Learning from Regional Recovery Events

A Practical Guide for Territorial Authorities and Local Recovery Managers

Prepared for:

Gisborne District Council under the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management Resilience Fund

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Report Author

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Approved by:

Brendan Morris, Director

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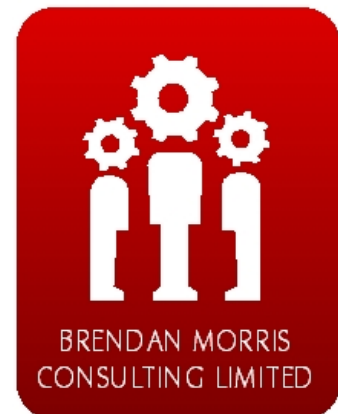Leadership in hazards and emergency management

Cover photos

Seddon shop front earthquake damage. Courtesy Marie Flowerday.

Earthquake damage to Grey Street buildings, Gisborne. Courtesy Gisborne District Council.

Recovery Manager Adrian Humphries meeting with Ligar Bay residents, Golden Bay. Courtesy Tasman District Council.

Aerial view of Matata debris flow. Courtesy Whakatane Beacon.

State Highway flooding at Moerewa, Northland. Courtesy Far North District Council.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Recovery is often the longest and most complex of the '4Rs'. Nowhere is this better highlighted than in Canterbury, where the largest and most complex recovery process in New Zealand's history is in progress. Important lessons from this event will continue to emerge over time.

Despite the Canterbury events, most events requiring a recovery process in New Zealand occur on a much smaller scale. Most events occur within one or two territorial authorities (TAs) inside a single Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) group, but nonetheless, require significant on-going local management and commitment of resources.

A number of such events have occurred since the production of the current recovery management guideline[1], including:
- Northland floods (2014)
- Bay of Plenty floods/debris flows (2005)
- Gisborne earthquake (2007)
- Nelson-Tasman floods/debris flows (2011)
- Marlborough (Seddon) earthquakes (2013).

While recovery processes can be large and complex, the level of 'readiness' for recovery within CDEM groups across New Zealand is relatively low[2]. In many CDEM groups, there are few resources applied to recovery management and planning in advance of events. TAs are often unaware of the level of resourcing and coordination that may be required during recovery, and the potential impact this may have on their business.

It is common for recovery to be the lowest scoring of the 4Rs within CDEM group capability assessment reports, and there are limited efforts being made outside of Canterbury to collate lessons learned from across New Zealand.

Purpose and objective

The purpose of this report is to capture and collate lessons learned from regional events requiring a recovery process in five regions, being Northland, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Nelson-Tasman and Marlborough, since the production of the recovery management guideline.

The objective of this report is to provide practical advice and guidance for recovery managers, recovery management staff and TAs to better prepare for and manage future recovery processes. The ultimate objective is to improve TA and therefore CDEM group recovery capability across New Zealand.

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[1] Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM) Recovery Management Director's Guideline (May 2005).
[2] Recovery is often the lowest scoring component of the 4Rs, per CDEM group and national capability reviews.

Target audience

The primary audience for this report is TAs, due to the responsibilities they carry for recovery, and the leadership role they play in managing recovery processes. This report will be of most relevance to key leadership roles for recovery management within TAs – recovery managers, public information managers, welfare managers and senior executives. This report will be of interest to staff with recovery roles within TAs – particularly those responsible for community development, customer services, building and infrastructure maintenance and information management.

This report will also be of interest to the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM), CDEM groups, welfare coordination groups and a wide range of agencies involved in recovery processes. These may include but are not limited to Government agencies, industry groups and organisations, and local volunteer and community groups.

About this report

How this report was developed

This report is the outcome of the 'Learning from regional recovery events' MCDEM Resilience Fund project 2014/15. This resilience fund project was developed and administered by Gisborne CDEM group, and supported by the Northland, Bay of Plenty, Nelson-Tasman and Marlborough CDEM groups. This report seeks to understand the specific issues and actions from real events that have both assisted with and hindered recovery outcomes within the five regions.

This report is based on a combination of:
- Reviews of regional recovery event information across the five CDEM groups, including recovery action plans, web-based information and review reports
- Consideration of existing recovery doctrine, and lessons learned from the Canterbury earthquake recovery
- In-depth semi-structured interviews.

Thirty-eight semi-structured interviews were undertaken, involving 59 participants across the five regions. Participants were recommended by group emergency managers, and covered a wide range of roles including Mayors, TA senior executives, recovery managers, welfare managers, public information managers, building/infrastructure managers, TA customer services staff and welfare staff – including Government agencies, Rural Support Trusts and community-based organisations.

Interview questions covered issues and impacts to communities and Councils, what worked well during recovery and what Councils should have done differently, what the most important elements of recovery were, and lessons learned from experience with recovery.

While the interviews spanned five regions, participants[3] from eight TAs took part as follows:
- Northland: Far North District Council and Whangarei District Council
- Bay of Plenty: Tauranga City Council and Whakatane District Council
- Gisborne District Council (unitary authority)
- Nelson-Tasman: Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council
- Marlborough District Council (unitary authority).

All interviews were typed, and feedback collated into key elements and themes based on the level of importance ascribed to elements/themes by participants, and by the frequency with which they were mentioned.

