

Emergency Management Department Report

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1. Emergency Management Group

On 23 March 2000 the Minister of Emergency Management made his first announcement about the future of emergency management in New Zealand.

The main points were:

- Emergency Management will be known as Civil Defence and Emergency Management
- the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Bill will be introduced by the end of the year
- Civil Defence and Emergency Management Groups will be based on regional council boundaries, with regional councils having an administering authority role
- there is a commitment to the four Rs, (Reduction of risks, Readiness, Response and Recovery)
- there is a commitment to a national capability
- there will be enhanced professional development.

At present we are, as a collective, working very effectively as an “informal EMG”. We have already built really good partnerships with the emergency services (Fire, Police, Ambulance), Defence Force (Army and Air Force), Department of Corrections, the Lifelines Groups, Airport Company, Earthquake Commission, Insurance Council, Rural Fire, Regional and Local Authorities and other departments of the Wellington Regional Council. We have formed committees responsible for training, publicity, logistics contingency planning, emergency services, and strategic planning. The result of this pooling of expertise and resources means that we are better organised than ever before. Knowing each other and working together much more closely gives us more confidence, and we all feel that we are better equipped to cope with any emergency.

We are all anxiously waiting for our EMG to be established and to get on with the job (see Dr Bradbury's report).

The Ministry for Emergency Management is at present developing guidelines for establishing EMGs. We have been working with Ministry staff on these guidelines. The Committee may be interested to know that our Foundation Document is being used by the Ministry and other regional councils in this work.

2. **Communications**

Apart from the normal weekly testing of the radio communication network, additional and more extensive tests were successfully carried out. The Wellington Regional Council now has a “state of the art” network that will play a very important part during any major emergency. The network is specifically designed for emergency situations, is very robust, is Council-owned and is very easy and inexpensive to maintain. The recent upgrading of the system (mainly for Y2K purposes) added significant value to the network.

As part of our technological advances, we investigated the possibility late last year of buying into a satellite-system. It was decided not to go ahead with it (because of its dependability on landlines), and to spend the money on enhancing our own radio system. It is of value to note that the “Iridium” satellite network has since been terminated (20 March 2000) and that their 66 satellites were de-orbited.

3. **Activities**

Since the previous report of the Emergency Management department to the Environment Committee on 15 February, this department was involved in various activities relating to exercises, training, public information and general emergency management planning.

Exercises:

- We are involved with the Wellington City Council’s exercise planned for 30 and 31 March. In this regard, we are working closely with them on planning the exercise, desired outcomes, etc.
- We are working with Regional Councils in putting together a seminar regarding the Logistics Contingency planning for the Wellington region, which will then be followed up by an appropriate exercise later this year.
- We are working on our Regional exercise planned for 27 April. A similar exercise will be held in the Wairarapa on 9 May. The scenario of the proposed exercise will be that of a Tsunami. The permanent, as well as mobile, headquarters will be used in this exercise.
- We are working with the Wellington International Airport in planning an exercise at the airport. The scenario will be an air crash.
- We are working with the Hutt Valley Emergency Services Co-ordinating Committee in planning a combined exercise, that will take place in the Hutt Valley later this year. The scenario is not finalised yet, but it may be that of a commuter train crash while on its way to Wellington with about 900 passengers aboard.

Training:

- All Wellington Regional Council staff involved with emergency management will again be trained in headquarters operations, communications, emergency administration, the Co-ordinated Incident Management System and in setting up and taking down the mobile Headquarters. We are also looking at “motivational” training for these staff that will include topics like team building, conflict handling, intergroup relations, communications, performance achievements, etc.
- We attended an excellent course on “Earthquake and Society” at the GNS on 28, 29 February and 1 March. The material presented, and the presenters, were of

outstanding quality and the new research information that was made available is of utmost value in our planning processes. For example, new information on wave movement in the harbour following a major earthquake makes it necessary for all of us to re-think our present planning strategies. According to the information, the Petone foreshores will subduct and the estimation is that the shoreline will move at least 200 metres into Petone! We are trying to get the information on video and then present it to the Environment Committee in the near future. Other topics covered were: earthquake forecasting, risk-based insurance, risk perception and disaster prevention, crises management, public relations, communications, tools for long-term integrated planning, Lifeline responses and the transfer of disaster research information into practice. The last day of the course was spent on a field trip to study the Wellington Fault.

