



caring about you & your environment

Report 02.730

11 November 2002

File: Z/4/3/1

[Report 2002.Env02.730 RvS:slh]

Report to Environment Committee
from Rian van Schalkwyk, Manager, Emergency Management

Exercise Phoenix Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the outcome of Exercise Phoenix held during the period 23 to 27 July 2002.

2. Background

Project Phoenix began in 1998 as a joint project between Auckland and Wellington Regional and local Councils, emergency services, health providers and many other response agencies. The main aim of the project was to determine how Auckland could assist Wellington to recover from a large earthquake and what logistical support Auckland could provide to Wellington.

Phase I of the Project (1999 and 2000) explored what resources Auckland had to offer to the Wellington Region. Phase II (2001) was a “needs” analysis of Wellington’s logistics requirements, and Phase III (2002) was an exercise to reality check the planning that has been conducted in Wellington and Auckland.

Overall, Exercise Phoenix was a success. From an operational perspective, all participants had a significant role to play and all organisations got great benefit from the exercise.

The “learnings” from Exercise Phoenix were many and varied. However, the following findings have been identified as integral to the future success of Emergency Management in the region.

3. Key findings of the Exercise

The Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management has prepared the Exercise Phoenix Report, a copy of which will be tabled at the meeting. The main points relevant to this Council are summarised below.

3.1 Scenario

Exercise Phoenix III was based on a scenario whereby a shallow magnitude 7.5 earthquake with its epicentre in Petone, about 10 km from the centre of Wellington City, caused widespread damage throughout the Wellington region as well as Nelson, Marlborough, Wairarapa, Horowhenua and Manawatu.

3.2 Exercise Aims and Objectives

3.2.1 Aim

The overall aim of Exercise Phoenix III was:

To improve planning for management of the initial logistics support required in response to a major earthquake in Wellington.

3.2.2 Shared Objective & Outcome

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between Wellington and Auckland regions setting out the basis by which mutual disaster aid will be planned and provided for.

3.2.3 Authorities of the Auckland Region

- Test the strategies, plans and framework arrangements for the provision and co-ordination of mutual disaster aid and support activities, with particular focus on:
 - The establishment of reliable-path alternate communication links for data and voice
 - The co-ordination of domestically sourced aid
 - The establishment of a processing point for international assistance and aid to provide reception and accreditation and the co-ordination of onward movement
 - The reception and management of injured persons
 - The reception and management of displaced persons
 - The establishment of a public information group to provide interim dissemination of information while the impact area is incapacitated

3.2.4 Authorities of the Wellington Region

- Establish robust processes for the supply of critical external resources to fulfil three urgent response tasks for public safety and confidence:
 - Urban Search and Rescue
 - Treatment and movement of the injured
 - Provision of potable water

3.2.5 *Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM)*

To evaluate MCDEM's ability to meet Part 9 (Logistics) of the National Civil Defence Plan (NCDP) including MCDEM processes and resources for:

- Planning and arranging for Government agency support to local government responders (filling the gaps)
- Planning and arranging for international agency support to local government responders (filling the gaps)
- Managing logistics at a national level
- Monitoring and evaluating the response effort

3.3 **Key Findings**

3.3.1 *Planning shortfalls:*

- Implementation gaps (key players are not aware of existing planning arrangements)
- Process gaps (functions not addressed by existing planning)

Exercise Phoenix established that a number of shortfalls in emergency planning and arrangements exist and need to be addressed. Where key agencies have differing assumptions as to how response activities will be managed, then confusion and inefficiency will mark the initial reaction to a significant emergency. In part, these identified deficiencies are the result of inadequate implementation of existing planning arrangements. Many participants were reported as not being aware of the provisions of the existing National Civil Defence Plan, or of the arrangements within emergency plans prepared within their own sector. The plans may be in themselves adequate to the task of describing consequences, allocating responsibilities and defining processes for co-ordination. If, however, the key players are not aware of and familiar with their provisions, they will have little influence on the management of a major event.

3.3.2 *Communications Deficiencies:*

- Capacity shortfalls (the required volume of traffic would overwhelm alternate modes)
- Process issues (requirement and procedure for information exchange is not defined)

Workshops and exercise activities (as detailed in the full report) also highlighted a number of functions where work needs to be done on establishing process arrangements and then recording those agreements in plans and procedures. In some instances, the recommended outcome of discussions would be the production of a formal Memorandum of Understanding.

In both the initial national debrief, and some of the consequent activity reports, participants identified the limitations of existing alternate communications. The expectation is that in any emergency both conventional and mobile phone networks will overload, even if they do not fail through damage to infrastructure. A national re-examination of communication needs and potential solutions need to be reflected by similar studies at regional and local level.

The other frequently voiced concern was the lack of definition of what information is required by each management level of CDEM, and the current confusion over the frequency and format of required reporting. The consensus is that current arrangements for the collection, collation and transfer of information in an emergency are inadequate.

3.3.3 *Inadequate co-ordination*

Agencies act in isolation, and are unsure about co-ordination processes.

Observers of the exercise noted that while participants understood the roles and responsibilities of their own organisation in responding to a major event, they were less sure about how the wider management of the emergency would function. Assumptions in respect of key response functions, such as public information, were at times not aligned with current provisions in plans. Further exercise activities may partially address this deficiency.

3.4 **Exercise Design Issues**

The principal concerns were:

- Resources allocated for exercise design and control were not adequate;
- The connections between the various exercise activities were insufficient in form and volume;
- Exercise participants received little feedback on the quality of decisions and conclusions.

The report on Exercise Phoenix, while it highlights some valuable lessons, should not be taken as a complete assessment of current issues in regard to emergency response. The exercise itself was limited in its scope and objectives, and was in part used to develop process rather than test existing arrangements. In particular, participants recognised the following limitations:

- The scenario, based on previous studies and exercises, is now ‘dated’ in its description of impacts on infrastructure and communities;
- The event depicted would be a ‘central New Zealand’ event, but there was little reference to damage other than in the Wellington region;
- Assumptions made about how a major emergency would be managed differed among agencies, and between participants in the two locations, but were not challenged by the exercise;
- The structure of the exercise was widely divergent, with most activities being conducted with limited connection to other workshops and activations.

3.5 **Proposed recommendations**

- 3.5.1 Describe in business plans how emergency plans are to be implemented.
- 3.5.2 Address planning shortfalls identified in the report.
- 3.5.3 Address intra- and inter-regional co-ordination inadequacies identified in the report.
- 3.5.4 Urgently review the provision of alternate communications.
- 3.5.5 Define information requirements, within and between responding agencies.
- 3.5.6 Conduct a regular and continuing programme of emergency exercises.
- 3.5.7 Allocate additional resource to the development of future exercises.

4. **Conclusion**

All the issues emanating from Exercise Phoenix are being addressed. Councils and agencies in the Wellington Region are working together to find workable and acceptable solutions for the issues identified and several projects are now under way to address the following:

- Emergency water supply
- Emergency road access
- Emergency communications
- Information management and transfer of information
- Commuter management
- Urban search and rescue
- Supply of external resources
- Reconnaissance
- City/district EOC robustness
- Medical response

5. **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (1) *receive the report; and*
- (2) *note the contents.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission

RIAN VAN SCHALKWYK
Manager, Emergency Management

JANE BRADBURY
Divisional Manager, Environment