This report was then drafted and reviewed by a representative from each participating CDEM group, before being released to all interviewees for feedback. Following feedback, the report was peer reviewed, updated, finalised and published.

Report structure

A brief synopsis of regional recovery events is provided, drawn from a combination of existing reports, media articles and interviews. The findings of this report are based on the collective observations of interview participants as follows:
- **Impacts and issues:** a brief summary of observations on the impacts and issues associated with recovery for both communities and Councils across the five regions, listed in the order of importance
- **Critical success factors for recovery:** the most important requirements during the recovery process to effect a successful outcome, and without which, recovery from events will be difficult
- **Other important considerations during recovery:** important additional considerations that are broadly recognised as assisting recovery processes
- **Important practical considerations prior to and following recovery:** a summary of the key considerations for TAs and recovery managers during the readiness, response and reduction/review phases
- **Lessons learned from recovery events:** a summary of the most important lessons learned by TAs/interview participants following recovery events.

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[3] Both present and former.

Synopsis of regional recovery events

Northland floods

This report draws primarily on experience from the 2014 floods, with experiences from earlier flood events in 2007, 2011, and 2012 also recognised. The 2014 floods resulted from three distinct weather events in July. The initial weather events of 8-9 July caused power outages and some flooding, while the 12-13 July event caused flooding in the Far North, property damage, evacuations, closure of State Highway 1 and widespread power outages. Further rainfall on 19-20 July affected Whangarei, particularly areas to the west and south of the city, damaged a small number of properties, and led to State Highway 1 closing again.

The transition to recovery for Whangarei District occurred on 18 July, while the transition for Far North District Council and Northland CDEM group occurred on 23 July. Local recovery managers were appointed in both the Whangarei and Far North District Councils, supported by the Group Recovery Manager.

Flooding at Otiria Marae, Northland. Photo courtesy Far North District Council.

Initial priorities for recovery included welfare for displaced people, repairs and strategy for road infrastructure repair and support to the rural sector due to financial loss and on-farm impacts. Ongoing recovery support focussed on welfare/psychosocial needs, needs assessment, public information management, relief funds, and support for rural communities via Expanded Task Force Green. Welfare recovery was largely complete by early September, and road infrastructure repairs are ongoing at November 2015.

Bay of Plenty floods/debris flows

On 18 May 2005, a complex low-pressure system produced extreme weather that resulted in an historic deluge that dumped more than 300mm of rain on Tauranga and in Matata in 24 hours.

In Tauranga, 471 homes were damaged by flooding or landslides. Of these, 53 were assessed as needing substantial rebuilding, while 14 were condemned as beyond repair. Around 400 people were evacuated from the Otumoetai, Welcome Bay, Pillans Road/Vale Street and Papamoa areas. In Matata, there was major damage to the township including the destruction of 27 houses with a further 87 damaged, and more than 500 people evacuated.

In Tauranga, the transition to recovery began on 20 May, while an emergency declaration was left in place in Matata until 30 May. Local recovery managers were appointed soon after the transition by both Councils. In Matata, a Recovery Facilitator was appointed soon after recovery began.

In Tauranga, the recovery priorities centred on identifying the cause of landslips/drainage issues, providing clarity on the status of properties and future rehabilitation potential, and supporting individuals and communities through the building restoration/retirement process. Recovery work was mostly completed within nine months of the event, with 40 properties retired and a four-year initial Council drainage infrastructure upgrade project.

In Matata, recovery priorities focussed on identifying the cause of the debris flow, developing potential engineering options for regeneration in the absence of other feasible options, and ongoing welfare support for the community. Physical and social rebuilding was still taking place six years after the event. In December 2012, Whakatane District Council agreed that no realistic engineering option could be found for the Awatarariki Stream, and that planning and regulatory options should be developed to identify hazard zones to manage future risks.

Gisborne earthquake

This report draws primarily on the 2007 earthquake event, but also recognises the considerable recovery experience built up within Gisborne District from previous flood events, including the Ngatapa flood in 1985, Cyclone Bola in 1988, and the October 2005 floods.

A magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck Gisborne at 8.55pm on 20 December 2007. The earthquake caused extensive damage to buildings in the CBD, widespread minor damage to residential properties and some minor interruption to essential utilities. An emergency declaration was made in the early hours of 21 December, and lifted the following day.

Earthquake damage to HB Williams Memorial Library. Photo courtesy Gisborne District Council.

A local recovery manager was appointed following lifting of the declaration. For welfare and community support, the recovery role was largely complete in 2-3 months, while building restoration and strengthening is still an ongoing work programme.

Due to the nature of damage, initial recovery priorities focussed on the identification, stabilisation and repair of commercial buildings in the central business district, and support for displaced people. Short/medium term priorities were ongoing support for the community in managing residential damage claims and repairs, and ongoing building assessment and strengthening. More than 6,000 insurance claims were made totalling more than $50 million for residential and commercial damage to content, interior damage and chimneys.

Nelson-Tasman floods/landslides

A significant rainfall event occurred from 13-15 December 2011 in the Nelson-Tasman region, causing surface flooding and multiple landslides centred west of Takaka in Golden Bay and east of Cable Bay in Nelson, and was compounded by further rainfall in late December. 170 houses were evacuated across the region, and slope failures led to dozens of road closures and infrastructure damage.

