

Organisational Debriefing

INFORMATION FOR THE CDEM SECTOR [IS6/05]



Te Rākau Whakamarumaru

Ministry of Civil Defence
& Emergency Management



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Whakamarumaru

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& Emergency Management

Organisational Debriefing Information for the CDEM Sector [IS6/06]

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Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management
PO Box 5010
Wellington
New Zealand
Tel: +64 4 473 7363
Fax: +64 4 473 7369
Email: emergency.management@dia.govt.nz
Website: www.civildefence.govt.nz



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Foreword

Following the response to and recovery from a number of flood events during 2004 and 2005, the importance of undertaking organisational debriefing following an emergency was reinforced. CDEM Groups, emergency services, government agencies and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were eager to identify lessons from their experience of these floods and to ensure these lessons could be embedded within planning arrangements in anticipation of future emergencies.

Although there are a number of ways of facilitating an organisational debrief including different methodologies, this guideline has been developed to provide a framework for organisational debriefing that can be used by CDEM stakeholders. Examples of three other debriefing models are also reproduced in this document with the kind permission of the New Zealand Police Service, New Zealand Fire Service and Rural Fire Authorities.

I wish to acknowledge the positive involvement and levels of commitment that the Ministry has encountered in producing this guideline and look forward to continuing to work with CDEM stakeholders as together we improve New Zealand's resilience to emergencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Norton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Norton

Director: Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management

Introduction

This guideline has been developed to provide a framework for organisational debriefing that can be used by CDEM stakeholders. The guide outlines a practical framework that can be applied in a variety of settings by either a single agency or by groups of agencies.

Recognising that organisational debriefing may be a new concept to some readers, examples of three other debriefing models are also reproduced in this document with the kind permission of the New Zealand Police Service, New Zealand Fire Service and Rural Fire Authorities.

This guideline begins with **Part 1 – Pre-event Debriefing Considerations**, which provides the aim of organisational debriefing and key considerations regarding official information and privacy when undertaking debriefing.

Part 2 - Post-event Organisational Debriefing Process provides detail of post-event activities including the preparation of reports, undertaking organisational debriefs and reviewing plans and arrangements. This section provides a step-by-step guide to arranging and facilitating an organisational debrief. Part 2 also links to additional resources and templates provided in the annexes.

Part 3 - Other Organisational Debriefing Models, in the final part of this document, organisational debriefing models used by the New Zealand Police Service, New Zealand Fire Service and Rural Fire Authorities are reproduced.

Part 1: Pre-event Organisational Debriefing Considerations

1.1 The aim

The aim of organisational debriefing is for staff to communicate their experiences of an emergency (eg response, transition and/or recovery), an exercise or other activity so that lessons can be identified. Arrangements (plans, training etc) can then be modified to reflect lessons identified and best practice and therefore improve the organisation's ability to respond in future emergencies.

It is important during pre-event planning to establish a process for learning from an emergency. This should involve identifying a process for organisational debriefing and reviewing plans and arrangements post-event.

It is vital that all staff involved, regardless of seniority, understand that an organisational debrief is about improving performance and not about assigning blame. All staff who contributed to the activity being debriefed should be able to contribute to the debriefing process. These expectations should be communicated with all stakeholders pre-event.

Although staff support mechanisms are not addressed in this document it is important for organisations to plan to provide a range of support for staff involved in responding to emergencies. Box 1 provides a brief overview of support mechanisms that could be offered to staff.

Box 1: Support mechanisms for staff

Staff should be offered a range of support services following an emergency. These support services should be made available for those who wish to use them on a confidential basis. Consideration should be given to the individual in the context of the family / household as well as the workplace. Support mechanisms that may be offered include:

- support from fellow staff members (peer support);
- support from managers;
- access to support via helplines;
- access to counselling;
- encouragement of a no-blame culture;
- psychological intervention including large group therapy, defusing and individual crisis intervention; and
- access to occupational health services for the follow-up and aftercare of staff and their families.

