

28. Public information management

Summary

In an emergency, the effective delivery of public information is critical. Timely, accurate information supports emergency response and recovery, and ensures that members of the public take appropriate actions to protect themselves and others.

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28.1 Introduction

Part 8 Response

Public information management

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- (1) *Public information management during an emergency involves—*
 - (a) *identifying the need for information, advice, or assistance required; and*
 - (b) *gathering information and disseminating it to the public; and*
 - (c) *media liaison and monitoring.*
- (2) *Public information management is necessary before, during, and after an emergency.*
- (3) *The target audiences for public information are all people who are, or may be, directly or indirectly affected by the emergency, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities.*

28.2 Objectives

131 Objectives

The objectives of public information management during an emergency are to—

- (a) *provide timely, accurate, and appropriate information, advice, or instruction to the public; and*
- (b) *build public confidence in a responsible, competent operation that makes all reasonable efforts to inform and protect the community; and*
- (c) *promote the effective management and co-ordination of public information between agencies, CDEM Groups, news media, and the public.*

28.3 Principles

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The principles underlying emergency public information management at the national level are to—

- (a) *establish, before an emergency,—*
 - (i) *a working relationship between news media representatives and Public Information Managers of lead agencies; and*
 - (ii) *an understanding of each other's expectations during an emergency; and*
- (b) *provide, during an emergency, dependable, accurate, and timely information to news media to help the gathering and dissemination of news and information; and*
- (c) *use a wide range of channels and media to reach as many people as possible, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities; and*
- (d) *ensure that each agency that manages public information during an emergency acts according to an integrated public information management plan established by the lead agency; and*
- (e) *provide public information that is consistent across all agencies involved in, or supporting, the response during an emergency and that is consistent within each agency at the national, CDEM Group, and local levels (key messages must be compatible or in agreement with each other); and*
- (f) *understand that national agencies and CDEM Groups may pool personnel and resources to provide a professional and timely public information service.*

28.4 National roles

28.4.1 Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management

MCDEM

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- (1) *During an emergency where the MCDEM is the lead agency,—*
- (a) *the Director or the National Controller will, as required, issue public information statements; and*
 - (b) *the MCDEM will—*
 - (i) *activate a public information management function to monitor and co-ordinate public information; and*
 - (ii) *activate, as required, the memorandum of understanding with certain television and radio broadcasters for the broadcast of emergency announcements; and*

National Controller

For the purpose of public information management during national response to a civil defence emergency, the National Controller is to:

- ♦ appoint a Public Information Manager to oversee this function, and
- ♦ ensure sufficient staff and resources are available.

Public Information Manager

The responsibilities of the Public Information Manager are to:

- ♦ oversee the relationship with and monitoring of the media
- ♦ oversee the release of public information, including media releases, updates of the MCDEM website and social media, promotion of the 0800 Government Helpline (when activated – **see** 28.4.2), and request of the broadcast of emergency announcements
- ♦ monitor the media
- ♦ coach and support MCDEM spokespeople
- ♦ maintain key relationships
- ♦ advise the all-of-government communications public information management group, and
- ♦ support CDEM Groups by:
 - publicly acknowledging the territorial authorities and CDEM Groups involved
 - coordinating nationally-issued public information to ensure that it is consistent or complementary with that issued by CDEM Groups
 - providing assistance and advice to CDEM Groups.

28.4.2 Ministry of Social Development

Ministry of Social Development

- (c) *the Ministry of Social Development, in consultation with, or at the request of, the National Controller, may activate the government helpline to provide information on the services and assistance available to people affected by the emergency; and*

0800 Government Helpline

Depending on the scale of the emergency the Government Helpline may be activated. Run by the Ministry of Social Development, the 0800 Government Helpline:

- ♦ provides easy access to information across agencies
- ♦ provides information regarding financial assistance and other support, and
- ♦ ensures people get correct, consistent and necessary assistance in a timely manner.

28.4.3 All-of-government communications group

All-of-Government communications group

- (d) *the DPMC, on the instructions of the ODESC, may convene an all-of-government communications group to develop and co-ordinate consistent national and international key messages.*
- (2) *The all-of-government communications group may include representatives from the following agencies:*
 - (a) *the MCDEM:*
 - (b) *the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment:*
 - (c) *the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade:*
 - (d) *the Ministry of Health:*
 - (e) *the Ministry for Primary Industries:*
 - (f) *the Ministry of Social Development:*
 - (g) *the Ministry of Transport:*
 - (h) *the New Zealand Customs Service:*
 - (i) *the New Zealand Fire Service:*
 - (j) *the New Zealand Police.*

During an emergency, government can decide to convene the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) to oversee the response (**see** Figure 3.1 in Section 3, Management of emergencies). An all-of-government communications group has been established to support and advise the Officials Domestic External Security Coordination committee (ODESC), which in turn advises the NSC.

The members of the communications group are senior managers with high security clearances. As well as advising ODESC, their role is to provide leadership and coordinate central government communications, and working with the lead agency PIM team, which deals with operational response. The group is convened by ODESC.

