Exercise Phoenix VI evaluation report

Feedback received from exercise debriefings

1.   Exercise design, play and control

1.1   Positive

- People seemed to know what their desk's area of responsibility was.
- People were very co-operative with each other and the personal communication seemed very good.
- Mabey Road facility was adequate for a Lower Control to operate from.
- System was quickly put in place to enable questions from desks to be answered and kept the exercise flowing.

1.2   Issues arising

- "Registration/Reception" in one location instead of roaming.
- Design for Exercise Lower Control.
- Communications links between Group Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC) and Lower Control facility.
- EOC training.
- Breakdown in response to questions.
- It was noticed that the internal management of some parts of the EOC were not fully familiar with their roles. This was evident in the lack of response to repeated calls for follow-up on requests – still waiting. This tends to be a common observance and even we have been guilty of it. A tendency to become black holes!

1.3   Recommendations/suggestions

- Based on what is to be achieved from the exercise objectives, design the plan for Lower Control at the outset.
- Avoid asking for what tended to be "off the cuff" injects before that plan is settled.
- Do not mix notional with real, for example, Wellington Emergency Management Office (WEMO) was playing, then it did not; Porirua City Council (PCC) played at the start of the exercise, and also Hutt.
- If Lower Control is to play agencies and organisations, such as New Zealand Transport Agency, bulk fuel suppliers, Welfare agencies, etc., a detailed brief is to be provided for the Lower Control to represent these. Requests from the Regional Welfare Advisory Group (RWAG) were a case in point. The RWAG needed to be briefed prior to the exercise of those territorial authorities (TAs) not being played and a corresponding realistic brief given to Lower Control so that valuable training dialogue is ensured and actions exercised.
- Injects must be in tune with the scenario and reasonable. A number were not and void of clear direction. Their expectations could not be met, for

example, one TA requested welfare resources through Group requesting that on delivery these be set up at a welfare centre. This was not practical, given the scenario. Bald requests with no details were common. One questions those TAs understanding how they should manage a real event.

- Desks need to understand that if they have a responsibility to link and work with external agencies then they need to practice.

- Desks unfamiliar with the internal administration of the GEOC. Many requests to Lower Control were made on the belief that it was an extension of the GEOC. Also unfamiliar with the roles of TAs.

- Communications need to be tested well prior to Exercise day and not on the day. For example, email failed to work at the start and time was wasted by Group in solving the problem; wrong fax number; etc. It would be useful if the Exercise General Instructions included communications details specifically for a Lower Control.

2. GEOC tools and equipment – Geographical Information System (GIS)

2.1 Positive

- Template is better structured.
- Dual screen capability worked well and reduced "downtime" of the GIS user.

2.2 Issues

- GIS not kept in the loop of information.
- Not utilised by other desks in the GEOC.
- Not utilised by Incident Management Team (IMT) to provide mapped overview of situation.

2.3 Recommendations/suggestions

- Two GIS users (one with the brief of creating and editing situation data, i.e., attached to Situation Unit and one to aid Planning and other parts of GEOC, i.e., plotter and map creator).

3. GEOC tools and equipment – Response Management Database (RMD)

3.1 Issues

- Out messaging was not working.
- Printing full message logs was hard to achieve.
- Operations could not find out who wrote the message by looking at the log. They needed to know at times to ask questions/clarify information.
- People did not seem to understand how the flow of information was supposed to go. For example, printing task forms, working with other areas and filling in the correct attachment area in RMD.
- There seemed to be a general lack of familiarity with RMD.

- Cannot erase logs that are double-ups or mistakes.
- Messages cannot be sent to all desks as FYI.
- Print view task form was not part of the instructions in some cases.
- Outbound messaging needs sorted.
- RMD is not a "business as usual" tool.