Recovery began with the appointment of a Group Recovery Manager (Nelson City Council) on 16 December, a Local Recovery Manager (Tasman District Council, Golden Bay) and a recovery office was set up and operational by 23 December. Transition to recovery was complete by 4 January 2012, following the lifting of the declaration on 28 December, and full-staffing of the recovery office.

Recovery priorities initially focussed on welfare for displaced people, loss of earnings and psychosocial support and restoration of lifelines utilities – particularly roads. Short-medium term issues were centred on infrastructure recovery, with extensive work required, and this was managed by both Councils separately.

For both Councils, the bulk of the recovery support was completed within six months, with ongoing support provided for up to a year following the event. As of November 2015, both Councils are still actively addressing outstanding infrastructure damage issues, and Nelson City Council are working on property remediation issues with remaining affected residents.

Seddon earthquakes

The Seddon earthquakes[4] occurred on 21 July and 16 August 2013, and measured 6.5 and 6.6 respectively.

The 16 August event occurred at 2.30pm, and was centred around 10km south-east of Seddon, at a depth of 8km. The earthquake caused significant land damage in the local area, with landslips blocking roads, including State Highway 1 between Blenheim and Christchurch. Around 90% of the buildings in Seddon were damaged in some way, with 15 being designated uninhabitable, and damage to the Haldon dam above the town resulted in temporary evacuations.

The transition to recovery began on 17 August with the appointment of a recovery manager and alternate. By 19 August, recovery liaison had been established at the Awatere Community Centre, with community trust staff and volunteers staffing the facility, and liaising with recovery managers based in Blenheim.

Initial recovery priorities focussed on building damage assessment, and needs assessment for both Seddon residents and rural residents in the Awatere Valley. Short-term priorities focussed on providing liaison with local residents for seeking required support, whether psychosocial, insurance claims, or financial support. Priorities also included ongoing coordination of needs assessment, and support for coordinating repairs.

The majority of recovery support was provided within 3-4 months, but liaison with vulnerable people and follow-up to building repairs continues into 2015.

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[4] The July earthquake is also referred to as the 'Cook Strait' or 'Wellington' earthquake, while the August earthquake is also referred to as the 'Lake Grassmere' earthquake.

Impacts and issues during recovery

Event type and impacts on communities

Across the five regions, feedback confirmed that impacts to communities and the approach to recovery is largely governed by the type of event, the size and scale of damage and the demographics of the communities impacted. Therefore, recovery must be customised to the specific local circumstances of the event.

The flood/landslide events in Nelson-Tasman and Northland (2014) produced widespread damage to road infrastructure, and affected communities across a large geographical area. By contrast, the Bay of Plenty flood/landslide events primarily impacted Matata and the suburb of Otumoetai in Tauranga. Damage from the Seddon earthquake was focussed on residential properties in Seddon and in the Awatere Valley, while the effects of the Gisborne earthquake were primary on commercial buildings in the central business district.

Differences in demographics can play a major part in determining how recovery should be undertaken, as illustrated by the Bay of Plenty flood/landslide events in 2005:
- In Matata:
  - Damage/ongoing hazards originated from multiple sources above the town
  - The community at risk is predominantly Maori[5], with land ownership and occupation going back generations
  - 80% of properties damaged were uninsured
- In Tauranga (Otumoetai):
  - Damage and ongoing hazards are related primarily to individual property drainage characteristics
  - More than 90% of the community identify as of European descent[6]
  - 95% of properties damaged were insured.

While every event is different, some issues are common to communities regardless of the event. Feedback indicates that the most common issues within communities are:
- Grief and psychosocial impacts on people over time is the biggest and most challenging issue, as it affects individuals to varying degrees, and changes as time progresses. The effects can be hidden, with vulnerable people not seeking assistance, and feedback suggests that this is common with elderly people and in rural communities
- Restoration of road transport links is the key recovery priority[7], then basic utility services and then building/land restoration or retirement
- Economic impacts, due primarily to loss of transport links and production losses, business closures, loss of tourism and public concern about potential loss of property values
- The need for communication of information about the event, what is being done, who to contact for help and the options available to recover from the event

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[5] Around 56% of people identified as Maori in the 2006 census, Statistics New Zealand.
[6] According to the 2013 census, Statistics New Zealand.
[7] Power is normally restored during the response phase.

- Community desire for face-to face contact with TA Councillors and staff
- The dichotomy of dealing with both affected and unaffected people in communities.

Impacts and issues for Councils

Interview feedback indicates that depending upon the type, scale and damage of the event, recovery processes can have significant effects upon Councils. The primary impacts and issues are outlined below.

