

Report 08.188
Date 26 March 2008
File Z/01/04/19

Committee Co-ordinating Executive Group (CEG)
Author Sandra Pederson, Kestrel Group

Disposal of sewage during a disaster

1. Purpose

To provide an update about the progress with the disposal of sewage project.

2. Background

The project was initially set up in 2005 by the Wellington Region CDEM Group to develop a strategy and specific arrangements around the disposal of sewage during and subsequent to a major disaster. Sanitation is one of the six critical needs identified by the CDEM Group.

A Steering Group featuring representatives from all the Group's territorial authorities, the CDEM Group Office and Regional Public Health was established. A Working Group drawn from the wider Steering Group has met on a regular basis to work through the issues. The Working Group consists of the Chair of the Hotel Council for Wellington, representatives from Capacity, Regional Public Health, Wellington Emergency Management Office, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Kestrel Group.

In August 2006 a report was presented to the CEG outlining the findings and recommendations of the Working Group. A proposed work programme was subsequently approved by the CEG.

The key elements of the work programme are:

- Clarify post-earthquake roles and responsibilities between Asset Managers, Emergency Managers and contractors (as applicable)

Output: A generic response plan indicating the types of key activities to be undertaken by the main players

- Develop the containerisation, collection and disposal strategy and logistics for mass assembly/ critical facilities (possibly using one specific facility as a pilot)

Output: Logistics plan covering each of the containerisation, collection and disposal elements

- Develop the information strategy and framework

Output: Information Strategy and content developed to the level of detail where printing of some elements can be undertaken (including a Fact Sheet).

An initial meeting in August 2007 identified the key contacts within the vulnerable communities for mass assembly. A working group was established to progress these elements of the work programme.

3. Progress

The Working Group established that the initial focus would be based on the containment of sewage for mass assembly facilities such as:

- Hotels
- Apartments
- Hostels
- Hospitals
- Retirement homes/ residential care facilities
- Council housing

Research highlighted that there was very little information available from learnings overseas, or best practices formulated for the containment and disposal of sewage during a disaster from other at risk countries. With the limited information available, the Working Group has identified the best possible options for containment for the facilities listed above.

An initial timeframe of three to five days was identified as being realistic for the facilities to have procedures in place for sewage containment, before alternative methods of disposal were provided by the local authorities and before health issues become a serious factor.

The Working Group is in the process of writing guidelines/ a fact sheet that will cover the best practice for households and protocols for apartments/ rest homes. Standard Operating Procedures for hotels are being established and these will be implemented through a seminar with the Hotel Association.

Investigation into costs and a possible sponsor for an apartment/ hotel/ rest home pack is underway. This would include items such as: biohazard tape, hand sanitizer, large skip or wheelie bag liners, information sheets.

The next steps will be to establish protocols and agreements for the disposal of waste from the identified facilities, and to provide guidelines to TAs on the best practice for emergency latrines at welfare/ assembly sites.

4. Conclusion

In recent events around the world, it has been highlighted that the proper disposal of sewage during a disaster will help reduce the risk of disease transmission.

This project is working towards providing the means to educate our 'at risk' communities to ensure that they have the knowledge and capability of using alternative methods for sewage containment. The Working Group will be liaising with TA's to ensure that they have plans and procedures in place for the collection and disposal of sewage, as well as the capacity to provide temporary facilities.

5. Recommendations

That the CEG:

- 1. receives the report; and*
- 2. notes the contents.*

Report prepared by:

Sandy Pederson
Kestrel Group