1.2 Official information and privacy

Organisations conducting debriefings that are subject to the Official Information Act or the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act must be familiar with:

- the **principle of availability** under those Acts, and
- the **exceptions to disclosure**,

The organisation should advise participants unfamiliar with these matters of the effects of them. Participants should be made aware that **exceptions to disclosure** are **limited** and **specific** and that views they express **may** be sought under an official information request. Reasons **not** to disclose may include:

- to protect the privacy of natural persons,
- to protect information supplied under an obligation of confidentiality where making the information available would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should be supplied, and
- to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or to members of an organisation or department, etc.

Section 2.3.6 also provides guidance on the distribution of debrief material, however it is important to note that decisions on distribution must be made by the organisation before the debrief is undertaken.

Where information identifies individuals, participants should be aware that the Privacy Principles under the Privacy Act apply and should be aware of their effect.

1.3 Key terms

For the purposes of this document, three key terms are defined in Part 1 to ensure readers understand the context in which these terms are used:

Organisational Debriefing: Organisational Debriefing is a process in which staff within or across organisations communicate their experiences of how their organisational operated during an emergency (eg response, transition and/or recovery), an exercise or other activity so that lessons can be identified.

Structured Debriefing: Structured Debriefing is a flexible model for learning through reflection by sharing experiences, gathering information and developing ideas for the future.

Review: A Review analyses the plans and arrangements in place at the time of the event. It compares them against what was done and how things did or did not work.

Pre-event Checklist

✓	CDEM sector stakeholders plan to:
	ascertain the level of disclosure or confidentiality of debriefing material required by their organisation before undertaking organisational debriefing.
	hold appropriate and timely organisational debriefs during and following any event.
	hold appropriate and timely reviews following any event.

Part 2: Post-event Debriefing Processes

Post-event activity will include preparing reports, undertaking organisational debriefs, reviewing plans and arrangements and documenting and implementing lessons.

As well as providing organisational debriefing opportunities for the agencies involved, consider the community's need for debriefing. This may take the form of public meetings, focus groups or other community meetings to discuss what lessons community members have identified from an event. Feedback from community meetings should be factored into organisational debriefs. Such a process may also highlight areas of further work to be done to resolve underlying recovery issues.

2.1 Reporting

The purpose of reporting is to maintain accountability and transparency, to keep the wider community informed, to gain support and assistance and to record an account of response/recovery efforts, including lessons identified. For details on post-event reporting, see Part 6 of *Recovery Management: Director's Guideline for Recovery Management* [DGL4/05].

2.2 Organisational debriefing

Post-event learning is an essential aspect of both the planning process and successful recovery¹. Events occur on an infrequent basis and it is 'important to document any lessons identified from managing incidents and to change current procedures and plans and provide reasons for any changes, so that they can be referred to in future incidents, which may not be managed by the same team. Many of the lessons identified in managing an incident have value for others working in the field'².

2.2.1 Ground rules when undertaking organisational debriefing

It is vital that debriefing is carried out in a manner conducive to promoting organisational learning and encouraging a no-blame culture. Arney³ (2000) suggests using ground rules when debriefing. Debriefing should:

- be conducted openly and honestly
- pursue personal, group or organisational understanding and learning
- be consistent with professional responsibilities
- respect the rights of individuals
- value equally all those concerned.

2.2.2 Types of organisational debriefing

Three types of organisational debriefing can be used to promote post-event learning. They can be held at different times for example at the end of each shift, following the end of the response, after the transition from response to recovery, throughout the recovery activity (such as at three-monthly intervals) and following the exit strategy.

¹ Section 2.2 adapted from Norman, (2003) *Organisational Debriefing* (Working Paper) Coventry Centre for Disaster Management, England

² Eagles, E, Goodfellow, F, Welsh, F, Murray, V, (2003) *Environmental and Public Health*, HMSO, London

³ Arney, (2000) *Structured Debriefing* (Course Notes)

1 The hot (or immediate post-event) debrief

Key features

- Held **immediately after the incident response or shift is completed**.
- Allows a rapid 'off-load' of a variety of issues and concerns.
- Should address key health and safety issues.
- Provides an opportunity to thank staff and provide positive feedback.
- May be facilitated by a number of people from within the organisation.
- A number of hot debriefs may be held within an organisation simultaneously following an incident. Each department/unit may wish to hold their own hot debrief to identify key issues within their locality.

