



Understanding Community Response Planning

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Bay of Plenty Civil Defence Emergency
Management Group
C/- Bay of Plenty Regional Council
5 Quay Street
PO Box 364
Whakatāne 3158
New Zealand

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Understanding community response planning

1 What are we trying to achieve and how this fits in with the group plan

The Bay of Plenty Civil Defence Emergency Management (BOP CDEM) Group's vision is a resilient Bay of Plenty, where communities understand and manage their risks. Many rural and isolated communities across the region are especially vulnerable to limited access and egress in the event of a disaster. BOP CDEM urges communities to be prepared and plan for emergencies, in the event that assistance may take up to three days to arrive. The key message is that communities are not on their own after an emergency. They are with their families, friends, neighbours and the wider community. Community response planning encourages communities to come up with their own solutions to the challenges they may face in the immediate aftermath of a large scale emergency, without having to rely on emergency services or official government response.

Mārae preparedness planning mirrors community response planning, however, is targeted towards mārae-centric communities and specifically meets the needs of Māori communities.

2 What is community response planning?

When a disaster strikes, it is the community which are the first responders. Help for people in need comes mostly from neighbours, existing community groups, faith-based organisations and volunteer organisations, such as Neighbourhood Support, Lions, Rotary, Salvation Army, Residents Association, sports clubs and so on.

Self-activation, self-sufficiency, self-responsibility and self-management were identified as key traits that contributed to individual and community resilience in the days following the Christchurch earthquakes. Essentially, individuals, organisations and communities have to own and be responsible for their own preparedness.

No one knows a community better than the people that live and work in it and this is why the community and community champions (those people who have taken the lead in local community engagement) must come together to develop a community response plan, and it cannot be developed in isolation. A community response plan covers how the community plans to self-activate and respond in the initial stages of a large scale emergency, primarily for the first 72 hours, though the work may continue longer than three days. If robust processes and systems are working well then the civil defence response will support what is already underway, not override the community response.

The plan is developed by community champions and/or representatives of stakeholder organisations such as local schools, businesses, Neighbourhood Support, Lions, Residents' Associations and so on. They form a working party with the goal of completing the planning process and maintaining the plan, while also building and strengthening relationships. Ownership of the plan remains with the community, represented by the stakeholder group.

The plan clearly defines the community that it serves geographically (mapped out) and contains information on the highest risk (likelihood and consequence) hazards, as defined by the community. The plan will be factual, clear and easy to read as well as accessible to residents, tourists, visitors, civil defence and the public.

3 Why community response planning

3.1 Empowering communities

Individuals, organisations and communities will respond in an emergency, whether there is an official response or not. By bringing together the community leaders and key stakeholders (combining assets and social capital), we empower communities to be able to respond immediately, using a plan created by the people who best understand the local demands and resources available. Understanding the hazards pervasive to the community and making a plan to manage those risks, with pre-agreed actions, mean that communities are empowered to start the work which may take valuable time to mobilise. The community response becomes the first part of the official response, and can then be supported by Civil Defence and local authorities.

3.2 Creates community ownership

Communities take ownership of their own preparedness and response by investing time, energy and resources to plan how they will work together during a large disaster. The plan will also inform how the community will work together to better prepare the community before the emergency, acknowledging their strengths, and working on local solutions to minimise vulnerabilities.

3.3 Supports emergency services

In a large-scale emergency, normal emergency services are likely to be overwhelmed. The plan encourages communities to be more self-sufficient and enables them to coordinate themselves, freeing up emergency services to deal with more life threatening issues. The planning process provides the opportunity to realign community expectations on the role of emergency services, in particular civil defence in community coordination.

3.4 Creates realistic expectations

The plan helps build a realistic picture of the hazard-scape and potential impacts on the community. It identifies strengths and vulnerabilities to the community and creates opportunities for building resilience and decreasing those vulnerabilities. The planning process highlights the resources already available in the community and encourages the community to find local solutions to mitigate any gaps in services or resources.

3.5 Builds/strengthens relationships/community resilience

The community response planning process fosters relationships and cooperation between community stakeholders with an aim to building trusting and honest partnerships, both within and outside of an emergency response. It seeks input from a wide cross section of the community fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging.

4 How we are going to achieve this

4.1 Our expectation from the community

1 *Community developed - identification of community response planning champions (influencers)*

Useful people to consider for championing the community response planning process include those people with extensive knowledge of the local community. In some cases this may be representatives of an organisation such as Neighbourhood Support, community board, Residents Association, Lions. The person(s) championing the plan do not have to be a representative of any organisation but they are responsible for leading the development and ensuring the maintenance of the plan. The community own the plan.

2 *Community led - Involvement by ALL the community*

The working group is made up of representatives of agencies and organisations who service or operate within the community response plan's area. Not every organisation or community group in the area may feel like they have something to contribute to the plan but should be considered. If there are schools, faith-based organisations, community centres, medical centres, local businesses and retail centres, these should be considered. Communities should be cognisant of the fact that the more parties involved the more robust and embedded the plan will be within the community. Consideration should also be given to disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse and more transient members of the community (seasonal workers and tourists etc.).

3 *Community promoted and communicated - promoted and communicated thoroughly*

In order to ensure that a wide cross section of the community (including minority groups) is included in the planning process, it is crucial that the planning process is well promoted and communicated. Consideration should be given to inviting the wider community to provide feedback on a draft plans. Once the plan has been signed off, a communication plan needs to be developed to ensure that the plan is disseminated and readily available to the community.

4.2 What we will do

1 *Provide advice and support where requested*

The BOP CDEM Group will provide the technical expertise to support communities and those developing the community response planning, about the specific hazards to the defined community (based on likelihood and consequences). This hazard information is not limited to civil defence led events.

The BOP CDEM Group will provide assistance and access to mapping tools for the community to develop maps defining the area the community response plan is intended to cover, as well as providing tsunami evacuation and other hazard maps. Templates will also be provided to communities to assist and guide in the development of the plan.

2 *Accessibility*

The BOP CDEM Group will ensure that the community response plan is accessible to the whole community by supporting and advising on the communication plan as well as providing the digital platform for the sharing of the public plan. Sharing the plan ensures that the whole community has access to the plan as well as those transient and visitor populations, supporting agencies and civil defence. Consideration will be given to culturally and linguistically diverse communities and translation of documentation where required and budget allows.

3 *Engaging communities*

The BOP CDEM Group will engage with communities to support them to complete community response plans as outlined in the BOP CDEM Group work programme. Communities will be prioritised according to the annual work programme based on risk posed by hazards to the community and level of community engagement. The BOP CDEM Group will engage with communities by providing advice, support and attendance at community response planning meetings where possible.

5 End goal

Communities have a pre-agreed plan for how they will prepare and respond to an event, examining the vulnerabilities and resources within the community and engaging all the stakeholders within the region. The whole community knows what to do when a disaster strikes and how they will communicate with each other as well as civil defence. Rural, isolated and vulnerable communities across the Bay of Plenty are empowered to respond to large-scale disasters.