

ABOUT CIVIL DEFENCE

- A GUIDE FOR MEDIA -

September 2020

GET READY



**National Emergency
Management Agency**
Te Rākau Whakamarumarū

Local authorities (city, district and regional councils or unitary authorities*) are the primary agents responsible for civil defence emergency management (CDEM).

Local authorities within a particular region come together to form a CDEM Group. In the case of unitary authorities, the unitary authority itself may form the CDEM Group.

As CDEM Groups, local authorities work with each other and with emergency services and other agencies to reduce risks, be ready for emergencies, respond when needed, and lead the recovery afterwards.

CDEM Groups are required to plan for and provide civil defence in their area by law - specifically the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 (or the CDEM Act).



Unitary authorities perform the function of city, district, and regional councils. There are six unitary authorities in New Zealand, including Auckland Council and Marlborough District Council.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) supports CDEM Groups in their planning and operations.

NEMA also works to ensure there is coordination at local, regional, and national levels, and provides policy advice to government.



NEMA doesn't 'manage' regional CDEM Groups or local authorities — that is, CDEM Groups don't report to NEMA. Rather, NEMA's role is to provide advice and support, and develop plans and arrangements at the national level — with and across agencies.

WHO RUNS THE SHOW?

The vast majority of emergencies are managed at the local level. This means the local council – or potentially other lead agencies, such as Police for an armed offender emergency – are in charge.

CDEM Groups, representing a collective of local councils and emergency services within a particular region, closely monitor local emergencies, and may assist, provide resources, or become the lead agency if the situation requires it.



FLOODS



STORMS



EARTHQUAKES



VOLCANOS



LANDSLIDES

REMEMBER

IN LOCAL EMERGENCIES...



CIVIL DEFENCE IS NOT ALWAYS IN CHARGE

Other lead agencies include the Ministry for Primary Industries, Police, Fire and Emergency NZ, or District Health Boards.

THE BEST INFORMATION IS USUALLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

If you're seeking comment or information on an emergency, please contact the regional CDEM Group, Council, or other lead agency that is in charge. If you call NEMA for information about a locally managed issue – for example, flooding – then we are likely to direct you to the CDEM Group or relevant agency. We're not brushing you off – this is us directing you to the best, most up to date information from the coalface.

NEMA CAN'T SPEAK ON BEHALF OF CDEM GROUPS, OR LOCAL COUNCILS

Because CDEM Groups do not report directly to NEMA, we cannot speak on their behalf. For comment relating to the activities of a CDEM Group, you will need to approach the Group itself.

WHERE NEMA CAN HELP

NEMA is always keen to provide information or advice about the right actions to take before, during or immediately after an emergency to stay safe. In fact, one of our core roles outside emergencies is to research, develop, and share readiness and safety advice especially for New Zealanders.

We can also provide information on how the Government is supporting the response to larger emergencies.

STAY UP TO DATE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

During an emergency, most CDEM Groups and councils provide regular updates on their social media and/or websites. Emergency services responding to the emergency (like the Police, or Fire and Emergency New Zealand) also do this.

WHO TO CONTACT

We always keep CDEM Group contact information on our website: www.civildefence.govt.nz/media/local-regional-media-contact-information.

WHEN THINGS RAMP UP

LENDING A HAND IN EMERGENCIES

NEMA always monitors local emergencies, and we're ready to lend a hand if things escalate, or if they have consequences that cross regional boundaries. In these circumstances, the CDEM Group will play more of a leading and coordinating role in the response, while the local Council or Councils, emergency services, and community groups keep their focus on the local response.

OUR SUPPORTING ROLE

NEMA's role in local and regional emergencies is a supporting one. Detailed operational information or comment will come from the CDEM Group, or the relevant supporting agency (e.g. the Ministry for Primary Industries).

However, you may see us pop up on social media - usually to reinforce some safety advice, or direct people to the relevant CDEM Group (where the best detailed information is available). Our Director may do interviews, and we may hold a media briefing to ensure the right messages are being shared, or to give an overview of the response, and how the government is supporting it.

