

Report **14.332**
Date 11 June 2014
File Z/01/04/19

Committee **Joint Committee**
Author **Bruce Pepperell, Regional Manager**

Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO): Emergency Coordination Centre – Concept of Operation

1. Purpose

To inform the Joint Committee of the concept of operations for the Wellington region Emergency Coordination Centre during response to an event.

2. Background

The Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) for the Wellington region was previously located at the Wellington Regional Council building on Wakefield Street. This presented an issue as the building was prone to earthquake damage and was located within the tsunami and liquefaction zones.

In 2011, Greater Wellington formed a relationship with the Joint Centre for Disaster Research at Massey University. It was proposed that a new building would be constructed on the Massey University campus in Mount Cook which would accommodate the ECC.

With the creation of the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) in 2011, an alternate option was developed for the ECC and presented to the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management. The proposal was to locate the ECC within the Royal Society, across the road from the Wellington Emergency Management Office (WEMO) on Turnbull Street. Discussions with the Royal Society resulted in a signed contract for the use of their premises during an emergency.

As the Royal Society does not have an alternative power supply, Greater Wellington funded a reel and cable that will enable power to be supplied to the Royal Society from the WEMO generator. This equipment is stored within the WEMO garage. It is

transportable by a fork hoist which means it can be taken to alternative sites (with a generator) if the Royal Society is not suitable for use.

3. Activation of the ECC

The manner in which the ECC activates for the Wellington region will be determined by the event. The Group Controller can make the decision to activate the ECC based on a number of factors including but not limited to:

- likelihood of the event occurring
- size of area within the region that could be affected/has been affected
- potential for damage to lifelines/damage to lifelines
- likelihood of a local Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) activating/activation of one or more EOCs

To ensure an appropriate level of ECC support and coordination is available during an event, three stages of activation are proposed:

- Virtual activation
- Stage 1 activation (based at the Wellington Emergency Management Office)
- Stage 2 activation (based at the Royal Society or an alternate site)

Virtual activation

For a minor event or early warning of an event, the ECC may be activated but staff would monitor the situation from their current locations rather than convening at WREMO or the Royal Society. Staff would stay in touch via email or phone and would be available to provide support and coordination for staff working at the local level. If the event escalates the Group Controller can make the decision to call staff in to the ECC for either a Stage 1 or Stage 2 activation.

During the Ekatahuna earthquake WREMO activated a five person ECC (spread across Wellington, Hutt City, Porirua and Nelson) to monitor events in Masterton, interface with the media, plus run Facebook and Twitter.

Stage 1 activation

For a Stage 1 activation, key ECC staff would convene in the WREMO office within WEMO at 2 Turnbull Street, Thorndon. The following key staff have been identified below, but this can vary based on the event:

- Group Controller
- ECC Manager
- Emergency Management Advisor
- IT Manager
- Public Information Manager
- Social Media staff (x2)
- Planning and Intelligence Manager
- Lifelines Coordinator

Staff would make use of existing infrastructure within the WREMO office to operate the ECC. As a Stage 1 activation involves only a small number of ECC staff it would not be necessary to convene in a space as large as that offered by the Royal Society. The WREMO office could remain the location of the ECC throughout the event if it did not escalate or was being successfully managed at the local level. Should the event increase in impact the Group Controller can make the decision to call in further staff and convene the ECC within the Royal Society.

Stage 2 activation

Following a significant event in the Wellington region or the escalation of a smaller event, the ECC would initiate a Stage 2 activation at the Royal Society, 11 Turnbull Street, Thorndon. As the installation of the ECC in the Royal Society will take time to set-up, the key ECC staff listed above would initially convene in the WREMO office. When the ECC is set-up and ready for use the staff will relocate to the Royal Society. The Royal Society provides a large open space to accommodate the ECC staff as well as a number of smaller rooms for meetings, press conferences, etc.

4. A portable solution

Flexibility is the key as an event could happen anywhere in the region and the ECC needs to be able to respond in the most appropriate way. As it cannot be guaranteed that either the WREMO office or the Royal Society would be available during an event, the ECC is being designed to be as flexible as possible. The ECC does not rely on desktop technology – all IT equipment is lightweight and portable. Staff will be trained in the set-up of the ECC at the Royal Society, a process that would apply to the set-up of an ECC at any given location.

By having a portable system, the ECC could activate in an existing EOC that has not activated during an event. Again, the skills used to set-up the ECC in WREMO and the Royal Society would be applied when setting up the ECC in an EOC.

The creation of WREMO was not simply an amalgamation but an opportunity to rethink traditional practices and where a more effective workflow could be achieved at a lower cost this was investigated. In this way WREMO have reduced CDEM costs, resulting in savings in both the WREMO budget and also for individual councils.

WREMO believes that the proposal to use existing infrastructure for the ECC, and avoid the creation of a specialist facility that would sit unused for long periods of time, is an example of a more efficient solution that will meet operational requirements at the lowest all-of-life cost.

5. Recommendations

That the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group:

- 1. **Receives** the report;*
- 2. **Notes** the contents of the report; and*
- 3. **Approves** the concept of operation for the Wellington Region Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC)*

Report prepared by:

Bruce Pepperell

Regional Manager, Wellington Region Emergency Management Office