



Te Rākau
Whakamarumarū

**Ministry of Civil Defence
& Emergency Management**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Exercise to Test Earthquake Response Arrangements

A major exercise to be held in Christchurch in September will test how national and international agencies will work together in a significant earthquake in a major urban area in the Pacific region.

The exercise, coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, will involve teams from the Pacific UNDAC programme, the National Crisis Management Centre at the Beehive, as well as national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Taskforces and response teams from throughout New Zealand. Canterbury's Civil Defence Emergency Management and 111 agencies will also take part, along with an Australian USAR contingent.

Exercise director Lynda Angus said the exercise is part of a week long series of activities to be held over the week 13 to 18 September starting in Wellington and ending with a 2 day exercise in Christchurch. "This integrated exercise provides a significant opportunity for New Zealand agencies to work together with our partners in the Pacific region. Systems of different agencies that need to be able to work together effectively in a major emergency are tested and refined through this type of exercise."

The exercise provides a realistic scenario in which emergency managers and responders at international, national, regional and local level will be brought together. This is intended to enhance New Zealand's ability to respond to a major earthquake.

The exercise will be run from the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Group's Emergency Operations Centre at Environment Canterbury in Christchurch. Aspects of the

exercise will be run throughout Canterbury, including testing border control arrangements at Christchurch Airport. United Nations teams will be setting up reception centres to simulate arrangements to control incoming assistance and aid from outside New Zealand. The United Nations Disaster & Co-ordination (UNDAC) programme is a UN coordinated international activity providing countries with disaster assistance when they are overwhelmed. In the Pacific region, 26 individuals from most Pacific countries, including New Zealand and Australia are trained to deploy instantly anywhere in the world. NZ would use UNDAC to coordinate international assistance into the country.

The exercise also tests New Zealand's USAR Task Forces, which will be concentrated at sites around Christchurch where they will use electronic search cameras, trained search dogs and electronic listening devices to detect victims buried in earthquake rubble. They will be supported by local response teams, who will concentrate on surface and lightly-trapped casualties.

Environment Canterbury Civil Defence Manager John Fisher welcomed the opportunity for the region to exercise its Civil Defence function.

"Given the risk of a major earthquake here it is important that Civil Defence procedures are well-tested. It also provides the impetus for individual residents to think about how they would be affected. While all of the agencies involved will be as prepared as possible for a big event, experience has shown that residents do need to be able to look after themselves for at least the first three days. This means at the very least you always to have three days food available and some emergency drinking water stored."

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