

Report 04.191
Date 22 March 2004
File Z/03/04/01

Committee CDEM Group
Author Debbie Cunningham, Emergency Management Officer, GWRC

Lessons learned from assistance provided to the Manawatu - Wanganui CDEM Group

1. Purpose

To inform the CDEM Group of assistance provided to the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group during the floods of February 2004, and to outline any issues of relevance to the Wellington Region CDEM Group.

2. Background

The flooding events of 16-23 February 2004 led to emergency declarations in the Manawatu and Rangitikei Districts, followed by a CDEM Group declaration for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region. This was the first CDEM Group (or regional) emergency declaration ever made in New Zealand under the new legislation.

Requests for assistance were received directly from the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group and the territorial authorities affected. In some cases requests were co-ordinated by the Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management.

Debbie Cunningham from Greater Wellington assisted the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group (based at Horizons Regional Council) with public information management for recovery. This role included:

- Preparing a communications plan for the recovery phase of the flooding emergency.
- Managing the transition of the public information management function from the response team to the recovery team.
- Developing of a format for reporting from local authorities to the CDEM Group and from the CDEM Group to central government.

Richard McLean from Wellington City Council assisted Rangitikei District with media management.

Horowhenua District was assisted by personnel from Porirua City Council (Mike Chapman, (Incident Controller), Ian Barlow (Operations Manager), Marshall Hyland, (Welfare advisory group)) and Kapiti Coast District Council (Olivia Campbell, Andrea Bayliss (Administration), Don McGuire (supplied over 3000 sandbags) and Council inspectors).

This report focuses on the activities undertaken to support the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group. This support was primarily for emergency recovery.

3. The Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group Response and Recovery set-up

3.1 Response

A CDEM Group emergency was declared on the evening of Tuesday 17th February. Peter Davies, Horizons Regional Council (HRC) CEO, was the CDEM Group Controller. An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was established in the HRC Building and staffed by HRC personnel, as well as support and liaison staff from around the country. The EOC staff worked in 2 twelve hour shifts of approximately 25 people (including IT and admin support etc). Other staff were working with external agencies and reported to the EOC for daily meetings.

3.2 Recovery

A Group Recovery Office (GRO) was established in the building adjacent to the Council building. Mark Harrison (Manager, CDEM Group Office) was appointed as Group Recovery Manager. The GRO became the principal management group when the emergency declaration was lifted on Tuesday 24th February.

Four recovery taskgroups were established:

- **Roading and Infrastructure Taskgroup.** This group was facilitated by the Lifelines Group project manager and comprised representatives from Transit, local authority asset managers and regional managers of gas, electricity distribution and telecommunications companies. This group worked together to gather information on the impact on infrastructure, to establish restoration priorities and to identify resource gaps. It also attempted to establish initial costings for infrastructure damage.
- **Rural Taskgroup.** This group was facilitated by the Federated Farmers and included representatives from Fonterra, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, HRC, rural co-ordinators, Farmers Support Trust and other local agencies. This group facilitated all rural volunteers working on farm cleanups. It also arranged a phone survey of all farms in the affected area (approximately 6000), using information provided by the Agriquality database. The survey gathered essential information about damage in rural areas. Specific information and advice was also provided to the farming and rural communities.
- **Economic Taskgroup.** This group was facilitated by Vision Manawatu and comprised representatives from the Regional Economic Development Agencies and Chambers of Commerce, as well as representatives of the banking and insurance industries, Ministry of Economic Development and NZ Trade and Enterprise. The group carried out

economic loss modelling for business and provided information and advice to the business community.

- Welfare/Social Support Taskgroup. This group was facilitated by a HRC community development staff member. The group included regional representatives of New Zealand Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Work and Income New Zealand, Housing New Zealand, territorial authority welfare managers and emergency managers. It co-ordinated local welfare efforts.

Additional personnel working from the Group Recovery Office included:

- MCDEM liaison officer
- Logistics officer
- Public information officer
- Media liaison officer (from Environment Bay of Plenty, Massey University)
- Admin support staff (2) and IT staff
- Recovery advisors (from Thames/Coromandel District Council, Auckland City Council, Environment Canterbury)

4. Lessons for the Wellington Region CDEM Group

4.1 Staffing requirements

The Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group response and recovery required a large number of staff. As these staff were primarily provided by Horizons Regional Council most 'normal' Council business was suspended during the emergency. As the event moved into the recovery phase there was pressure for personnel to return to their normal jobs.

Personnel were brought in from around New Zealand to fill specialist roles. Particular expertise was required for communications/media management, emergency management, recovery advice and for tasks like setting up and maintaining the rural database.

There will continue to be a large staffing requirement for a period of months. Longer term recovery tasks include road and infrastructure restoration, and distribution of recovery funds from local sources and central government.

Lessons learned:

- External personnel provide vital support. Arrangements should be in place to obtain this support promptly during an emergency event.
- Dedicated recovery staff are required for an extended period after an emergency. We need to plan for this.
- The establishment of a Group Recovery Office is effective as it allows clear lines of co-ordination.

4.2 Reporting requirements from central government

There were many demands for information each day from central government, particularly the Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (for rural impacts).

Lessons learned:

- A single information report should be sent to all relevant government departments at the same time so they each have the same information.
- Central government is likely require similar information following most events. Reporting formats can therefore be pre-prepared, and amended to suit the specifics of the emergency situation.

4.3 Structure – Group versus Local role

The taskgroups that were established by the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group were very successful. Each taskgroup agreed a terms of reference to ensure they were undertaking the correct activities, and providing Group co-ordination rather than local delivery. In some cases this distinction was very difficult. For example, the rural taskgroup was carrying out many activities through local Federated Farmers organisations. These were co-ordinated by the rural taskgroup at the Group Recovery Office rather than through the territorial authorities.

Lessons learned:

- Be clear about the functions of recovery taskgroups established at the CDEM Group level.
- Make sure there is a clear distinction between local delivery of a service and CDEM Group co-ordination.

4.4 Information Technology (IT) support and event documentation

The IT support for the Manawatu-Wanganui CDEM Group response was excellent. Email was the main mechanism of information transfer. IT personnel installed 4 new PC's in the Group Recovery Office, developed databases, posted information to a website, developed GIS maps of road damage, and created new email addresses and file management systems.

Lessons learned:

- Adequate IT support is vital.
- A website is a key tool to disseminate information and minimise enquiries.

5. Recommendation

That the report be received and the contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Debbie Cunningham
Emergency Management Officer,
Greater Wellington Regional Council