

Emergency Management Department

Activities undertaken in the period January to June 1999

1. Introduction

In the last six months most of our time was spent on activities involving work on the Emergency Management Group (EMG), planning for the year 2000 (Y2K), training and meeting with the relevant groups in emergency management. This report provides a summary of these activities under the following headings: roles and responsibilities of the Department, training, regional emergency headquarters and communication, emergency management exercises, administration and technology, and hazard related activities.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Emergency Management Group

On 4 December 1998, a presentation was made to the Chief Executive Officers regarding the progress achieved in establishing the Emergency Management Group. The presentation was centred on the document *Report on the Formation of the Emergency Management Group* which contained detailed information on a draft Charter and operating models. The Chief Executive Officers expressed a consensus view that they were encouraged with the progress made but they also raised a number of issues regarding the sharpness of focus in the document.

The CEO's requested Stephen McArthur, Hutt City Council, and Dr Jane Bradbury, WRC, to take responsibility for adding value to the existing proposal by incorporating additions and sharpening some of the focus.

An "Explanatory Document" was prepared and a number of meetings held to discuss the various roles and responsibilities of the different role players. The General Manager and the Divisional Manager, Environment, also attended a long awaited meeting with the Director of Emergency Management and Civil Defence on 30 April 1999. A revised document is now being prepared and will be presented to the CEO's soon. Once approved by the CEO's, the document will be forwarded to the various Councils for ratification. Once ratified, the inaugural meeting for the EMG will be arranged.

Year 2000 (Y2K)

In terms of regional preparedness for Y2K, we have been working collaboratively with other territorial authorities in the Wellington Region to

prepare the community for the Y2K issue. Our staff has also been working closely with other groups, including the Ministry of Emergency Management and Civil Defence, the Emergency Services, the Lifelines Groups the Insurance Council and the Earthquake Commission.

As part of our internal strategy, we are planning and preparing for potential disruptions of the delivery of services such as electricity, water, gas, sewage, communications, electronic financial transactions, transportation and health care. We do that by preparing the community about what to expect and telling them what to prepare, what to do when things go wrong, and where to go to get help. Local government's Emergency Management response in this Region is to encourage our communities to prepare now for Y2K using similar steps as those used for other emergencies, such as earthquakes, floods, storms, etc. To this effect we have already developed an advertisement that will be published in the Yellow Pages (Wairarapa in July and the rest of the Region in October) and we shall also provide other necessary guidelines and checklists well ahead of time.

The Wellington Regional Council's "Regional Headquarters" in the basement of the Beehive will be utilised as the Regional Monitoring Centre and will be activated on 31 December 1999. Our Emergency Management staff and volunteers will operate the Centre as well as the Communications room at Marshall House. The Council's Mobile Headquarters will be activated at the Mabey Road Depot to allow direct communications between "Water Supply", the Beehive and Marshall House.

We are working closely with the Utility-providers (through the Wellington Lifelines Group) and the emergency services (through the Emergency Services Co-ordinating Committees) to ensure an effective partnership.

The Y2K-problem could create a special demand for communications. The normal communications systems may be unable to meet these demands, or may fail completely or partially. It is essential to ensure that the best use is made of present communication resources and that viable alternative systems are readily available. The WRC communications system (regional radio network) will be used in the Regional Monitoring Centre (Beehive) and will also be available as a backup communications system should the emergency services (111-agencies) system fail. The Regional Communications Network is a robust, stand-alone system with links to all the local authorities in the Region, the Police, Fire, Ambulance, Hospitals and the Lifelines (Utility providers).

Inter group Relations

To be able to sing from the same song sheet, especially in the field of emergency management, it is of great importance for us to work very closely and co-operatively with all organisations and individuals involved in Comprehensive Emergency Management. A great part of our work and time is spent ensuring that this will happen. For the period January to June 1999, we attended more than 150 meetings and had proactive dealings on emergency

management with almost 450 people (an average of 26 external meetings per month attended by an average of 17 representatives each). These included meetings with local authorities, lifelines groups, emergency services, hospitals, communications providers, Government departments, and special committees on rural fire, ports, Insurance Council, EQC, earthquake engineers, hazardous substances, oil pollution, private enterprise, etc.

We carried out a peer review of the Horizons.MW Emergency Management Department and we also succeeded to clarify the respective emergency management roles and responsibilities with relevant organisations. The latter was reported to the Environment Committee Meeting on 6 May 1999.

3. **Training**

Our long-term performance indicator states - *The Council can demonstrate that it has done all that is reasonably possible to ensure that the Region is ready to cope with a major emergency event.* We are taking all possible steps to keep our volunteer staff, and ourselves, able and motivated through dedicated and suitable emergency management training. We are committed to train our volunteers and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to handle any situation effectively during an emergency.

In this regard we have developed a training programme which included training on headquarters operations, co-ordinated incident management, emergency management administration, communications, media, advanced first aid, and basic rescue. A total of 28 volunteer staff were trained.

In order to further enhance our knowledge and skills, we attended various external courses, workshops, seminars, and training sessions on recovery management, oil spill management, geological hazards, emergency management education and training, interview training and standards design for the Hutt River Floodplain.

