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Committee CDEM Group
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Exercise Back Blast

1. Purpose

To inform the Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEM Group) about an exercise for the Wellington Regional Response Teams that took place in February 2007.

2. Background

In the Wellington Region there are four Response Teams, namely WCC Tawa Rescue NZ-RT8, Victoria Rescue, NZ-RT7 Upper Hutt Community Rescue NZ-RT9 and Hutt City Emergency Response Team NZ-RT18.

Each team has purchased equipment, trained members and developed Standard Operating Procedures in accordance with the National Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Steering Committee and the Best Practice Guideline for Response Team Registration. The teams have subsequently been audited and obtained registration with the Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management.

In accordance with the Best Practice Guideline the teams are required to engage in at least two CDEM Group approved USAR Response Team exercises per year, preferably with other registered USAR Response teams. Exercise Back Blast was one of these exercises.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Exercise

3.1 Aim

The aim of the exercise was to provide members of the Wellington Response Teams with a meaningful exercise to fulfil their requirement for registration and also to form part of the Wellington CDEM Group annual exercise programme.

3.2 Objectives

- To practice the Response Team abilities to operate in an environment without support.

- To practice teams in combined operations.
- To practice teams to work with USAR trained engineers.
- To practice an Incident Management Team over the period of the exercise.
- To involve secondary school teams as “casualties” in a learning exercise.

3.3 Exercise Overview

The exercise commenced at 16:00 on Friday, 16 February 2007 and continued overnight until 17:00 on Saturday, 17 February 2007.

The scenario was based on an explosion from a petroleum refinery in Wainuiomata affecting a large number of buildings within the suburb. The Response Teams were tasked with reconnaissance and subsequent removal of any casualties from buildings within the former Wainuiomata College site, Moohan Street, Wainuiomata.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) was established to manage and task the Response Teams during the exercise. The IMT was staffed by volunteers seeking to complete their CIMS Level 4 qualification.

The Response Teams proved their abilities to operate in an environment without support. The teams also showed their capability to work in combined operations together with USAR Trained Engineers and Red Cross Emergency Response Units.

3.4 Participants

In addition to the four Response Teams the following organisations participated in the exercise:

- Red Cross Emergency Response Units from Porirua and Upper Hutt – casualty management
- Devereux-Blum Training and Development Ltd – exercise development and part of the Incident Management Team
- Salvation Army Lower Hutt – catering for exercise casualties and coordinating committee
- Lower Hutt Secondary School students – exercise casualties
- Wainuiomata Whanau Family Trust – lease of the site

3.5 Budget

The proposed budget for the exercise was \$5,000.00. The final expenditure came to \$4,524.00.

4. Lessons learned

The response teams reported that the exercise was the most successful that they had participated in and wanted to repeat the exercise as part of the annual

exercise programme of the Wellington CDEM Group. It is therefore proposed that the response teams be included in future exercises of the Wellington CDEM Group if appropriate.

Due to a small number of CDEM officials (controllers and emergency management officers) participating in the exercise, a few 'management' gaps emerged especially within the IMT. These exercises are great opportunities for CDEM officials to work and learn with the response teams and also to get the experience of 'managing' such events. It is proposed that CDEM officials be more involved with future exercises of this kind.

The Wellington Region Mobile Emergency Operations Centre was deployed during the exercise and it again proved to be a valuable asset in managing emergencies. However, the facility is in need of some improvements in terms of communications, printers, computer capabilities and additional accommodation. It is proposed that Greater Wellington consider an upgrade of the facility.

5. Recommendations

That the CDEM Group:

- 1. **agrees** that Response Teams be included in the annual exercise programme of the Wellington CDEM Group where appropriate;*
- 2. **agrees** that Wellington Region CDEM officials (controllers and emergency management officers) be part of the Incident Management Team for response exercises; and*
- 3. **requests** Greater Wellington to consider an upgrade of the Wellington Region Mobile Emergency Operations Centre in terms of communications, printers, computer capabilities and additional accommodation.*

Report prepared by:

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