2 The internal organisational debrief

Key features

- Should be **held within four weeks of the incident**. If the incident continues to be managed over the medium to long-term it may be necessary to hold regular internal organisational debriefs at key milestones.
- Should involve the same key players within the organisation that were involved in the response to the incident.
- Should address organisational issues not personal or psychological issues.
- Should look for both strengths and weaknesses as well as ideas for future learning.
- Provides an opportunity to thank staff and provide positive feedback.
- May be facilitated by a range of people within the organisation.

3 The multi-agency debrief

Key features

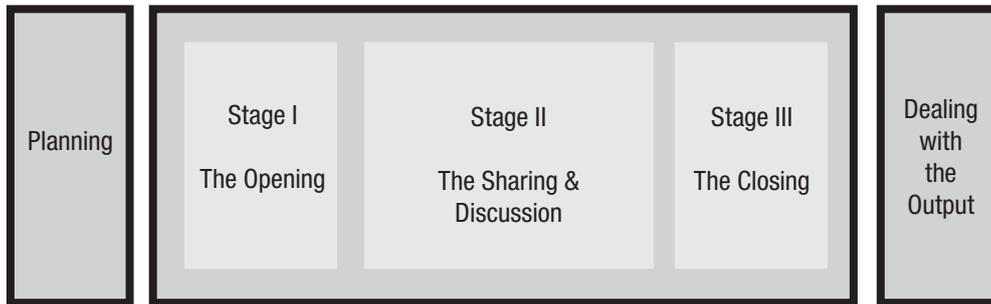
- Should be held **within six weeks of the incident**. If the incident continues to be managed over the medium to long-term it may be necessary to hold regular multi-agency debriefs at key milestones.
- Should focus on the effectiveness of inter-agency coordination.
- Should address multi-agency organisational issues not personal or psychological issues.
- Should look for both strengths and weaknesses as well as ideas for future learning.
- Provides an opportunity to thank staff and provide positive feedback.
- May be facilitated by a range of organisations such as Police, Local Authority or Fire Service.
- May form part of tiered debriefing process, eg local authorities in a region affected by an emergency may undertake an internal debrief initially; followed by local authorities in the region contributing to a multi-agency CDEM Group debrief; followed by CDEM Group representatives contributing to a debrief of government agencies at national level or a debrief between affected CDEM Groups and agencies involved in the National Crisis Management Centre.

2.3 Process of organisational debriefing

A number of methods are already used within the CDEM sector for undertaking organisational debriefs⁴ (see **Part 3**). One method used effectively by a number of organisations following the February 2004 Flood and the Eastern Bay of Plenty flood in July 2004, as well as internationally is a method for Structured Debriefing developed by John Arney in 1998. *Structured Debriefing* is flexible model for learning through reflection by sharing experiences, gathering information and developing ideas for the future. The process is provided in this section for those wishing to develop a method for organisational debriefing.

⁴ Section 2.3 adapted from Arney (2000) *Structured Debriefing* (Course Notes)

Figure 1: Process for Debriefing



2.3.1 Planning your organisational debrief

- Four roles exist within structured debriefing. One person can lead all four or the tasks can be broken down into separate roles.
 - Initiator – the person who requests and is ultimately accountable for the debriefing process.
 - Planner – the person who plans the debrief based on key areas and questions.
 - Leader – acts as facilitator for the debrief.
 - Participants – attend and participate in the debrief.
- Before arranging an organisational debrief consider the key areas and questions outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Key areas & questions

<i>Key Areas</i>	<i>Questions</i>
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose (aim) of the debrief? • What event is being reviewed? • What period of time is to be covered?
Authority Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional role does the initiator (the person who requested a debrief) wish to adopt? • Will anyone in a position of authority be taking part or wish to be present? • Confirm the level of disclosure or confidentiality of debriefing material required by the organisation.
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the participants aware of the debrief? • Are they all willing to take part? • What experience have they of debriefing? • Consider questions they may ask.
Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people were involved in the event? • How many people are keen to take part in the debrief?
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the minimum and maximum time available for the debrief? • When does the debrief have to be completed? • Is some sort of social gathering (if appropriate) planned at the end of the debrief eg morning tea, BBQ etc?
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the best place in the circumstances?
Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will lead the debrief? • What experience does the leader (person facilitating) have of debriefing?
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What maps, charts, photos, reports etc should the facilitator and/or participants have access to both before and during the debrief?