4. **Regional Emergency Management Headquarters and Communication**

Infrastructure Maintenance

Inspections of all sites have been conducted on a regular basis to ensure all equipment is maintained in a state of functionality. These sites are located as follows: the Beehive, Wakefield Street, all local authorities, hospitals, Police, Fire Services Command Vehicle, Beacon Hill, Mt. Climie, Colonial Knob, Normandale, Mt. Eringa, and the Mobile Headquarters.

The Duty Officer Service (to ensure 24-hour readiness) is shared by the Manager, Emergency Management and the Emergency Management Officer of the Council. The duty officer's guide is being maintained on an ongoing basis to ensure that we always have the latest updated contact information and operating procedures available.

Communication Tests

Formal communication testing between the Regional Operation Centres (Beehive, Marshall House, our vehicle and the Mobile Headquarters) and the territorial local authorities, Beacon Hill Signal Station, Wellington Police, Wellington Hospital and our maintenance contractor (Access Telecom) has taken place every week. This determines the capability and the effectiveness of the communication system.

5. Emergency Management Exercises

This Department has been involved in the following exercises.

- Two Local Authority Exercises (Upper Hutt City and Wellington City)
- Exercise “Big Wet”. This took place at the Regional Headquarters in the Beehive on Friday, 30 April 1999. The objectives set for the Headquarters Exercise were met successfully. The aim of the exercise was to practice operating the Emergency Operations Centre under a scenario of serious regional flooding and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Emergency Operations Centre Operating Procedures. The exercise was also used to determine further training needs for Emergency Operations Centre staff (volunteers).

All the territorial local authorities in the Region took part in the exercise (radio messages, phones, faxes, etc.).

The Response 98 Database and the hard copy method of managing emergencies were successfully put to the test, as was the capability and functionality of the communications system.

Staff of the Ministry of Emergency Management and Civil Defence monitored the exercise and provided assistance when difficulties were experienced. The Controllers and the staff that took part in the exercise were dedicated to the task in hand and worked with enthusiasm and regarded the experience as “great fun”. This attitude will ensure us to have a motivated group that we can rely on in the case of any emergency.

In addition, good progress has been made on the combined exercise “Project Phoenix” between Auckland and Wellington Regional Councils. We are working together on issues like lifelines, governance, rescue/recovery, health and welfare, economics and logistics. We are now at the point where we have to plan and develop an integrated logistics system, which will include the identification of resources required, assistance arrangements within New Zealand and international assistance.

6. Administration and Technology

Response 98 Database

The “Response 98” Database was installed at the Department on 31 August 1998. This system resulted in the Department to function more effectively. A huge amount of data has already been entered into the system (details of more than 560 persons and more than 230 different equipment/services categories). The Laptop computer was delivered to the department at the end of February and the database installed on it on 3 and 4 March. A second network was also set up in the Regional Headquarters (Beehive). We are using the laptop to transfer data from the Marshall House network via a “snapshot” function to the Beehive network. This enables us to update both networks very easily and it also allows us to operate the laptop as a standalone (when necessary), with the result that we can manage emergencies effectively from any location. We were the first to operate the database in this way and since March most of the other local authorities (20+) changed their systems to operate according our method.

Satellite Communications

We did some research on satellite communications as part of our “advanced technology” programme. Two systems are now available, namely Iridium and Inmarsat. We found the satellite option to be very expensive (purchase or rent and airtime) and not adequate to be a sustainable and robust fail-safe system, especially not when they are still dependant on normal telephone landlines and cell phone networks. Future models, especially after 2002, will be much cheaper and much more effective

Approval of Civil Defence Plans

The Department of Emergency Management approved the following Local Authority Civil Defence Plans:

- Lower Hutt (amendments 17 June 1999)
- South Wairarapa District Council (6 May 1999)
- Masterton (17 June 1999)
- Carterton District Council (17 June 1999 - Extension to 26 December 1999)

7. Hazard Related Activities

The Emergency Management Department has been involved with additional hazard related activities, including:

- as part of implementing our Divisional Strategy and Direction commissioning, an independent audit of health and safety issues. We are currently awaiting the final report before we can determine what actions are necessary to ensure the safety of the staff in the Division,
- commenting on natural hazard aspects of district plans,
- consultation on natural hazard aspects of resource consenting,
- providing information and maps concerning earthquake hazard to members of the public,

- liaising with emergency managers from outside organisations,
- responding to public queries regarding zoning of land based on geological hazard,
- attending conferences on geophysics, hazard, and risk management.

Warnings/Events

Three earthquakes were recorded in the Wellington Region over the past six months, the largest being 4.0 Richter.

The earthquakes recorded by IGNS were:

1999 January 21 - Wellington (4.0)

1999 May 12 – Paraparaumu (3.7)

1999 June 21 – Wellington (3.6)

IGNS also recorded 21 other earthquakes in the country ranging between 3.6 and 6.3.

A total of 25 weather warnings were received and promulgated. Of these 10 were for strong wind and 15 for heavy rain. This Department informed all involved. No problems were experienced.