Public Information:

- In a combined effort, the Environmental Education and the Emergency Management departments made use of the opportunity to display our respective information on hazards and educational strategies during the Hutt River Festival (12 February) and the Petone Street Fair (19 February). Our displays attracted a great number of people and our messages were successfully conveyed to the public.

Emergency Management Planning:

- We are working very closely with the other regional councils as well as the local authorities in our region in developing a sustainable logistics contingency plan. In this regard we have met with Auckland Regional Council a couple of times (February and March) and also had meetings with the territorial local authorities, emergency services and the Lifelines in our region. We are planning a seminar/workshop/exercise towards the end of this year to which all the role-players (government departments, local authorities, emergency services, Lifelines, health authorities, financial institutions, the insurance industry and other essential participants) will be invited to take part. The desired outcome should include total resource management, how to communicate availability of resources, identifying how other parts of New Zealand could support the Wellington region with resources that are lost in an event, and, if not in this country, from where, internationally, we could obtain such resources.
- We joined forces with Wellington City Council in doing an aerial reconnaissance of critical facilities, access routes, water intakes, etc. of the region. The idea is to put a “Reconnaissance Plan” together that could be used in the case of a major disaster. The Plan will include “before” photographs of roads, bridges, critical facilities, etc. as well as a pre-determined route to be flown.
- We are working with the two Hutt Councils and our Flood Protection department in developing “non-structural options” for the Hutt River Floodplain. Because of a very tight timeframe, we meet regularly to discuss issues and to determine which options are the more viable to be implemented.

4. Representative Visits

- As a member of the EQC working group we are investigating emergency management information that organisations make public. These organisations include local authorities, government departments, Police, Fire, Ambulance, the insurance industry, etc. At present about 20 organisations put out more or less the same information at high cost. The idea is to streamline the information so as to make it available in a format acceptable to everyone. The first phase that we are

working on includes a set of four posters (reduction of risks, readiness, response and recovery) as well as corresponding information in the Yellow Pages.

- We are much involved with the non-structural options part of the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan. We are working with the Hutt Councils in developing measures to reduce risks on the floodplain and to put strategies into place to enhance response and recovery actions during a flooding event.
- We had a long discussion with the policy writers of the Ministry for Emergency Management regarding “Guidelines” for the establishment of EMGs. They regard Auckland and Wellington as the most advanced in setting up EMGs.
- We have met with the new Chief Executive Officer of Wellington Hospital (Margo Mains) to explain the Wellington Regional Council’s role in emergency management and the role that she will have to play during an event. We also discussed combined exercises, the EMG and the communications network in the region, of which they also form a part.
- We had discussions with about seventy organisations with a Civil Defence responsibility in the Wellington Region to determine the best way in which we could publish their respective roles. A new format has been developed and it will be tabled for the Environment Committee to approve.
- We attended a couple of meetings of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineers, chaired by John Norton of the Ministry for Emergency Management. At this stage we are working on issues like: urban search and rescue, determining critical facilities, and compiling a registered list of earthquake engineers, building inspectors, environmental health officers, etc. The emergency management department will include, upgrade and maintain this data on its Resource Database.
- We arranged a visit for the emergency management officers of the region to the Met Services on 8 March. It was a very informative visit, especially with regard to our role as the provider of severe weather warnings to 34 organisations in the region.
- We attended the monthly meetings of the Emergency Management Managers, the Insurance Council, the Rural Fire Committee and the Emergency Services Co-ordinating Committees. Main topics of discussion were the EMG, Logistics Planning, Publicity, Communications and Exercises.

5. General

- Three Special Weather Bulletins were received from the Met Service since the last Environment Committee meeting on 15 February 2000, namely on Tuesday, 14 March. They were all for Heavy Rain. All the involved agencies were notified and no problems were experienced.
- Since the last report, more than 40 earthquakes bigger than 3.0 on the Richter Scale occurred in the country. The following Earthquake Reports for the Wellington Region were received from IGNS:
 - 07 February – Paraparaumu (3.5)
 - 07 February – Paraparaumu (3.6)
 - 08 February – Masterton (3.7)
 - 15 February – Wellington (3.8)
 - 26 February – Porirua (4.0)