- Once these key areas and questions have been considered, a debriefing plan (see **Annex A**) can be compiled. The time required for the debrief will depend on the number of participants attending.
- A list of key considerations and hints for best practice when debriefing is provided in **Annex B**.

2.3.2 Pre-debrief

- (a) Dissemination of information
- Send invitations to all those involved
 - Confirm attendees and then set the timeframes for the session based on the number of people attending eg does the session need to be an hour or three hours?
 - Confirm venue, set-up and duration of meeting
 - Create an agenda or programme
- (b) Setting up the room
- Ensure room is set up with enough seats, refreshments, etc.
 - Using three different colours of sticky notes eg blue, pink and yellow, put three blue and three pink sticky notes on each chair. Hold onto yellow sticky notes for later.
 - Print out in poster size or write up on whiteboard:
 - ground rules for debriefing
 - debriefing aims
 - the three key prompt questions

2.3.3 Stage I: The opening

- (a) Introduction
- Like meetings, facilitating a debrief involves providing:
- a welcome to participants
 - an overview of the reason for the debrief eg following a flood, train derailment etc
 - an overview of the aim of the debrief
 - an overview of the method for debriefing, including potential actions following the debrief ie notes will be written up and given to the person initiating the debrief and a process developed for addressing lessons identified
 - an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and their role in the event
 - details on the discoverability and transparency of debriefing documentation (also see section 1.2)
 - an explanation of how and why the debrief facilitator was appointed.
- (c) Review
- Provide an explanation of the prompt diagram which should be based on the event or issue being explored in the debrief. A prompt diagram could be a hand-drawn diagram on a white board or a large piece of butchers paper or something created on computer and printed in A1 or A2 size. The prompt diagram may depict key milestones, key decisions, timelines, etc. Two examples of prompt diagrams are provided in **Annex C**.
- (d) Ponder
- Ask the participants to take 2-3 minutes to consider the first two prompt questions eg
- (i) What, for me, were the negative aspects of the emergency/event?
 - (ii) What, for me, were the most positive parts about the emergency/event?

Participants should write three answers to the first question on the three blue sticky notes and the three answers for the second question on the pink sticky notes.

2.3.4 Stage II: The sharing and discussion

- Once the participants have finished writing down their answers, ask them one at a time to volunteer a brief explanation (about 20 seconds) of their three answers to the first question and then place the blue sticky notes on the relevant place on the prompt diagram. Please note: It is optional for people to verbally share their experiences with the group.
- When everyone who would like to give their answers to the first question has spoken, ask them to volunteer a brief explanation (about 20 seconds) of their three answers to the second question, one at a time. Place the pink sticky notes on the relevant place on the prompt diagram.
- When everyone who would like to give their answers to the second question has spoken, the leader (facilitator) then asks if anyone has any additional comments to make before the leader summarises the main points raised.

2.3.5 Stage III: The closing

- Ponder: Give each of the participants one yellow sticky note and ask them to take 2-3 minutes to consider the final (two part) question:
 - For me the most significant thing I have learnt during this event has been, and
 - If I was involved in the response/recovery/function of another disaster I would.....
- Once the participants have finished writing down their answers, ask them one at a time to volunteer a brief explanation (about 20 seconds) of their answer and then place their yellow sticky notes on the relevant place on the prompt diagram.
- When everyone who would like to give their answer has spoken, the leader then summarises the main points raised and again reiterates what actions will be taken following the completion of the debrief - ie that the notes will be written up and given to the person initiating the debrief and a process developed for addressing lessons identified. All participants are then thanked for their contribution as well as their attendance and the debrief is then closed.
- Consider the suitability of social functions to continue building relationships developed during the event. The function could involve for example, food, refreshments, sports, games, or site visit follow-up.

