



MEDIA RELEASE FROM WAIKATO CIVIL DEFENCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GROUP

1045hrs 28 February 2011

SELF-EVACUEES TO WAIKATO ADVISED TO GET NEEDS ASSESSED

Any Christchurch people who have self-evacuated to the Waikato after the earthquake are being advised to contact Work and Income for a welfare needs assessment.

They can make contact through the Government's helpline 0800 779 997 or visit a local Work and Income service centre in the Waikato.

The Waikato Civil Defence Emergency Management Group controller Chris McLay said it was important people coming to the region got the support they needed.

"We are also keen to have a clear picture of the numbers who have come to our region to stay with family and friends, or in other accommodation."

At this stage no evacuees have been sent to the Waikato through official channels, other than three medical evacuees and 30 disabled clients who have been placed with current care providers.

Any family members or friends who have accompanied sick, injured or disabled people could also contact a local Work and Income service centre for a welfare needs assessment, Mr McLay said.

Mr McLay reiterated that new centralised national arrangements were in place for people wanting to make offers of free accommodation to those needing to leave Christchurch following the earthquake.

Waikato people wanting to make such offers can now call 0800 435 700 or visit www.housinghelp.govt.nz.

Waikato Civil Defence is currently assessing how it will respond to any requests to take official evacuees from Christchurch.

Meanwhile, just under 20 local staff have deployed so far to Christchurch through Waikato Civil Defence, including welfare officers, an urban search and rescue team, building inspectors and administration support staff. About another 60 volunteers are on standby to go if requested.

Media contact:

Stephen Ward 021 756 310