But our main role will be behind the scenes, providing advice and assistance to CDEM Groups and other supporting agencies. We will ensure that — at a national level — the right people are working together to ensure the right help is getting to the right places.

IN A STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

NEMA IS THE GO-TO AGENCY

NEMA is the lead agency in a state of national emergency for a geological or meteorological hazard event. A state of national emergency is declared by the Minister of Civil Defence.

When an event of this type occurs, NEMA then becomes the go-to agency for information, advice, and comment.

STATES OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY ARE RARE

To date, states of national emergency have only been declared in response to the Christchurch Earthquake of 2011 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

REMEMBER

Other types of emergencies have other lead agencies. For example, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been led by the Ministry of Health.

NEMA may support other lead agencies in their response efforts. We may even become the lead agency if the circumstances call for it.

IN A TSUNAMI

NEMA is the agency responsible for issuing tsunami warnings (whether they apply to a localised coastal area, or the entire New Zealand coastline). CDEM Groups take this warning, and provide more detailed information about what the warning means for local areas, such as evacuations.

IN A TSUNAMI, NEMA IS THE GO-TO AGENCY FOR THE OFFICIAL THREAT STATUS, INFORMATION, AND ADVICE.

MORE INFO

See **Tsunami Warnings - A Guide for Media** for more information about how things work in a tsunami event.

WE NEED YOU TO HELP US SPREAD THE MESSAGE

SHARE OUR MESSAGES

During an emergency, we rely on you in the media to help us communicate vital information that will keep the public safe. So please, if we ask you to share information, spread it forth by whatever means you have.

INTERVIEWS AND INFO

During a severe or sudden onset event — like a tsunami — we will try to provide information and interviews as soon as possible. We will prioritise interviews and requests that are focused on sharing key information and advice relating to public safety.

WORKING SMART

Our spokesperson's time will be limited, as they will have other duties. In the interests of working smart, we'll be aiming to offer one interview per major outlet or network during the initial stages. You'll get the information you need to distribute throughout your channels as you see fit, and our spokesperson and support personnel can focus on the response.

In large-scale emergencies, we will always hold a briefing at the earliest possible opportunity - usually in the National Crisis Management Centre underneath the Beehive. Remember we don't have control over who has access to this area - you'll need to contact Parliament Security to arrange access.

THE VERIFICATION CHALLENGE

Given the speed at which raw information and rumour is shared during an emergency (e.g. on social media), it's a constant challenge for us and emergency services to verify it. We always monitor this information (as you do), but we can only confirm and comment on information that has been verified. This verification process is extremely important in an emergency response and will always take time.

KEEPING US HONEST

As an organisation with a crucial responsibility to the public, we welcome and expect scrutiny of our performance.

However, during an emergency response, we're unlikely to be able to respond to commentary or criticism. This is because our key focus will be ensuring people are safe, and minimising the impact on communities. It will simply be too early to provide an informed reflection on our performance.

We will front up to requests for interviews and comment about our performance once we've had time to review how things went.

MORE INFO



PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES AND BEING PREPARED

getready.govt.nz

HOW TO CONTACT CDEM GROUPS

www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group

ABOUT CDEM

www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/plans-and-strategies/guide-to-the-national-civil-defence-emergency-management-plan

ALL ABOUT TSUNAMI

getready.govt.nz/emergency/tsunami

www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/guidelines/national-tsunami-advisory-and-warning-plan

TSUNAMI EVACUATION ZONES

getready.govt.nz/emergency/tsunami/tsunami-evacuation-zones

MOU WITH BROADCASTERS

www.civildefence.govt.nz/media/memoranda-of-understanding-mou-with-radio-and-tv-broadcasters

WHO TO CONTACT

www.civildefence.govt.nz/media/local-regional-media-contact-information



for helping us keep New Zealanders safe.



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