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From: cdevent@datasquirt.co.nz
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To: Civil Defence @EW
Subject: Media Release - Earthquake



Media Release

22 February, 2011

15:30

Christchurch earthquake

Damage from the earthquake that hit Christchurch at lunchtime today appears to be centralised in the central city.

Christchurch hospital is operational, with only one ward damaged

Christchurch airport is open for emergencies only closed, closed for domestic pending an inspection of the runway.

Civil Defence Director John Hamilton says the National Crisis Management Centre in Wellington has established communications with the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group in Christchurch, and is still working on communications with Christchurch City Civil Defence.

Mr Hamilton says the cellphone network is suffering under the load of people trying to get in touch with loved ones and colleagues.

“It’s very important that the public to keep their use of the cellphone network – especially voice and data -- to a minimum. If you must use your cellphone, please do it with text.”

“Equally, many roads are congested, so we’re asking people to avoid travelling unless absolutely necessary”

To keep updated, local radio and Radio New Zealand National are good sources of information.

There will be a media conference at the National Crisis Management Centre at 4pm.

People in the affected area should:

1. Expect aftershocks. Each time one is felt, drop, cover, and hold on.
2. Check yourself first for injuries and get first aid if necessary before helping injured or trapped persons.
3. Assess your home or workplace for damage. If the building appears unsafe get everyone out. Use the stairs, not an elevator and when outside, watch out for fallen power lines or broken gas lines. Stay out of damaged areas.
4. Look for and extinguish small fires if safe to do so. Fire is a significant hazard following earthquakes.
5. Listen to the radio for updated emergency information and instructions.
6. Do not overload the phone lines with non-emergency calls.
7. Help people who require special assistance - infants, elderly people, those without transportation, large families who may need additional help, people with disabilities, and the people who care for them.

Detailed safety advice will come from local authorities and emergency services in the area. People should act on it promptly.

The Director of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, John Hamilton, said that the National Crisis Management Centre has been activated to monitor the situation and co-ordinate central government response if required. The Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Group has activated its emergency plans and is working urgently with its local authorities, local emergency services and local media to assess risks, provide advice and respond to the earthquake.

Detailed safety advice will come from local authorities and emergency services in the area. People should act on it promptly.

The Ministry will release further information as soon as it becomes available.

Media contact:

Public Information Duty Officer

Telephone: 04 494 6951

E-mail: pim@ncmc.govt.nz

Useful websites:

www.civildefence.govt.nz/

www.geonet.org.nz/earthquake/

<http://www.getthru.govt.nz/web/GetThru.nsf/web/BOWN-7GY5TP?OpenDocument> for information about what to do before, during and after an earthquake.