2.3.6 Dealing with the output

- The leader then types up the notes under the heading of each of the three questions used in the debrief. The comments are grouped into key areas raised eg some or all of the following may be key issues: communications, teamwork, human resources, planning, activation, staff welfare, coordination, etc. This forms a summary of the debrief – an example of an organisational debrief summary is provided in **Annex D**.
- These notes are then handed over to the initiator of the debrief. It is the initiator who is responsible for developing the actions and activities for post-event organisational learning.
- The leader should provide details of to whom the debrief documentation will be distributed, for example the initiator and all participants. The initiator may also have to distribute the documentation to additional stakeholders (in the case of an internal debrief this may include managers and the chief executive or in the case of a multi-agency debrief, external organisations. In all cases, the initiator must:
 - keep an accurate distribution list and any comments received;
 - ensure distribution of documentation to all participants; and
 - ensure participants are clear on to whom they can distribute the document within their own organisation or externally - for example *not for general distribution or for distribution to managers only or for general distribution*.

2.4 Actions and activities for post-event organisational learning

Once organisational debriefing has been completed, a number of activities should be undertaken, including:

2.4.1 Notes from organisational debriefing

Following the debrief, the collection of comments should be compiled into a single **internal** document. It is these notes that provide the basis for identifying lessons from the event. Debriefing sessions and the subsequent notes must be treated as confidential to promote a no-blame culture and ensure staff feel able to share their experiences openly and honestly.

2.4.2 An organisational report

An organisational report should be completed after the hot debrief and internal organisational debrief have been completed. It should:

- summarise the sequence of events
- identify the individuals involved
- describe the actions of staff
- provide an accurate timeline
- remain factual, concise, objective and blame-free.

2.4.3 Identifying lessons from the event

An organisational report should allow an organisation to:

- demonstrate where the response was effective and where it was not
- establish why this was the case at corporate level – objectively
- recommend ways to improve future response
- resist a critique of individual actions
- encourage a no-blame culture.

2.4.4 Reviews

A review analyses the plans and arrangements in place at the time of the event. It compares them against what was done and how things did or did not work. The report can provide findings and recommendations and be undertaken by a single organisation or as part of a multi-agency review. Reviews can also focus on particular areas of plans or arrangements such as communications or standard operating procedures. They can also address the response and recovery activity in its entirety up until a particular point in time. Therefore it is important to identify terms of reference as well as aims and objectives of any review.

The review process can be carried out by someone within the organisation. More often it is conducted by an independent person/team to provide objectivity. This person will need to have a defined scope for operating, and will need access to appropriate people within the organisation.

2.4.5 Developing an action plan

By developing an action plan, lessons from the event can be identified and focused reviews undertaken. A named individual should be responsible for completing each action within an agreed timeframe. Review dates should be set and progress should be documented. An action plan:

- identifies the work activities/programme needed to address the findings, recommendations and lessons against a timeframe

- should also identify any amendments, changes or additions to the emergency management plans (eg CDEM Group plans) against a timeframe
- includes a programme of identified training and exercising as appropriate
- aligns with any changes required of other planning documents such as the CDEM Group, Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCPs), district plans or regional policy statements, national policy documents, strategies or other documentation.

2.4.6 Lessons learnt?

Have the lessons been learnt? Learning from an event requires a genuine process – the lessons must have been identified, the action plan completed and the CDEM Group plan tested and validated by exercising. Only when past mistakes are not repeated can the lessons be considered learnt.

Post-event Checklist

✓	CDEM Stakeholders should:
	hold an appropriate organisational debriefing following an event
	undertake a review of plans and arrangements to promote organisational learning
	develop reports and action plans as necessary to address identified lessons and/or gaps
	identify suitable training and exercising following the debriefing process to validate new arrangements

Part 3: Other Organisational Debriefing Models

3.1 New Zealand Police debriefing guidelines

The following information has been reproduced from the Planning and Command chapter in the New Zealand Police Manual of Best Practice (1998) with the kind permission of the New Zealand Police.