Impacts

Council staff and business as usual functions

Significant impacts to Council staff and business as usual functions were by far the most commonly reported. Interview feedback highlighted the following impacts on staff:

- Large increase in demand on staff time at all levels within Councils. The impact upon staff was described as 'massive' in Nelson City, a 'game-changer' in Tasman District and as 'all-consuming' for Far North District Council in the 2014 event. Feedback indicates that outside key recovery leadership roles, staff time is especially impacted within building/infrastructure and customer service units
- Psychological impacts, with some staff not coping well with a lack of stand-down time, long hours and work pressures, while others perform exceptionally but are unable to stop
- Dealing with the public becomes more challenging, and criticism from an at-times hyper-critical public and political representatives leads to staff becoming downhearted. Staff burnout became apparent six months after the Seddon earthquake for example
- Increased management requirements to help staff cope, and ensure their welfare
- Personal circumstances in relation to the event, as some staff suffer personal loss from the event
- A drop off in the momentum and enthusiasm of staff following the response phase
- Timing of events and lack of staff availability, such as the Nelson-Tasman and Gisborne events, both of which occurred around Christmas.

Feedback indicates that recovery may render business as usual temporarily impossible due to redeployment of staff to recovery work, and this was reported in the Nelson-Tasman, Seddon, Gisborne, Far North and Bay of Plenty events. Recovery may occur during times of heavy demand for services, and can compound the impacts of previous events, such as previous flood damage to road infrastructure in the Far North District.

Financial and infrastructure impacts

Feedback shows that for some events like Matata and Tauranga, recovery means huge financial pressure on Council, and may require Council commitments to significant additional expenditure via LTP amendments. Capital requirements for road infrastructure are high where widespread effects occur, such as in Nelson-Tasman and the Far North. In other events infrastructure impacts can be less widespread, such as damage to water reservoirs in the Gisborne event, and damage to Council buildings in Seddon.

Issues

The main issues reported as being common to Councils as a result of recovery are:

- A lack of preparation for recovery, including:
  - Absence of formal recovery planning or structures, or loose arrangements only
  - Limited organisational awareness of recovery roles and responsibilities and their importance, including the role of recovery managers and welfare managers
  - Late connection of recovery to response
  - Lack of training for key recovery roles
  - Lack of organisational understanding of basic recovery concepts, and a view that Council involvement in response is more 'legitimate'
  - In some Councils, a lack of organisational experience in dealing with recovery and lack of appreciation of the types and complexity of issues that may arise and level of coordination with stakeholders that will be required
- Management of recovery information including collection, coordination of needs assessment, storage, management, and the ability to share
- Public information management challenges such as:
  - Giving an holistic perspective of the event impacts and the possible time and resources required for recovery
  - Managing the 'one truth'
  - Monitoring social media
  - Identifying and managing rumours
  - Managing the demands of media
  - Providing the facts to counter public perceptions that 'things are moving too slowly'.

Other issues noted that were common to more than one Council were:

- Lack of organisational support for CDEM as a Council function, and corresponding challenges with resourcing, training and preparation (previous Far North and Whakatane Councils)[8]
- A lack of regional representation of national agencies (Marlborough and Far North)
- Lack of welfare preparation (Tauranga) and timing of needs assessment (Whangarei)
- Lack of Rural Support Trust capacity for needs assessment (Marlborough) and lack of clarity of role in CDEM (Gisborne, 2005 floods)
- Middle management lack of understanding and support for recovery staff and push to get back to business as usual (two Councils)
- Frustration at interaction with Government on recovery support, including lack of a single point of contact, and with EQC on privacy requirements and lack of information sharing (Gisborne)
- A limited range of recovery options for some events such as Matata, and level of TA debt availability.

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[8] It is noted that substantial improvements to regional/local CDEM have subsequently been made.

Critical success factors for recovery

The following factors are universally identified as critical during recovery by multiple interview participants across all the regions.

Appoint the right people as local recovery managers

The role is pivotal and requires advanced leadership skills, due to the wide range of stakeholder liaison and management required. Local recovery managers are most commonly appointed from Council senior executive leadership teams, but may also be a well-known local person with a high degree of mana within Council and communities.

Recovery managers should:
- Be both empathetic and realistic
- Be consistent in their approach to dealing with people
- Be strong and assertive, and be comfortable saying 'no' when required
- Actively communicate with Councils, recovery team members, the Welfare Coordination Group and other agencies, and ensure ongoing communications with communities
- Not be afraid to have straight, honest conversations, especially with senior executives and political representatives, including central Government Ministers and the affected community
- Manage and navigate strong personalities
- Be appointed at a senior level that allows recovery matters to be managed with an adequate level of resourcing and urgency
- Get on the ground, and understand what the issues are.

Tasman District Council Recovery Manager Adrian Humphries discusses recovery issues with Ligar Bay residents. Photo courtesy Tasman District Council.

A 'tag-team' approach for recovery managers (simultaneous use of recovery manager and alternates) can be very effective, and was used in the Tauranga and Marlborough events. It is essential that recovery managers are 'released from their day jobs' to focus on recovery, and that their Council roles are effectively backfilled.

Ensure governance and management support

The following factors in Councils at political and senior executive levels will greatly enhance recovery effectiveness:

- Highly engaged Mayors who get out on the ground, are the public face and voice of the event, and who are the primary political link between Council and communities
- Mayors who play an overseer role rather than a controller/manager role in events – understanding issues first, and providing linkages and liaison with Government
- Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Community Boards and members during recovery
- Full support of Council CEOs and senior executives for local recovery managers.