3.2   Recommendations/suggestions

- More clarity on outward messaging and flow of messages.
- More work on RMD to familiarise.
- Training around printing of logs.
- It would have been helpful to have more than one person (Chris) available to help the desks with issues, questions or learning points.
- For the next Phoenix it would be helpful to have an experienced person whose job would be to answer questions from the staff (how do I enter this?, where do I save this? I sent this to x but it should have gone to y.?). This would leave the people with roles in the disaster response free to carry out their roles and deal with issues at other levels. It might also mean that a plethora of minor issues and questions could be sorted out more quickly, and that more learning (and in a real disaster, more action) could occur in the time available.
- On another note, now that I know what the Operations desk does and have found some more detailed areas in RMD, it would be useful to have access to RMD to review outside of training time.
- Message flow training.
- Mini scenarios for training to gain understanding of message flow and desk roles and responsibilities.

4.   GEOC tools and equipment – general

Issues

- Could not call out using the desk phone.
- No colour printer – Planning and Intelligence desk and GIS mapping.

5.   Desk functions – Planning and Intelligence (P&I)

5.1   Positive

- Good leadership at the desk
- It was fun!
- Leadership at the table and overall.
- The separation of Intelligence and Planning.
- Priorities were established by P&I Manager in the absence of clear prioritisation of the actions required on the Incident Action Plan (IAP) by Controller at start of shift.
- Two staff on Situation Unit meant that the situation report was kept current

and deadline was met.

- Information was slow and steady as it would be in a real event.

5.2 Issues

- We had about four major problems to solve. Each one could have taken a whole day to sort out.
- Not sure how to work in with other tables and divide responsibilities.
- Sometimes information ran out, making it hard to complete tasks.
- No indication or priorities of tasks from IMT/Controller at start of shift. No timeline on the whiteboard.
- Situation Report (Sit Rep) timing not clear.
- Situation unit needed to continually go back into existing RMD messages to monitor changes that staff had put into the progress boxes. This was in addition to monitoring all new messages via Operations.
- There needs to be a clear process for capturing the Fire, Police and Lifelines' situation prior to IMT meetings.
- Clarity on who has the up-to-date situation on key statistics, i.e., P&I or Welfare – clarify roles.
- Not enough resources to do the planning around major issues.
- A lot of the major issues could be planned for in "peace time".
- Future training can be used to clarify roles within the GEOC and also provide some positive input into pre-event planning.
- Planning unit needs a progress/status tracking document.
- Messages were vague again, making it difficult to know what was meant.
- Planning did not get to a very advanced stage.
- Slow responses from some of the other agencies.
- We did not have time to read all the messages and few messages seemed to be addressed to us directly. Not sure if the messages were travelling along the right paths or whether there was some misdirection or error on our part.
- Manager not always tasking desk staff.
- The Situation Unit needed to write information on paper. It would be more efficient using the computer.
- Some IMT staff and particularly observers were asking too many questions whilst desk staff were trying to work.

5.3 Recommendations/suggestions

- Delegate responsibilities with other tables.
- Possibly two laptops for Planning - one for reading messages and investigation and one to type messages and write IAPs.
- Delegate responsibilities with other desks.
- Provide clarity around the Lifelines Sit Rep. What goes into the P&I Sit Rep and what belongs in the Lifelines Sit Rep?
- The biggest hurdle, I think, was the interaction between the tables and

knowing the roles of the other tables. One of our tasks was *provide welfare for 10,000 people*. Surely either this is a Welfare issue, or Welfare needed to tell us exactly what these 10,000 people needed (then we could plan where they go and get Logistics to help us get the supplies). Since our tasks were so huge, we needed to know what we could subcontract out to the other tables to make the tasks manageable. Perhaps another person would have helped us, ideally one with a computer. That way we could have read more incoming messages, while also come up with ideas, sent messages and consulted the other tables. We had a bit of a bottleneck at some stages, as we tried to read, write and send messages from the one computer.

- Different colours could be used on the whiteboard for different shifts/types of information.
- Name tags during real events and exercises.
- Consider the manager role – the manager needs to be the go for the P&I desk. Other staff members were being interrupted too much.
- P&I needs a dedicated colour printer.

## 6.	Desk functions – Operations

Issues

- The Controller came to the Operations desk asking for verbal Sit Reps. At times it was hard to answer without the correct information.
- Information was not worked through as quickly as it could have been, as we were low on computers and space. Obviously we cannot help the amount of space we have but we can attempt to obtain more computers next time round. Also, things were not tested before they were used and there were some IT issues that had to be repaired before we got started, which got us off to a slow start and made us play catch-up for the rest of the day.

