

**Horizons Regional Council
Manawatu Wanganui Civil Defence
Emergency Management Group**



**NEW ZEALAND POST
MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE
AWARDS**

Category: Process Management

JULY 2004

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Management Group**

**Application in the New Zealand Post Management
Excellence Awards**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application relates to the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEMG) operating in the Manawatu-Wanganui region.

Legislation enacted in December 2002 requires all regions within New Zealand to establish CDEMG groups, however, our work towards the CDEMG concept began in the Manawatu-Wanganui region in 1998.

This Group was formed after the region identified a need for a coordinated and collegial approach to emergency management. In some of the smaller and more isolated communities and because of the large and diverse geographical nature of the region, there remained a high risk to residents from the various hazards in the community and yet, due to the location of these communities, resources and assistance tended to be scarce and remote.

The proactive and innovative approach by our regions CDEMG to the issue of civil defence and emergency management, meant that when the new legislation was introduced in December 2002, it was implemented seamlessly and was effectively already considered "business as usual".

As no other Plans or structures for CDEMG's was in place in New Zealand this region is now looked to for direction for other regions commencing the process.

Q1. Why was there a need for this project, what are the benefits we expect and how does it further our vision and strategic direction?

As outlined in the Executive Summary, the Manawatu-Wanganui region is a geographically spread and diverse area. The region has large numbers of smaller communities with a large number of natural and technological hazards facing them, from volcanic hazards through to tsunami and coastal threats.

A significant amount of vital lifeline utilities also travel through the region including major road, rail, telecommunications and energy networks.

In 1998 the Regional Council, the seven constituent territorial authorities (Taranaki, Horowhenua, Manawatu, Rangitikei, Wanganui and Ruapehu District Councils and Palmerston North City Council), the two local Health Boards and the Emergency Services agreed to form a Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEMG) in the region.

One of the main reasons for the group was the identified need for a coordinated and collegial approach to emergency management in the region.

It also became clear that the government intended to amend emergency management legislation in favour of the establishment of such groups.

The CDEMG concept was developed within the region and formal planning commenced.

There are three major components to the CDEMG.

The CDEMG committee consists of the chairman of the Regional Council and the mayors from the seven local authorities. This committee is the overall decision-making body for the CDEMG and provides governance and clear political accountability for the Group.

The Coordinating Executive Committee (CEG) is made up of representatives from the Regional Council, the seven local authorities, Police, Fire, Ambulance and local Health Boards. This group is responsible for giving professional advice and guidance to the CDEMG committee, implementing the committee's decisions and overseeing the CDEMG Group Plan.

The third "level" is the Emergency Management Office (EMO). This office is based at Horizons Regional Council and is responsible for carrying out planning, administrative and advisory work for the CEG and CDEMG committee.

The CDEMG has four main goals.

These are:

- To provide effective and efficient emergency management through partnership and coordination
- To reduce or mitigate the risks from natural and technological hazards
- To minimise adverse effects of natural and technological hazards upon life, the social and economic fabric of communities, infrastructure, property and the natural environment
- To ensure that there is an effective region wide emergency management capability to respond to, and recover from, natural and technological disasters

One of the major steps taken by the region towards achieving work for the CDEMG was the appointment of a Manager for the Emergency Management Office. This position has a "region-wide" focus and is fully funded by the Regional Council.

The office not only carries out duties associated with planning and functions under the CDEMG Plan but also plays a lead role in providing "centralised" support to the local authority Emergency Management Committees (EMCs). The Emergency Management Office also facilitates networking amongst these local groups with the aim of information and idea sharing.

A requirement of CDEMG groups is to develop and implement a Plan within two years after their formation under the 2002 legislation.

The Manawatu-Wanganui CDEMG has already completed this planning process, had the Plan approved by the Minister and in March 2003 this region was the first in New Zealand to ratify its CDEMG Plan.

By adopting this visionary and proactive approach to working with agencies and communities, the group concept has enabled these groups to become more strategic in their approach to emergency management. This in turn has made them more resilient and able to address specific issues at a local level.

Q2. What effective Project Management techniques were used?

A series of interagency workshops were conducted to identify issues that required a strategic direction to be taken. Agencies were able to share common interests and work out how best to achieve the desired outcomes as a group.

The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated in February 2004, when the strong relationships created during the planning process played a major role in the success of the response to the storm event.

Q3. How did we ensure a participatory approach to communicating with and getting 'buy-in' from stakeholders associated with the project?

A major factor in ensuring the success of the plan was the need for a coordinated and multi agency approach to emergency management in the region.

The financial constraints many partner agencies have and the geographical nature of the region were the main hurdles to stakeholder participation. The decision to undertake a multi agency approach was particularly effective in addressing these issues and allowing all agencies to participate.

By working through this process with partner agencies they were able to experience first hand the benefits of the collegial approach.

Partners could identify common areas of interest and work with other agencies to achieve the best outcomes possible.

A series of further projects have evolved from the CDEMG process that have enabled all partners to continue to work together to achieve a common outcome yet ensuring all stakeholders have an input.

Q4. What makes this project innovative and original?

This project involved an extremely innovative approach to emergency management planning and implementation at a regional level.

