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Committee **CDEM Group**
Author **Dr Roger Blakeley, Chairperson, Co-ordinating Executive Group**

Community preparedness survey results

1. Purpose

To inform the CDEM Group of the results of the recently commissioned Community Survey into Emergency Preparedness.

2. Background

The CDEM Group recognises the importance of gathering information to help gauge progress towards community awareness and preparedness for emergencies.

Greater Wellington Regional Council has commissioned Peter Glen Research over the last three years to gather information to help quantify the Region's level of preparedness for a major civil defence emergency.

Over the last two years a telephone survey has been conducted among a random cross-section of 500 Wellington Region residents 16+ years of age.

In 2005 a precautionary measure was taken (to verify people's telephone responses), and the survey was split – with half the respondents receiving the normal telephone survey and half receiving a door-to-door survey where answers were verified with a visual check of emergency items.

Interestingly, the telephone survey and door to door survey findings were almost identical. However, the visual check suggested that, on average, residents tend to over-estimate their emergency water volumes by approximately 19% and other supplies/equipment (e.g. torches, radios) by around 9%. In many cases there was genuine surprise when people found that they did not have the items that they thought they had.

This year, the survey sample size was increased to 1100 residents to provide more quantifiable data for the Wairarapa districts. All respondents were surveyed by telephone.

3. 2006 survey results

3.1 Awareness of major hazards

All respondents were able to recall at least one major hazard that might affect their Region. They recalled, on average, 2.9 major hazards, which is identical to last year and up from 2.6 hazards in 2004.

Earthquakes and floods remain the major hazards most top-of-mind, but other hazards such as tsunami and Avian Bird Flu registered prominently this year.

3.2 Extent to which the public consider themselves informed

81% of residents in the greater Wellington Region now consider themselves 'very' or 'quite well informed' about the major hazards that could affect their region. This is similar to the 80% recorded last year and represents a statistically significant increase on the 69% of respondents who were 'well informed' in the 2004 survey.

Younger residents, in the 26 to 29 years age group, still consider themselves less well informed than older residents.

3.3 Level of preparedness for a major civil defence emergency

Whilst 81% of respondents regarded themselves as 'well informed' about major hazards that could occur, only 63% of residents considered their level of preparedness to be 'good' or better. This represents a steady improvement on the 59% figure recorded in last year's survey and the 56% figure registered in 2004.

Results again varied by age group and also by area, with Lower Hutt City residents considering themselves **most** well prepared and Wellington City residents considering themselves **least** well prepared.

It is interesting to note that residents in the lower household income groups considered themselves to be more prepared for a major emergency, than did the affluent. A similar result emerged in the 2005 survey.

3.4 Items that households currently have for use in an emergency

Consistent with the steady improvement in the perceived level of preparedness, more respondents now say they have supplies that are intended for use in a major emergency.

- 70% of respondents claim to have emergency food supplies (up from 65% in 2005 and 61% in 2004)
- 71% of respondents claim to have emergency water supplies (up from 69% in 2005 and 68% in 2004)
- 75% of respondents claim to have other emergency supplies and equipment (e.g. torch, radio etc) (up from 69% in 2005 and 2004)

- And a disappointing 27% of respondents claim to have an emergency plan for their household (up from 26% in 2005 and down from 31% in 2004). In most cases, the household emergency plan is a verbal agreement rather than a written document.

3.5 Period of time that households estimate they could remain self sufficient

76% of residents now estimate that their household could remain self-sufficient for more than three days, which is a noticeable increase on the 60% who made this estimate in 2005.

3.6 Perception of responsibilities

The majority of residents (88%) now consider that they would need to be responsible for themselves in the *initial stage* of a major civil defence emergency. This has steadily increased over the three survey periods.

Many respondents also named an organisation that would be responsible for them in the early stages of an emergency. Emergency Services were named by 39% of respondents, Local Councils 25% and Civil Defence 29%.

It is interesting to note that Civil Defence, in particular, has shown a significant decline, probably as a result of the adverse media publicity in recent emergency events.

For the period *immediately following* an emergency, 74% of respondents perceived themselves as being mainly responsible. This is also up significantly on the two previous survey periods. Emergency Services, Local Councils and Civil Defence are also seen to have a primary role in the period immediately following a major emergency.

3.7 Disposal of sewage

The 2006 survey introduced a new question “If a major civil defence emergency occurred, how would you dispose of sewage if the normal flush toilet facilities were unavailable?”

Ninety percent of respondents were able to identify a method of disposal, 10% were not able to do so.

The most common method of disposal would be to “bury it in the backyard”, which was mentioned by 58% of residents. This was followed by “storage in plastic bags” (16%) and “storage in buckets” (13%).

3.8 Awareness of danger following a severe earthquake and tsunami

Two new questions were introduced around tsunami due to the increased publicity in this area recently.

99% of respondents were able to identify danger(s) after a severe earthquake (such as falling debris, fire and tsunami).

Most respondents stated they would “*move to higher ground, hills, or the highest point available*” if an alarm was raised and they were in a low lying coastal area or river mouth.

3.9 Conclusion

The 2006 survey has revealed that residents of the greater Wellington Region continue to have widespread awareness of the major hazards that could affect their region.

There is a steady increase in their level of preparedness; however, there still remains a significant gap between those that consider themselves *informed*, and those who consider themselves *prepared*. It will be important to continue to address this shortfall.

The incidence of emergency supplies in the home is steadily increasing, (approximately 70% of residents claim to have food and water supplies and 75% have other supplies/equipment). However, only 27% of homes have an emergency plan in place for their household. Work is currently underway to address this issue.

76% of residents currently estimate that their household could remain self-sufficient for a period of more than three days. It is also encouraging to note that there seems to be a growing perception that individual households/residents will be responsible for themselves in a major emergency.

3.10 Full survey results

The full survey report may be obtained from the Wellington Region CDEM Group Office. Please contact Jo Guard or Rian van Schalkwyk on 04 384 5708.

4. Recommendation

That CDEM Group:

1. *Receive the report; and*
2. *Note the contents.*

Report prepared by:

Dr Roger Blakeley
Chairperson, Co-ordinating Executive
Group