Debriefing is a subsequent examination of the operation.

Debriefing is necessary to:

- Critically examine an operation.
- Record successful actions and techniques, for inclusion in future plans and training.
- Evaluate what went wrong, so that it won't happen again.
- Solicit suggestions for improvement and consider valid criticisms.
- Identify any need for welfare assistance or support, and provide that assistance if required.

Debriefing should take place as soon as possible after the operation.

Guidelines

When you are holding a debriefing, observe the following guidelines:

- Set an agenda.
- If the operation was large, ask only key people to attend. If it was small, all staff can be included.
- The Operation Commander should chair the debrief.
- Ask a writer of shorthand to record the names of those attending and apologies from those unable to attend and to record all points raised during the debrief.
- Do not apportion blame. Complaints about individuals must be constructive.
- Acknowledge and record any member's exemplary contribution.
- Clarify misunderstandings. If the Operation Commander cannot resolve any problem, he or she must notify the proper authority, follow the matter up and give the staff feedback.
- After the debrief, have the shorthand notes typed and distribute copies to those who attended. A copy of the notes and a record of all subsequent action should be placed on the operation file before it is finally 'filed'.

3.2 New Zealand Fire Service post-event report template

The following template has been reproduced with the kind permission of the New Zealand Fire Service.

Report Type _____	Incident Detail (date, time, location) _____
Local File Number _____	Event Type eg serious harm accident _____
Report completed by _____	

1. Report Summary

This is a summary of the report. It should be about 1 page and highlight the important events and significant conclusions.

2. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference are provided by the report Sponsor. They will include the key areas that the investigation is to address, the investigation team members and can be in draft form until the investigation is under way. The Team Leader can approach the Sponsor to alter the Terms of Reference if they feel that additional findings will be of value. It is the Sponsors role to determine/agree the Terms of Reference.

3. Incident Details

This will be a summary of events leading to the accident, including a description of what happened and actions immediately following. One or two photographs may serve to help in this description.

4. Contributing Factors/Evidence

This is the area where you write the summary of all evidence gathered. Including a summary of witness statements, records, policy and procedures that apply. Also evidence relating to equipment etc that was involved. It is not a verbatim record. One or 2 photos that are important may help here.

5. Compliance with Operational Procedures etc

This is where you write your assessment based on evidence, records and procedures of any issues relating to Operational Procedures etc.

6. Conclusions (assessment of what happened)

This is where your knowledge and expertise is applied to drawing on all your findings to identify what happened.

7. Considerations for Corrective Action Plan

As it is the Sponsors role to develop the Corrective Action Plan, this is where you identify those areas that need to be considered in the Corrective Action Plan. The result of the assessment of Business risk (legislative compliance, breaches of H&S etc from the Regional H&S Manager) are brought together as matters for the sponsor to consider.

8. Appendix

List and attach those items that form a vital part of the investigation. This may include Technical/Expert reports, photographs, witness list etc. You may want to scan items so they can be included electronically.

9. Investigation and report completed by:

Name: _____ Date: _____

10. Report approved/received by:

Name: _____ Date: _____

3.3 Rural Fire Authorities national debrief guideline and debriefing template

The following information has been reproduced from the National Debrief Guideline (2001) with the kind permission of the Rural Fire Authorities (RFA).

NATIONAL DEBRIEF GUIDELINE

1. Introduction

The objective of a fire debrief is for a Fire Authority to review the events of a fire incident and the associated development and control efforts. Through discussion with those participating at the fire an overall perspective of the operation can be gained. This provides an opportunity to evaluate the practices and procedures involved and make recommendations for improvement where necessary. A debrief is not intended to justify actions, make recriminations, push a personal agenda or apportion blame. It is a fact finding exercise that should be both positive and constructive. This set of guidelines and template is intended to standardise the debriefing process throughout New Zealand.

2. When to debrief

A debrief is mandatory when there is:

- A likely claim on the Rural Fire Fighting Fund (e.g. over \$1,000 of fire fighting expenses)
- Significant injury(s) to fire fighters or public
- Significant operational short comings or unforeseen events

A debrief is optional when:

- Landowner requests
- There is media interest
- There is arson/malicious intent
- Any other occasion when lessons can be learned.