## 7.	Desk functions – Welfare

### 7.1	Positive

- Useful to have someone who understands the Welfare role.
- Desk ran well in terms of dynamics, staffing, etc.
- Emma was a great leader.
- RWAG worked well.
- I thought the day as a whole went well.

### 7.2	Issues

- Clarification of role – particularly other desks and who we should go to for certain things, e.g., getting water.
- RMD – Do not use it enough - not particularly user friendly and paper based seemed easier.
- Need TAs to take part.

- Message not sent out to participating TAs – Message/ops/then where?
- I thought there was some idle time, which could have been better utilised.
- Regular updates on how all the teams are doing would be good.

7.3 Recommendations/suggestions

- Preferred two day exercise.
- Training day with all desks involved.
- Would be good for each team to meet up before the exercise to go through each other's roles (but maybe this was done and I could not make the time?) as I felt a bit superfluous at times.

8. Desk functions - Logistics

8.1 Positive

- Good team of people.
- Pizzas for lunch.

8.2 Issues

- Bottle neck on Logistics. Monitoring RMD and actioning tasks digitally is difficult and slow with one computer.
- Computer / technical issues put us on the back foot from the start.
- Paper logs and forms are essential (in hindsight).

8.3 Recommendations/suggestions

- Two laptops would be ideal for the desk.
- A chance for the team to follow up on decisions made and contribute to solutions.
- Review Logs, tasks and outputs, and provide feedback to the team, so they can see what was effective and what needs work / solutions.
- Ensure that there is plenty of equipment for all staff to operate as efficiently as possible. Test all equipment the morning of the exercise.

9. Desk functions – Lifelines

9.1 Positive

- Team worked well.
- Seemed to eventually get the hang of the RMD system.
- Having a second laptop was extremely helpful.
- The workshop on Thursday with the various agencies provided valuable discussions and learnings. It was a pity that the local controllers did not attend, as this would have provided them with a good understanding of the issues around the six critical needs, as explained by the experts in the field. They would have also provided a local perspective to the discussions.
- The lifelines team worked well together, working through their tasks

competently, and managing to reallocate tasks once a team member left.

- Thanks to an experienced Lifelines desk co-ordinator, things went pretty smoothly I thought (when I was there).

9.2   Recommendations/suggestions

- As mentioned last year, and during this debrief, it would be a good training/planning exercise to get the relevant "desks" together and work through various issues one at a time, e.g., requirements for landing areas, water for welfare, etc. These issues need to be planned for before an event happens – as discussed in the workshop on Thursday. (This also applies to emergency temporary accommodation and the needs around these.)

- RMD is still not the most user friendly of services, especially with the difficulty of printing out full messages and sending messages, as well as trying to monitor and action the incoming RMD incident folder at the same time.

- There is a definite need for at least two "networked" laptops available to each desk.

- The Group may wish to consider other scenarios for future exercises that may affect the Wellington Region.

- Needed to develop a better system to deal with the paper trail.

- Rethink whiteboard.

- Second laptop to be on network.

- More training.

- More talking between desk managers.

- Perhaps a backup plan is needed for when just one desk cannot access the computer – I know one exists for when everyone has to revert to paper but it's not so clear-cut for when just one desk is on the fritz.

10.   Public information management (PIM)

10.1   Positive

- Effective interaction between PIM team and others. PIM staff actively sought updates and confirmation of information, rather than waiting for people to come to us.

- Good structure for division of work.

- Good leader.

10.2   Issues

- The situation was not realistic enough for PIM team - need more information via media and VIP injects.

10.3   Recommendations/suggestions

- Maybe bring in some journalism students to act as journalists.

- More injects for the next exercise.

- Some more difficult injects for the next exercise.

- Requests for information from journalists.
- Stage a press conference.

11. Desk functions – Incident Management Team

Issues

- Initial briefing lack prioritisation of IAP, although this did come later it would have helped at start to get things moving in the right direction. This also should have led to a managers' "Group Think" on who and how they were going to manage the priorities.
- Controller was directing the Planning unit instead of talking to the P&I Manager.