When there is no emergency, government departments routinely make statements on matters relating to their own fields of interest. However, when there is an emergency, government departments must liaise with the lead agency Public Information Manager so that statements can be coordinated, made consistent and, if need be, prioritised.

28.4.4 Emergency services

As part of their routine work, emergency services often provide public information about hazards and incidents. Following a warning or while managing a major incident that could lead to an emergency, emergency services may continue to provide public information about matters under their control.

During emergencies, emergency services information officers should liaise closely with the lead agency Public Information Manager, so that all information released is consistent and coordinated.

28.4.5 CDEM Groups

During all responses, CDEM Groups focus on communicating directly with communities. The range of channels and media used to achieve this should be as broad as possible.

When there is a state of national emergency or emergency of national significance, CDEM Groups must liaise with the national Public Information Manager so that statements can be coordinated, made consistent and, if need be, prioritised.

During local emergencies CDEM Groups routinely make statements on matters relating to their own areas. In this case the Public Information Manager will liaise closely with their counterparts within the affected CDEM Group(s).

28.5 Specific Public Information Management arrangements

28.5.1 Issuing national warnings and advisories

MCDEM maintains a national warning system (**see** Section 25, National warnings and advisories) to issue advisories and warnings about hazards that may affect communities to news media. This system is supported by online, social media, traditional media and other ways of getting messages to communities when technology is limited.

28.5.2 Accessibility of information

'Accessibility' refers to characteristics of the built environment, and of information and communication systems that enable their use by all members of the community, regardless of language, cultural and ethnic identity, age, or disability (including physical, sensory, neurological, mental, or intellectual impairment).

MCDEM and CDEM Groups are expected to take practicable steps to ensure their public information is accessible. This may involve the use of:

- ♦ translators and interpreters (including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL))
- ♦ video links for NZSL, or other languages spoken in the affected communities
- ♦ live captioning, and/or
- ♦ large print formats, or using diagrams or images as an alternative to text.

The Government Web Toolkit's information on accessibility requirements is available at www.webtoolkit.govt.nz. **See** also the MCDEM publication *Public Information Management* [DGL 14/13], available at www.civildefence.govt.nz (search for 'public information management')

28.5.3 Automatic links between CDEM Group and MCDEM websites

MCDEM's website has automatic links to CDEM Groups' websites. When a CDEM Group changes the emergency status on its website, this is automatically displayed on the MCDEM website's homepage. The purpose is to make it easier for the public to find the CDEM Group's information, and for the CDEM Group to get its information to the public.

CDEM Group Controllers are responsible for the information their CDEM Group issues during emergencies. They must ensure their webmasters understand how the automatic links work and the protocols for using them.

28.5.4 Broadcasting emergency announcements on radio and television

Radio and television provide a critical channel for the dissemination of timely information to the public before, during and following an emergency. By working with radio and television, MCDEM can get the widest public coverage practicable throughout New Zealand.

MCDEM has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with key national television and radio broadcasters for the broadcast of emergency announcements.

Broadcast agencies	<p>Under the <i>National CDEM Plan 2015</i>, and the responsibilities set out in the MOU, arrangements for the broadcast of emergency announcements are in place with the following agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Radio New Zealand ♦ The Radio Broadcasters Association ♦ The Association of Community Access Broadcasters¹ ♦ Television New Zealand Limited, and ♦ Media Works TV Limited. <p>Individual arrangements between local CDEM agencies and local broadcasters also exist but are not covered within the <i>National CDEM Plan 2015</i> and the MOU with radio broadcasters and key national television networks.</p>
Request for broadcast	<p>A request for broadcast of an emergency announcement must be made by an authorised CDEM manager. MCDEM serves as the central point for the verification of requests for broadcast. Authorised CDEM managers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ a National, CDEM Group, or Local Controller, or ♦ the Director of CDEM.

28.6 References and links

Other Guide sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Section 3, Management of emergencies ♦ Section 4, General roles and responsibilities ♦ Section 5, Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM) ♦ Section 6, Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups (CDEM Groups) ♦ Section 24, Response ♦ Section 25, National warnings and advisories ♦ Section 26, National Crisis Management Centre ♦ Section 27, Emergency information management ♦ Section 29, Logistics ♦ Section 30, Mass evacuation ♦ Section 31, International assistance for New Zealand ♦ Section 32, Recovery ♦ Section 33, Government financial support to local authorities
Other documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (2013) <i>Public Information Management Director's Guideline for Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups [DGL14/13]</i>; ISBN 0-478-35572-7 (www.civildefence.govt.nz – search for 'public information management') ♦ Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (2008) (Revised October 2014) <i>Response Management: Director's Guideline for CDEM Group and Local Controllers [DGL 06/08]</i>; ISBN 978-0-478-43504-7 (www.civildefence.govt.nz – search for 'response management') ♦ Practical public education information about what to do before, during and after emergencies can be found on the Get Ready Get Thru website: www.getthru.govt.nz; and happens.nz.

¹ MCDEM acknowledges that the Association of Community Access Broadcasters, and some members of the Radio Broadcasters Association, will follow a 'best endeavours' approach to broadcasting emergency announcements, as described in the MoU.