Firstly this initiative involved gaining a collaborative approach from many agencies and organisations towards planning and delivering effective emergency management. Historically, this was uncoordinated, with little or no hazard identification with many communities potentially at risk. The collaborative approach involved removing many barriers to gain trust and understanding at a political, senior management and field level among agencies and the development of a collective vision for effective and efficient emergency management.

A particularly innovative part of the CDEMG approach was the use of Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) training, a management tool for controlling large multi agency responses to incidents. This method of management has been adopted by all government agencies likely to deal with or take part in a multi-agency response. It is therefore vital that as many agencies as possible are trained in this system.

It was envisaged that a core training team be established and this team deliver training across the region. To ensure accessibility, it was agreed that courses would be held in all of the seven local authority areas in the region.

Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) training was decided on as the most appropriate delivery method. The project team recognised the importance of CIMS training as a tool to ensure everyone involved in a multi agency emergency response is familiar with the same system.

At an early point, the CDEMG identified that multi agency training would also be desirable when delivering CIMS training. That is, as agencies will work together in an emergency they should also train together rather than in isolation.

The environment in place within the CDEMG is such that firm commitment was given to carrying out training for as many people as possible in the region and in a multi agency forum.

One of the key benefits of the 'all encompassing' approach has been the development of key contacts and regular communication with all involved parties. The development of these close links has had positive benefits for other projects outside of the scope of the CDEMG.

Taking this approach means that all parties have a direct input into the work that is done throughout the region. As projects are identified and approved, staff from within the participating organisations, are seconded to work on them.

To ensure "affordability" for partner agencies to attend each local authority undertook to fund venue, meals and study books for each attending person regardless of who they work for.

The Regional Council undertook to fund travel, accommodation and all expenses for the training team.

Initially the training team consisted of a Police member, a Fire Service trainer and a Palmerston North City Council trainer. The three core trainers were also supported by a representative of the local authority in the area the training was taking place.

The three “main” agencies effectively “donated” the time spent by these staff delivering training.

The courses run for a period of three days and, due to the “absorption” of costs associated with this training by various agencies within the CDEMG, attendance at these courses was “free” for partner agencies to attend.

To date approximately 200 people have been trained with the Manawatu-Wanganui region in CIMS. This training has included Police, Fire, Ambulance, Military, roading contractors, Local Authorities and several other agencies.

The CIMS training has added value to local communities by making available resources, support and training that they would not otherwise had access to or the resources for. There are many additional positive benefits from the CIMS training, notably, the fostering of strong relationships by bringing together different groups in a participative, non threatening environment as this has led to a greater understanding and appreciation for others abilities and needs.

Horizons Regional Council budgets for any major emergency management projects requiring external assistance.

An example is the Lifelines Project, which examines all the hazards in the region, plots them on a map and then overlays the information onto a map of essential infrastructure in the region (infrastructure such as communication, transport and energy lines). This information will be used to identify vulnerabilities in the system so that planning can begin and infrastructure owners can plan future works.

The approach has been one of cost and resource sharing, with each member contributing their personnel and expertise.

Local authorities, as stakeholders, have participated fully in the development of the plan and have retained their existing emergency response expertise and sites, with their activities facilitated by the EMO. The project has benefited the Local Authorities in the region by facilitating the establishment of Emergency Management Committees involving all local emergency services people, council, health providers and contractors meeting regularly to address local issues, build relationships and carry out planning and implementation.

Secondly the Plan itself required significant innovation, as, at the time of the establishment of the CDEMG GROUP, no direction or templates were available from any central agency. Essentially this Group “broke the ground” and began planning and created its own structure.

The CDEMG Group was borne out of a “vision” from within the region and recognition that this structure provided a firm base from which to improve working relationships, make better use of scarce resources and ultimately provide a better service to the community.

Q5. How successful has this been both financially and non-financially?

Success in emergency management is generally thought of as a very difficult thing to quantify. Often it is thought of as how successful a response to an incident has been.

However, this new comprehensive approach involves not just response but also identifying and reducing hazards, being prepared for the consequences of them and the community's ability to recover from the effects of a major event.

The true test of these procedures and planning will still be in the resilience of a community to withstand such events however, the level of cooperation, integration and the robust working relationships created have been invaluable.

It is already apparent that by uniting the region in this way the CDEMG has brought about a change in "culture" and all agencies are now better prepared and working together in a much more productive way on a daily, routine basis.

By adopting the group approach to dealing with strategic issues facing the region, groups and agencies have contributed personnel, time and expertise as part of their contribution to the various projects. In doing so this has ensured that costs have been kept to a minimum and has been distributed across the group, so smaller communities continue to benefit as much as possible.

Q6. Why was this project a 'good, sensible and right thing to do'?

This region is extremely proud of its achievements with the CDEMG Group.

This pride encompasses the fact that we are the first to achieve the significant milestone of ratification of the Plan but even more so that, that we all now enjoy an environment where all emergency response agencies work comfortably and efficiently together.

Events of February 2004 have proved this approach to emergency management was indeed the right thing to do. This event impacted on every local authority in the Manawatu Wanganui Region and the fact that this entire group process created an environment whereby all key agencies could work and plan together played a major role in the management of this event. The success is emphasised by the fact there was no loss of life.

This region is also proud of the fact that this work is not finished!

While this may sound strange, we recognise that the basis has been established for future growth within the region and that we can improve public safety and resilience as well as assist other regions and communities throughout New Zealand.

This process, the Plan and the structure will all continue to evolve.