Examples of the positive impacts of governance and management that support the above factors are the Nelson-Tasman, Marlborough, Gisborne and Bay of Plenty events. There is also evidence that a lack of Council/senior executive support for CDEM generally and poor relationships between political and senior executive levels in Councils impedes recovery management. Recovery managers should regularly communicate with Council leadership and staff, and engage the whole organisation in recovery.

Build relationships, trust and communication with recovery agencies[9]

Feedback unanimously identifies relationships, trust and communication with recovery agencies as critical both prior to and during recovery processes.

Feedback states that prior to events, recovery managers and Council staff with recovery leadership/management roles should build relationships with:

- Welfare Coordination Group members – particularly the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), emergency services, power companies, media, contractors, non-government organisations and the Regional Council
- Local political representatives, Council CEO and senior executives, building, consents and transport staff
- Local economic development agencies, EQC and insurers
- Local communities.

Feedback indicates that the better the relationships prior, the more effective the recovery and the less need for formal recovery structures[10]. Efforts should be made to broaden and strengthen relationships over time.

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[9] Including Council internal relationships with various staff and units that play a role in recovery.
[10] Noting that formal structures will likely be required for large events.

Feedback indicates that during recovery:

- Ongoing communication with agencies and Council staff is important to maintain relationships
- Use of task groups helps build relationships and coordination – especially in the welfare and transport areas
- Use of conference calls as a key tool for coordinating agencies involved in recovery is favoured, not only to maintain relationships and coordination, but to keep political representatives informed of progress. Agency coordination via meetings should be regular, and confirm the status of recovery, what is being done by whom, where the gaps are and how to fill the gaps.

Ensure the public information management function is well resourced and managed

Feedback from all five regions strongly reinforces the success and importance of public information management (PIM), and its role in informing and engaging communities in recovery. The following critical success factors are identified:

- Strategic PIM leadership and team support
- Councils cannot over-communicate during recovery, should not underestimate the amount of work required, and should quickly set up media channels and 'flood' the media with information. There is also a need to manage the drop-off in public awareness over time
- PIM messaging during events should:
  - Be simple and practical, such as who to contact for services or where to dump rubbish, and state the obvious
  - Be regular and consistent, via a combination of status sheets, newsletters, billboards, handouts, emails, and website updates
  - Be linked to welfare and targeted to those most vulnerable
  - Be down-to-earth, especially for rural communities
  - Keep issues in front of the community and give an holistic view
  - Project that Council is engaged, cares about communities, will support communities and is in control
  - Be honest and give the 'hard' facts
  - Quickly manage misinformation
- Use social media to push messaging and monitor/receive feedback from communities. Don't underestimate the ability of disaffected individuals to derail recovery processes via the media, and actively manage the 'one truth'
- Liaise with and keep local media in the loop, and use media accreditation for larger events if required
- The PIM role in managing VIP visits and leveraging support is very important
- Helping people understand what happened during the event, and why.

It is acknowledged that considerable work has been undertaken nationally by public information managers since 2005 to improve PIM knowledge and practices.[11]

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[11] Refer to Public Information Management Director's Guideline for Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups [DGL14/13].

Get communities involved in recovery

Feedback from all regions recognises the importance of community involvement during recovery. The following points are noted:

- Communities want to help and need to feel listened to
- Community-led recovery is preferable, since it allows people to move on better
- Look for local champions and influencers, use their knowledge and networks, and seek a collaborative approach
- Build relationships and trust by seeking/facilitating Government support
- Keep people genuinely engaged as much as possible over time, recognising that recovery issues drop off the radar quickly
- Use community meetings as a key engagement tool:
    - Start early
    - Facilitate with honesty, empathy and realism
    - Get other agencies to attend in support, such as EQC, MSD, and technical specialists such as GNS Science
    - Cover what has happened, what Council is doing, and where to from here
    - Allow people to vent first
    - Commit to meetings and follow up as required.

Seasonal workers and volunteers help the Seddon shops to re-open (left) and remove ceiling tiles from the Seddon gym (right). Photos courtesy Marie Flowerday.

Ensure welfare needs are assessed

Understanding the welfare needs of people ensures that recovery planning is appropriately prioritised and targeted. Feedback indicates the need to:

- Be clear on why information is being collected
- Be proactive – find out what is needed quickly, and follow up as needed over time
- Standardise the process and forms for information collection, and ensure collection is carried out properly. Simple forms are preferable
- Ensure needs assessment is coordinated by regular communication with agencies and teams
- Ensure that the needs of rural people are assessed if required, and coordinate with Rural Support Trusts

- Look for 'hidden' needs over time – those vulnerable people who may need support but not seek it
- Base prioritisation of recovery support on the hierarchy of needs.

Collect and manage information effectively

Sound information collection and management systems and processes are required in order to understand what is required to manage recovery. The most important factors are:

- Using response information and amending/enhancing as required
- Collecting high quality information to enable decision-making
- Collecting task-specific detailed information on priority areas - normally welfare needs and building/infrastructure damage
- Using existing information systems and processes where possible, and avoiding creation of duplicate systems
- Ensuring that good records are kept, including photographs linked to properties
- Coordination of needs assessment processes, and avoidance of multiple assessments by multiple agencies, which places stress on people
- Ensuring that information is accessible and able to be shared
- Developing privacy protocols for information-sharing in longer term events.

