

## **11 Public information management**

### **11.1 Introduction**

- a. This section provides information concerning timely and accurate public information management in an emergency and related readiness arrangements.

### **11.2 Public information management function**

- a. In a national emergency, and events where there is significant central government involvement, the Public Information Management function is supported by the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC).
- b. The Group Public Information Section will be based at the Group ECC. The Public Information Manager will bring in staff as required, depending on the type and scale of incident.
- c. Where Local EOCs are activated they will also have a Public Information Management function. The Group ECC, as required, will support this.

### **11.3 Appointment of Public Information Managers**

- a. The CDEM Group and each local authority shall appoint a CDEM Public Information Manager, and two alternates - pursuant to s5.7.1 of this Plan. Public Information Managers will be responsible for developing and managing the Public Information Management function within their ECC/EOC.

### **11.4 Instructions from Controllers**

- a. When the ECC or an EOC is activated, the first priority will be the issue of an initial news release or radio statement to explain what is happening, what can and is likely to happen, and what people should do.
- b. Controllers and Public Information Managers will identify specific community liaison priorities depending on the needs of the event.
- c. After the initial stages of the event, Controllers and Public Information Managers will identify the key messages at the start of each day. These will be reviewed as required. The messages will be in bullet point form and will be the basis of all communications that day. Priorities for public information are listed in the ECC and Local EOC Public Information Management SOP.
- d. Ongoing liaison must occur between the ECC and activated EOCs to ensure that messages are coordinated and consistent.

## 11.5 Radio stations

- a. The Group ECC and all Local EOCs will have arrangements in place with local radio stations to have messages broadcast in an emergency. After hours contact details for radio stations will be listed in respective Public Information Management SOPs.
- b. Guidance on the format of announcements will be in the SOPs. Whenever possible, all declarations, instructions and announcements for broadcast media are to be submitted in written form.

## 11.6 Community relations

- a. Public Information Managers will utilise appropriate measures to ensure the community is kept informed. Depending on the type of event, this may include:
  - daily briefings of a relevant group of community leaders eg. council and community board members, school principals, service group leaders. Ideally this should occur first thing each day, prior to any Media briefings;
  - community noticeboards;
  - community newsletters;
  - faxing regular updates to relevant organisations in the affected area.

## 11.7 News media liaison

- a. Every effort will be made to meet the requirements of news media representatives. Where necessary a base will be provided for news media representatives.
- b. If Community Leaders' Briefings are held each morning, they will be followed by a News Media Briefing.
- c. If required, Public Information Managers will appoint Media Liaison Officers who will send out frequent regular updates to the news media. These can be in bullet point form.
- d. If necessary, Public Information Managers will advise the news media representatives to establish a pool, which will represent all media. The news media will then be expected to share video/audio tapes, photographs and information. The pool should be made up according to the following priorities:
  - Priority 1: The radio stations and the newspapers covering the area of the emergency, and/or a radio representative from one of the national radio networks, one television news network, NZPA and local television (if applicable).
  - Priority 2: Journalists and photographers from other NZ newspapers and magazines.
  - Priority 3: Overseas journalists, photographers, film crews and other media representatives.

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- e. It is recognised that there could be situations where overseas journalists and film crews may need to have their priority rating raised by the Controller, if significant numbers of foreign nationals are involved or other pertinent considerations arise.
- f. When a pool system has been established the provision of transport and other facilities for media representatives becomes the responsibility of the relevant ECC or EOC.
- g. Where a pool system is not operating, the individual representatives are responsible for providing their own transport, accommodation and other arrangements. They should also keep Public Information Managers informed of their movements and should be guided as to the advisability of entering a declared emergency area.

## **11.8 Website**

- a. Public Information Managers will regularly update the Group and territorial authority websites, if available, utilising information released by Media Liaison Officers, information developed for Community Relations and information necessary for the effective management of the event provided by other sections of the ECC/EOC and /or partner organisations.
- b. In some cases it may be appropriate to have a Web Cam to transmit live pictures from a particular location to the web-site.

## **11.9 Emergency response organisations**

- a. During an undeclared emergency and/or when an emergency is anticipated, the appropriate emergency response organisations will continue to provide public information about matters under their control in a coordinated manner within the provisions of CIMS.
- b. In a declared state of emergency, the determination of the boundaries of responsibility for the provision of public information lies with the Controller(s). With this shift of primary responsibility, the emergency response organisations' communications staff must exercise strict control over what information they release and liaise closely with Public Information Manager. During major events this will be via a single point of contact. The ECC Public Information Manager will usually be the best position to perform this function. This is intended to ensure that the release of information is consistent and authoritative.
- c. The emphasis for all CDEM messages will be on Public Safety and Public Health ie. instructions on what actions people should take. Other agencies may choose to supply extra information to the media. They should, however liaise in advance with Public Information Managers over this.

## 11.10 Public enquiry centres

- a. CDEM Group or Local Public Enquiry Centres will be set up as required. The function of a Public Enquiry Centre is to respond to individuals who seek information about the disaster generally or about particular people or aspects of the disaster. Where possible, the Centres will be based on existing local authority Call Centres.
- b. The Public Enquiry Centre should be:
  - set up and scaled to suit the numbers of victims, relatives and friends affected, on a 24 hour basis;
  - fully briefed on the current situation so they can answer public enquiries;
  - able to relay any information gained through the public enquiry system relevant to the Emergency, to the Group ECC or Local EOC.
- c. The provision of information on websites and regular news bulletins should keep to a minimum to support inquiries of a general nature. Accordingly, the majority of enquires are likely to be about people or the welfare of people. Public Information Managers should ensure that up to date information regarding the disaster is provided to the Centres on a regular basis. Likewise Welfare Managers should provide lists of those people who have registered.
- d. Enquirers asking about people not registered should be reassured. The principle "no news is good news" applies.
- e. Public enquiries about offers of materials or other assistance (which may be inappropriate or not suitable as to timing), need to be responded to positively. Organisations and individuals wishing to contribute aid should be encouraged to contribute money to a relief fund - unless a specific need has been identified. In these circumstances the enquiry should be forwarded to the Group ECC Logistics Manager or appropriate agency.
- f. If requested, a National Enquiry Centre may be activated by the Director MCDEM.