Zealand. You can do this for free on the New Zealand Search and Rescue Beacons' website.

Note: You do not need to register a hire beacon. The beacon will be registered to the hire organisation which will hold details of your hire and trip intentions. Please ensure you provide as much information as possible about your planned trip in the intentions section of the hire form. In the event you activate the beacon, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) will seek your trip information from the hire organisation.

- Consider carrying more than one device, particularly if in a group.
- Make sure you know how to use your PLB, it is in good working order and the battery hasn't expired. Some units have test functions, otherwise you should approach the service agent of your device for battery replacements or repairs, or consider replacing or upgrading your PLB.
- A PLB does not replace good planning. Follow the five simple rules of the [New Zealand Outdoor Safety Code](#): plan your trip, tell someone where you're going, be aware of the weather, know your limits, and take sufficient supplies.

Use

- It is recommended to carry your PLB on your person. There are a number of reasons you may become separated from your pack.
- If you need to activate your PLB, remember:
 - PLBs operate best with a clear view of the sky. Take it outside and away from any tin roof if you are at a hut.
 - Stay put once you have activated your PLB, as long as it is safe to do so. If unsafe move to a nearby safer location, if you can.
 - Do not turn off your PLB once it has been activated.
 - Help will arrive as soon as possible but will be dependent upon your location, the environmental conditions and the availability of a rescue asset.
- Situations can deteriorate rapidly. If you are unsure about when to activate the PLB, it is better to activate it and get help – **don't wait until it's too late!**

- If your PLB has been activated by accident, please call RCCNZ on +64 4 577 8030 (0508 4RCCNZ) as soon as possible to advise that help is not required. The duty staff will confirm you're safe and ok then instruct you to turn off your PLB. If you cannot contact the RCCNZ, leave the PLB on and wait for a rescue asset to arrive. There is no penalty for inadvertent activations.
- PLB's can be used anywhere on the earth's surface. The system is global and international. You can bring your overseas PLB whilst visiting and travelling in New Zealand and take your New Zealand PLB with you when you travel overseas.

For more information about PLBs, including their use and care, visit the New Zealand Search and Rescue Beacons [website](#).