Actively manage and support the recovery team

- Ensure recovery team welfare is monitored and maintained via staff rotation, stand-down time and actively dealing with stress or performance issues
- Identify people who have the right skills and attitude, and use experienced people where possible
- Communicate often via regular catch-ups, and praise and encourage staff
- Get external support and expertise when required
- Ensure recovery management team 'day-jobs' are backfilled.

Other important considerations during recovery

Feedback from participants highlighted three additional considerations that while not considered to be 'critical' to recovery per se, were identified to be important considerations that will facilitate better recovery outcomes.

Set up local community service hubs

The use of local hubs was important for recovery in the Seddon and Matata events. In both events, hubs provided a central meeting place for people, provision of general advice/assistance, and linkages to agencies – especially social services and EQC/insurers. In both cases, hubs used local liaison people to help recovery managers:

- Understand needs and issues arising
- Understand community dynamics, relationships and how the communities were coping
- Coordinate delivery of some welfare goods and services.

Feedback indicates that communities relate best to dealing with local people on-site within their community, and being linked to services via the recovery manager as required. The longer the recovery timeframe, the more important the need for a hub.

Provide simple and practical assistance to communities

Recovery managers from all regions state the importance of finding out what communities really need, and facilitating provision of simple and practical assistance via Council, welfare agencies or community groups. Examples of this include:

- Assistance with consents and providing erosion control plants at cost in Tasman
- Insurance advice and liaison with EQC in Whangarei and Seddon
- Advocacy role for vulnerable people in Seddon, such as coordination of repairs for elderly people
- Coordination of clean-up efforts, such as in Matata
- Facilitation of community gatherings such as open days, kids play events and community barbecues in Seddon, Gisborne[12] and Matata
- Community support groups taking care of weekly chores, such as lawn mowing
- Immediate relief fund grant assistance[13]
- Provision of internet access and photocopiers in Seddon
- Finding and re-homing animals in Matata
- Temporary relaxation of rubbish dumping fees in Seddon, and provision of waste bins in Matata and in the Far North
- Provision of toilets and funding for loss of freezer contents in the Far North.

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[12] During the Cyclone Bola event
[13] All regions

Be creative and flexible

Feedback indicates that recovery may not mean getting things back to how they were prior to the event, as this may be impractical, unaffordable or impossible. Community understanding of issues changes as options for recovery become clear, therefore changes in community mood and preferences must be expected.

Feedback suggests that an empathetic approach and temporary relaxing of some Council bylaws and procedures can facilitate goodwill and a faster recovery – two examples being temporary rates rebates for damaged properties in the Tauranga event, and a rates remission policy for properties unable to be occupied in Matata.

A rates remission policy was implemented following landslide damage in Tauranga in May 2005. Photo courtesy Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management.

Important practical considerations prior to and following recovery

While the critical success factors highlight what is most important during recovery, feedback indicates that there are some practical considerations which will improve recovery management before and after events occur. These practical considerations are identified during the readiness, response and reduction/review phases, and are outlined below.

Readiness

The following practical considerations were identified as important:

Develop relationships and trust with recovery partner agencies

Having strong relationships and trust in place prior to recovery greatly assists recovery outcomes[14]. Understanding and agreeing on roles and responsibilities is often an important first step, and this can be achieved without creating a large 'recovery organisation' within Councils. Feedback indicates that established relationships are particularly important within the welfare sector, due to the range of agencies and complexity of issues involved, and the need to work collaboratively.

Focus on community response planning

Feedback indicates that well-prepared communities that are linked into CDEM networks will cope better with the impacts of emergencies. The benefits of community response planning are two-way:

1. Communities increase their knowledge of hazards and risks, how to prepare for emergencies and self-reliance, who to contact, communications with Councils and in some cases, strengthening of local relationships
2. Councils develop key local contacts and relationships within communities, an understanding of local community networks and dynamics, and an ability to rapidly understand impacts and needs of communities.

Community response planning extends to all community groups including rural fire teams, who are often instrumental to facilitating communications and support for communities.

Develop a recovery plan in advance

- Keep the plan simple and practical – it should provide a simple framework for any event, and not be too detailed
- Develop a recovery checklist or ready-reference guide[15] that provides recovery managers with a simple guide to required actions and key considerations
- Append with templates as required, such as a Recovery Action Plan template, media release templates, draft meeting agendas etc.
- Clarify the local capability and capacity of partner agencies
- Add other relevant information as required, such as contact lists.

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[14] Identified as a critical success factor in the previous section.
[15] Such as developed for Northland CDEM group

Train recovery staff and build internal relationships in advance

- Build a basic understanding of recovery concepts and roles for staff involved in recovery, and also for Council leadership, both senior management and political representatives
- Build relationships with people within Council who will be pivotal during recovery - especially senior management, Councillors, public information managers and welfare managers, but also building, infrastructure, and planning and consents staff
- Identify skills required for specific roles such as recovery managers and welfare managers, and train for these roles
- Ensure capacity is maintained for key roles – recovery manager, task group managers and public information managers at minimum
- Involve controllers in recovery exercises, and participate in response exercises where possible
- Hold regular recovery exercises, or add on to existing exercise programmes.

