

Emergency Management Department Report

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1. Communications

A group comprising local authorities, emergency services, lifeline utilities and hospitals, are working well together to carry out weekly testing of the Regional Communications System. We also visit all the repeater sites in the Region and carry out tests on that equipment. Although vandals damaged the building at Mt.Climie, steps have been taken to carry out the necessary repair work. All communication equipment seems to be in a well maintained and functional condition and it was also certified fully Y2K compliant.

During a meeting at Porirua on 27 September, the NZ Police and Fire Services expressed their concern about back-up communications for their 111 system. An anticipated overload on the normal telecommunications system will prevent emergency calls to get through to the 111 Communication Centres (especially at the end of the year), which will then necessitate our system to be used as a back-up. We are working closely with them on this issue.

2. Regional Monitoring Centre

During the activation of the Regional Monitoring Centre (Beehive) on the night of 8/9 September, our communications and emergency management systems were tested to the full. As a result of the exercise, we realised that we will have to install the two spare repeaters at Mt. Climie to give us that extra capability, especially when using voice and fax frequencies simultaneously. This will also allow us to expand our capability to accommodate the Lifelines Groups.

We experienced a few minor problems during the exercise on 8/9 September. We need to sharpen up our procedure on feedback to the utilities, noise control in the communications room and the capability of our telephone and fax system. We are making use of an Ericsson telephone exchange at the Beehive which, when tested, worked perfectly well. However, during the night of the exercise it did not perform that well and caused some delays, especially when faxing.

We received good feedback from the TLA's and the Utilities that participated in the exercise. We are using this feedback to enhance our capability by preparing new and better procedures for the RMC and we are also in the process of updating all the current contact details.

As part of our preparations for the Millennium change, we set up the Mobile Headquarters at Mabey Road for the 8/9 September exercise and we provided training to Mabey Road personnel on how to use the radio equipment. Communications using the Mt. Climie repeater were good, but the Normandale repeater provided some

problems with the receiving and transmitting of messages. This was due to the position of the Headquarters (too close to the building) which prevented line of sight to Normandale.

3. Y2K

There have been several meetings with the EQC, Lifelines, emergency services, local authorities, the Defence Force, Insurance Council and our Corporate Services (Communications Section) to discuss Y2K (planning and preparing). In order to add value to the Readiness Commission's publicity campaign, we are working with our communications section and the TLA's in the Region to develop a Y2K poster urging communities to prepare themselves for Y2K. In this regard, we are also planning a media awareness week from 1 to 5 November. The idea is to display the Mobile Headquarters at certain sites throughout the Region and, in the process, be available to provide information to the public in the form of display material, posters, samples of Y2K and general readiness kits and to answer any questions. We also plan to appear on NewstalkZB on 31 October, Talkback Radio on 3 November and to publish Y2K features in community newspapers.

4. Representative Visits

A highlight this month was the several meetings with local authorities, the Ministry for Emergency Management and Lifelines and Emergency Services to discuss and develop a "Logistics Contingency Plan to Support the Wellington Region" as well as a New Zealand-wide Logistics Plan. The recent high-profile disasters around the world (earthquakes, floods, accidents, crashes, explosions, etc.) again highlighted the need for adequate emergency management and logistics planning. The Plan will be developed to include Search and Rescue, treatment of the injured, provision of shelter, water and food to those in need, sanitation and the restoration of major lifelines (water, waste water, power, transport, telecommunications).

We had the opportunity to visit the National Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Lower Hutt on 30 September. The Centre is responsible for all aviation and maritime traffic in the region bordering Australia, the South Pole, Chili and the area north of the Pacific Islands. The Centre handles about 800 incidents per year and it is a valuable contact for us, especially in supporting each other in various ways (communications, accommodation, expertise, etc.).

5. General

- One Special Weather Bulletin was received from the Met Services on 5 October. It was for heavy rain. The appropriate warnings were sent out and no problems were experienced.
- A National Test Message issued on 21 September was successfully dealt with.
- The following Earthquake reports were received from IGNS:

- 3 September – Havelock North (4.1)
- 10 September – Hamner Springs (4.2)
- 10 September – Seddon (4.5)
- 11 September – Opotiki (4.7)
- 12 September – Mosgiel(3.5)
- 14 September – Rotorua (3.9)
- 15 September – Springfield (4.9)
- 17 September – Hamner Springs (4.5)
- 19 September – Rotorua swarm of 12 quakes (3.2)
- 21 September – Picton (3.7)
- 21 September – Otaki (4.3)
- 26 September – Harihari (4.0)
- 26 September – Ross (4.1)
- 1 October – Waiora (4.2)
- 3 October – Waiora (4.7)
- 4 October – Wellington (3.5)
- 6 October – Whakatane (4.2)