



14 June 2011

NEW WAIKATO CIVIL DEFENCE DRAFT PLAN APPROVED FOR CONSULTATION

A new five-year draft plan to enhance the capability of the Waikato region to respond to disasters has been approved for public consultation by the Waikato Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group.

The draft emergency plan was signed off for consultation yesterday by the Group's Joint Committee, made up of the region's mayors or designated elected political representatives.

"This new plan outlines a pathway forward to enhance regional civil defence capacity over the next five years, to ensure that we are better prepared for disasters and can respond to them even more effectively," said Group chairman Hugh Vercoe, the mayor of Matamata-Piako District.

"The recent Canterbury earthquakes, including yesterday's, the Japanese tsunami and tornadoes in Auckland and the United States graphically underline how disasters can strike at any time and how big an impact they can have on society.

"I strongly encourage the community to look closely at what's being proposed and give us any suggestions for improvement or changed direction. The best way for us to deal with the threat of deaths, injuries and property damage is to work together."

Mr Vercoe said a review of the previous plan had been influenced by a capability assessment of the Group by the Ministry of CDEM. It found the Group was well placed to respond to localised or short duration emergencies but raised concerns about its ability to handle a bigger or longer duration event.

"All of the Group members – which include the regional council and local councils, emergency services and other stakeholders – took that advice on board and have worked very well together to come up with this new five-year plan, which aims to strengthen our capacity to deal with all types of events," said Mr Vercoe.

Highlights of the proposed plan actions include:

- a clearer framework for working together involving all supporting agencies
- a new regional hazards forum
- development of a Group risk reduction programme
- implementation of new public education and public information management plans
- a new professional development programme for staff and a Group exercise plan
- development of a Group mass evacuation plan.

Another feature of the new plan is the development of a detailed Group recovery plan for helping communities affected by disasters to get back on their feet as soon as possible.

“The situation in Christchurch has shown us how important it is to manage the recovery phase of disasters well so that communities can come back from disaster,” said Mr Vercoe.

The draft plan will be available at www.waikatoregioncdemg.govt.nz from 1 July.

The formal public consultation period is from Friday 1 July to Monday 1 August. Submissions must be received by 4pm on 1 August. Details on how to make a submission are described in the online document. The July edition of the Waikato Regional Council publication Your Waikato will contain a brief summary of the plan and submission details.

For any enquiries on the submissions process or hard copies of the draft plan call Sharon Cousins-O'Donnell on 0800 800 401 or email wcdemg@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Media contact:

Stephen Ward
Group public information manager
07 859 0782 or 021 756 310