Understand and clarify financial mechanisms in advance

- Develop an understanding of Government financial mechanisms such as grants, the MCDEM recovery funding criteria and claims process, and what financial assistance can be provided from various Government agencies
- Understand Council mechanisms for asset repairs such as reserves and insurance, and clarify Council financial delegations
- Create a mayoral relief fund in advance and clarify the processes and delegations for fund distribution in advance. Simplify fund processes as much as possible to ensure that fund management time is minimised, and that funds can be distributed as quickly as possible.

Develop a social media audience

- Feedback suggests that getting messages to communities is easier if Council already has an established audience and is aware of existing local user social media interest groups.

Response

Two considerations during response were identified as particularly important:

Activate recovery at the start of the response phase

- Involving at least the recovery manager from the beginning of the event helps to get a head start on understanding of the event and issues, initial planning for recovery, what additional information will be required, and an appreciation for what decisions are being made during response and why they are being made
- Recovery managers should 'walk alongside' response, rather than becoming deeply involved.

Formalise the transition to recovery

- Provide significant overlap between the response and recovery teams – particularly between the Controller and Recovery Manager
- Ensure staff involved in both response and recovery transition between the roles
- Understand and fill the resource gap between phases, as there is a tendency for a big reduction in staff availability following the end of response, and limited understanding in some Councils of the importance of recovery.

Reduction and review

Reduction occurs prior to and after recovery, and there are important links between reduction and recovery:

Link reduction to recovery before and after the event

- Prior to events – build resilience by:
    - Improving understanding of local hazards, risks and vulnerabilities as a part of ongoing Council/CDEM group work programmes
    - Working with lifelines utilities to identify and manage risks such as critical power supplies, and confirm capability and vulnerability of lifelines utilities
    - Encouraging ongoing reduction activities such as maintenance of Council assets (particularly roads) and building strengthening
- Following events:
    - Encourage land use change where possible to reduce future risks
    - Ensure that planning provisions and future development standards are adequate, and are locked in for the future.

Debrief and review after recovery

The importance of debriefing and review of recovery is as important as in response:

- Involve all parties in debriefs, and identify and fix issues
- Ensure knowledge transfer following events
- Set remembrance triggers for follow-up with communities as required.

Lessons learned from recovery events

The main lessons learned from recovery events that were widely reported across all regions and many interview participants are:

Activate and resource recovery management early

- Activate/appoint recovery managers at the start of response, and allocate administrative support time to the role
- Resource the recovery team up quickly with people who have the right skills and experience, and scale back slowly as required
- Don't underestimate the time and effort required to manage recovery – especially in welfare management, customer services/enquiries, public information management, information collection and management, and administration of financial processes, including Government grants and Mayoral Relief Funds
- Secure the best external advice and assistance you can, such as building damage assessment and hazard/risk assessment
- Start recovery planning quickly, look for emerging issues and resource the recovery team accordingly.

Do some simple planning and preparation in advance

- A lack of simple, tangible arrangements for recovery impedes recovery processes
- Understand what recovery is, what roles are required, what agency local capability and capacity is, and 'who will do what' in simple terms. Prepare a simple recovery plan to document this
- Prepare a recovery action plan template in advance, and use to guide recovery actions. A 'typical' recovery action plan will cover the event details, response actions taken, cause, potential options/costs and proposed implementation.

Recovery is the longest and hardest part of CDEM

- TAs must find resources and manage recovery – it is unavoidably a TA responsibility
- Recovery is a long-term process, is not linear, and is more like a series of programmes than a single plan
- TAs should assume that recovery processes will happen, and prepare for them
- The recovery processes will likely have big impacts on staff and business as usual, and these impacts should not be underestimated. Where possible, use existing staff for recovery, and backfill business as usual roles.

Don't underestimate the importance of information management

- Information management requirements are often large – even for small events
- Prepare arrangements and systems in advance to collect, manage and distribute information
- Ensure information collection is coordinated between agencies, field teams and Council customer services teams
- Don't underestimate the value of rapid information provision to decision-makers, including financial information, and ensure that the recovery manager has access to all information
- Take more care around information quality, and provide dedicated data entry and information management roles.

Learn from previous events

- Previous events provide invaluable experience, and are a good platform for preparing for future events
- Previous events increase organisational understanding of the requirements during recovery and increase community awareness of CDEM and the need to prepare in advance. It is important to build on this awareness following recovery
- Include all agencies in reviews/debriefs
- Provide opportunities for recovery staff to gain experience by assisting in events outside the region.

Recovery experience from the 2007, 2011 and 2012 floods helped to shape the recovery to the 2014 Northland floods. Photo courtesy Far North District Council.

Train and exercise for recovery

- Ensure that recovery training and exercising is undertaken for key leadership roles, including the Recovery Manager, Welfare Manager and Public Information Manager at a minimum
- Ensure redundancy for key recovery leadership roles
- Provide CDEM fundamentals training for all staff with recovery roles.

Prepare for welfare delivery in recovery

- Ensure that essential planning and structures are in place
- Resource welfare properly from the start, and don't downsize too quickly
- Ensure a smooth transition from response, and look for emerging needs
- Operate under a collective 'CDEM welfare' banner
- Coordinate service provision – especially psychosocial support.

