

Southland Business Continuity Planning Workshops-Resilience Fund 2013/14 Report

Emergency Management Southland (EMS) was granted resilience funding for the 2013/14 financial year to run business continuity planning workshops.

The concept was to hold three business planning workshops during the year and that has been achieved, with the last course being held on 23 June 2014. There are plans to carry on the concept, with Gore businesses planning to hold a workshop in August and a plan to target Te Anau businesses in July.

Southland collaborated with the Northland Civil Defence Group to replicate its successful model for holding the workshops. Kim Abbott, of Northland Regional Council, visited Southland with Ministry advisor, Greg Gallop, and explained the concept and how it had worked for them. They allowed us to adapt their Business Continuity Planning Guide, which is a document given to every participant and “Southlandise” it. This included putting the information into a Southland context and replacing the graphics, as well as using local case studies. The graphic design and booklet printing was done locally with funding from the resilience fund. This guide was of particular interest to the participants.

We also printed copies of the Shut Happens booklet, produced by Resilient Organisations and Canterbury University. These documents were provided in a large magazine folder, with “Business Continuity Planning Kit” boldly emblazoned on it, so that businesses could add other emergency related documents they may have to it. The folders are easily recognised on a shelf and can be taken from the building in an emergency.

From the outset it was clear that there needed to be buy-in from the commercial sector. The link with the New Zealand Fire Service at a local level was the key to running a successful workshop.

Locally, EMS worked to gain a partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Southland Fire Risk Manager of the NZ Fire Service. Both organisations could see the benefit of the product. The Chamber of Commerce could see immense value to its members and it gave the Fire Service an opportunity to work collaboratively with us to promote fire safety and business continuity. The real examples of local business continuity issues after a fire seemed to strike a chord with the participants.

Unfortunately, the Chamber of Commerce had a change of leadership and the enthusiasm from that organisation faded dramatically. Plan B saw us approach the Otago Southland Employers Association and it readily agreed to participate. This proved very worthwhile. Leading up to workshop 3, the Chamber of Commerce has seen the product and is now back on board and encouraging its members to attend. It has provided a venue for the three workshops to date and is continuing to support that.

Workshop 1 was held in November 2013 and, while we had targeted small to medium businesses, we found that large businesses were also keen to learn. We were surprised to find companies with branches nationally attending and finding value. The feedback from this workshop was very positive and on the basis of that we moved to workshop 2, in February 2014. We had very similar feedback from that workshop.

We invited the participants of the first workshop to a follow-up meeting, to see if they had progressed with their plans. None had completed a plan, but most had started to get information. The main reason for not completing the plan was the difficulty in getting managers to allocate time to complete the plans, but they could see the benefit in doing it. Business as usual always took precedence.

Another barrier to getting small business to attend was the release of staff for a three hour period to attend the workshop.

The relative success of the project hangs on these simple things:

- buy-in from a local business association;
- local Fire Service participation, with an angle other than civil defence emergencies to provide real life, local examples;
- a three hour workshop that means only half a day away from the business;
- good resources, such as the Business Continuity Planning Guide and the Resilient Organisations Shut Happens brochure;
- good local case studies that business people can relate back to their own business.

Costs

The costs are relatively small, especially if facilitated by Emergency Management staff and NZ Fire service. Other costs which may be saved on are the venue (if you can provide a free, or low cost option) and advertising (may not be required if you have good networks in to the business community).

The costs for Southland were.

Printing and venue costs	\$3255
Advertising (part share)	\$1745
Total	\$5000