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Committee CDEM Group
Author Dave Brunsdon, Lifelines Co-ordinator, Wellington
Region CDEM Group

Strategy for increasing household emergency water storage levels

1. Purpose

To inform the Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEM Group) about an initiative of the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group to increase emergency water storage levels of households throughout the Region.

2. Background

As part of personal civil defence preparedness, households are being encouraged to store more water for use following an earthquake or other major emergency. Active promotion of this forms part of the range of mitigation and preparedness activities being co-ordinated by the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group.

Greater clarity around target storage levels per household is required in order to sharpen the focus on this initiative. For example, a standard target level of 50 litres per person is proposed by Capital & Coast Health District Health Board. This is consistent with the message of '*10 to 20 litres per person per day for at least three days*' established in 2003 by the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group.

One of the obstacles to achieving a greater level of household emergency water storage is the limited availability of suitable water storage containers. As such containers need to be capable of being used both for water storage before the event and for carrying from supply points after the event, they should be of a size and type to be easily carried and stored. Previous work by the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group has determined that a 10 litre container is the optimum size to perform this function. Larger containers cannot easily be refilled, stored and transported, whereas a larger number of smaller containers require greater effort on behalf

of householders to both accumulate the appropriate overall quantities and to maintain on an annual basis.

The positive response of members of the public to displays at the Easter 2004 programme of activities at Te Papa, and in response to subsequent WEMO and Greater Wellington Emergency Management initiatives has indicated support for this size of container and a desire to have access to greater numbers of them.

This project forms part of the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group Activity Plan for 2004/05 (*Activity No. 1: Key Facility and Household Emergency Storage*). It links into a wider set of initiatives aimed at increasing the level of emergency water storage at critical facilities such as Police stations, Fire stations and Hospitals. Included in this are current initiatives by Capital and Coast District Health Board to work with Primary Health Organisations to raise the level of awareness of medical centres, etc to hold specific on-site emergency water storage as part of fundamental business continuity planning.

The Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management is supportive of a national approach to increasing the availability of water storage containers with civil defence messages, which would work through selected national retail outlets. The procurement process is however relatively complex, and has not been able to be progressed in view of workload and resources.

3. CEG Discussion – 18 March 2005

The original strategy presented to the last CEG meeting, focused on making standard 10 litre water containers available at cost through local councils to members of the public.

However, at the meeting of the CEG on 18 March 2005 the majority of chief executives expressed their concern about their councils being ‘retailers’ for the proposed water containers, and pointed out a number of associated logistical issues (e.g. storage).

It was suggested that other options be investigated, such as distribution through national food chains or using service clubs (e.g. Lions and Rotary). Councils would then have a promotion role only.

The CEG asked the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group to explore more options and make some recommendations to the next meeting of the CEG.

Since the CEG meeting, we have made contact with Foodstuffs Ltd. They have showed interest in retailing the containers on a national basis. However, at the moment, there are complications with a ‘middleman’ retailer. We are trying to work through the issues with the three parties involved.

In the meantime we did arrange for a hundred containers to be sold at New World (Thorndon outlet). These were displayed with emergency management

material. There was a huge public interest, especially as the TV documentary on personal preparedness, had just been screened. All the containers were sold quickly.

4. Conclusion

Greater levels of household emergency water storage are required given the levels of damage foreseen to the Wellington water supply systems in a major earthquake.

Ten litre containers are seen as being the optimum size for household emergency water storage, covering both handle ability for filling and the possibility of having to carry them some distance to a community emergency water supply point.

There has been a positive reaction from members of the public at recent displays to obtaining this size of container, and a desire to have access to greater numbers of them.

5. Recommendation

That the CDEM Group:

1. *receive the report;*
2. *support the Wellington Metropolitan Emergency Water Supply Planning Group exploring opportunities to distribute the water containers.*

Report prepared by:

Dave Brunson
Lifelines Co-ordinator, Wellington Region
CDEM group