Other lessons commonly reported include:
- Seek to understand the recovery roles of Government agencies, support that may be provided during recovery and engage with Government agencies in advance
- Engage the whole organisation in recovery (particularly senior executives) to ensure that an appropriate level of resources are applied to recovery, and that staff are adequately supported
- Ensure rural communities are engaged during recovery via liaison between the Recovery Manager and Rural Support Trusts, coordination of rural recovery and face-to-face contact with rural communities
- Utilise active volunteer groups, and don't underestimate the value of local Iwi/Hapu groups, the level of community trust for rural volunteer fire forces, and the connectivity of local community groups
- Maintain public information management efforts to ensure that awareness of the importance of recovery is maintained, rumours are dealt with head on, and opportunities for Government awareness and involvement are maximised
- Provide adequate resources for CDEM in Councils
- Don't 'over-structure' recovery – the structure should be as simple as the event requires
- Use recovery as an opportunity to build relationships and trust with communities.

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Appendix 1: Interview participants

Northland

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Malcom Perry	Whangarei District Council	Recovery Manager
Susan Gibson	Whangarei District Council	Local Welfare Manager
Rhonda Padgett	Whangarei District Council	Local Welfare Manager
Owen Thomas	Whangarei District Council	Mayoral Relief Fund Manager
Graeme Macdonald	Northland Regional Council/ Northland CDEM Group	Group Controller
Claire Nyberg	Northland Regional Council/ Northland CDEM Group	Group Welfare Manager
Victoria Randall	Northland CDEM Group/ Whangarei District Council	Civil Defence Emergency Management Officer
Bill Hutchinson	Far North District Council	Emergency Management Officer
Alistair Wells	Consultant	Local Controller
Janice Smith	Far North District Council	Recovery Manager
Colin Dale	Far North District Council	Chief Executive Officer
John Carter	Far North District Council	Mayor
Jacqui Robson	Far North District Council	General Manager Infrastructure and Asset Management

Bay of Plenty

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Rob Wickman	Tauranga City Council	Building Services Manager
Stuart Crosby	Tauranga City Council	Mayor
Terry Wynyard	Tauranga City Council	Recovery Manager
Margaret Bachelor	Tauranga City Council	Customer Services Manager/ Welfare Manager
Elizabeth Hughes	Tauranga City Council	Communications Manager
Steve McDowall	Consultant	Recovery Facilitator
Diane Turner	Whakatane District Council	Director Environment and Policy/ Recovery Manager
Barbara Dempsey	Whakatane District Council	Recovery Projects Manager

Gisborne

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Jon Davies	Gisborne District Council	CDEM Group Controller
Kevin Strongman	Gisborne District Council	Environment & Policy Group Manager
John Clarke	Gisborne District Council	Recovery Manager
Sheridan Gundry	Consultant	Public Information Manager
Richard Steele	Gisborne District Council	Manager Emergency Management
John Moroney	East Coast Rural Support Trust	Trustee

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Ian Petty	Gisborne District Council	Building Services Manager
Penny Shaw	Gisborne District Council	Group Welfare Manager
Lynne Campbell	Work and Income	Deputy Group Welfare Manager
Neville West	Gisborne District Council	Acting Utilities and Asset Manager

Nelson-Tasman

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Roger Ball	Nelson-Tasman CDEM Group	Manager Emergency Management
Joe Kennedy	Nelson-Tasman CDEM Group	Emergency Management Officer
Adrian Humphries	Tasman District Council	Recovery Manager
Peter Thomson	Tasman District Council	Engineering Services Manager
Bill Findlater	Nelson Regional Economic Development Agency	Chief Executive
Alec Louverdis	Nelson City Council	Infrastructure Group Manager
Shane Davies	Nelson City Council	Manager Roading and Solid Waste
Joshua Large	Nelson City Council	Senior Engineering Officer
Richard Kempthorne	Tasman District Council	Mayor
Ronnie Gibson	Ministry of Social Development	Group Welfare Manager
Chris Choat	Tasman District Council	Public Information Manager
Jim Frater	Tasman District Council	CDEM Group Controller

Marlborough

Name	Organisation	Recovery role at time of event
Nick Raynor	Seddon School	Acting Principal
Tania Pringle	Seddon School	Principal
Alistair Sowman	Marlborough District Council	Mayor
Lachlin Marshall	Salvation Army	Corps Officer
Ian Blair	Top-of-the-South Rural Support Trust	Coordinator
Robin Mortimer	Work and Income	Service Centre Manager
Dean Heiford	Marlborough District Council	Recovery Manager
Lyne Reeves	Marlborough District Council	Recovery Manager (2IC)
Mark Wheeler	Marlborough District Council	Assets and Services Manager
Stephen Rooney	Marlborough District Council	Operations and Maintenance Engineer
John Foley	Marlborough District Council	Emergency Services Manager
Gary Spence	Marlborough District Council	Emergency Services Officer
Lil Broadhurst	Awatere Community Trust	Community Hub Coordinator
Marie Flowerday	Awatere Community Trust	Community Hub Coordinator
Rosie Bartlett	Marlborough District Council	Public Information Manager
Karen Fisher	Marlborough District Council	Public Information Manager