3. When to hold the debrief

As soon as possible and at least within two weeks after the fire is declared out.

4. Preparation prior to debrief

Where possible an independent facilitator/chairperson needs to be retained. It is that person's job to work through the agenda, manage the participants and draw out pertinent comments. The facilitator needs to work through the attached template, selecting and recording the relevant detail. Action points, lessons learnt, and other recommendations also need to be recorded.

The purpose of the debrief is **not** a 'witch hunt'. It is important that the debrief is honest and open and that shortcomings of the fire operation are addressed. The facilitator/chairperson needs to:

- Ensure that invitations have been sent, including notification of expectations where presentations or reports are expected.
- Introductions – welcome participants including 'who is who' and their role/responsibilities
- Outline reasons for debrief being held
- Record attendance
- Designate a note taker
- Comments recorded on debrief template.

5. Debriefing requirements:

It is the obligation for the Principal Rural Fire Officer (PRFO) to ensure that the practical requirements for the debrief are completed. These include:

- Venue, date and time and notification details decided by the RFA and PRFO
- Supply a paper or electronic version of the national debrief template
- Preparation of aids, including:
 - Map of fire area, 260 NZMS series preferable blown to a larger scale, with fire marked at different times including location of key operational facilities
 - Overhead projector, slide projector
 - Fire log(s)
 - White board and pen
 - Large sheets of paper for making up charts and summarising key points
 - Power point presentation data projector if needed.

6. Recommendations and action points

As the debrief session progresses, recommended action points (concerns, ideas for improvement or problems incurred) raised by the participants or facilitator are to be listed in the table provided, see debrief template. Assigning a person responsible for looking into the action point and indicating an expected completion date will ensure that ideas are not lost.

<i>Debrief Reference</i>	<i>Action Required</i>	<i>Person to Action</i>	<i>Expected Completion Date</i>
4.1 Notifications	Liaise with Comcen on zone callout	B Wright	Dec 2001
4.0 Topography & 4.10.2 Fire Equipment	Boots too heavy – for arduous hill climbing over long duration	B Neat	Jan 2002

7. Facilitator's Summary

It is important to end the meeting in a positive way. The facilitator/chairperson can achieve this by:

- Identifying the good things that happened at the fire
- Supporting the recommendations suggested by the debrief participants
- Comment on whether an Operational Review should be recommended
- Advising when and how the debrief notes will be made available
- Thanking debrief participants for their attendance

8. Attachments

It is preferable for the persons who make comments on specific debrief points, to have supporting documentation for attachment to the debrief report. These can include maps, debrief presentation notes, communication charts, accident reports, media comments, and photos.

NATIONAL DEBRIEFING TEMPLATE

Fire Name

Rural Fire Authority

Debrief Date Reference

Venue

Facilitator/Chairperson

Note: Complete sections relevant to this fire only.

1.0	Overview: Incident management personnel to provide comment and prepare reports	<i>Designated person to comment on the following points in this section.</i>
1.1	Summary Details (Name:.....)	
1.1.1	Location	
1.1.2	Date and Duration	
1.1.3	Incident background	
1.1.4	Impact and Area Burnt	
1.1.5	Cause	
1.1.6	Fire Environment: Weather, Topography, Fuel(s)	Fireground Weather:
1.1.7	Threats	
1.1.8	Fire Resources Deployed (equipment/ personnel)	
1.1.9	Incident Management and Officer(s) in charge	CIMS Used? Yes / No Other comments:
1.1.10	Supporting agencies and organisations	
2.0	Planning and Intelligence (Name:.....)	
3.0	Operations:	
3.1	Ground (Name:.....)	
3.2	Aerial (Name:.....)	
4.0	Logistics (Name:.....)	
5.0	Safety (Name:.....)	
6.0	Liaison and cooperation with agencies, landowners and others. (Name:.....)	
7.0	Event Details: The key personnel of the incident management are to provide comment and/or prepare reports	
7.1	Notifications	
7.2	Turnout	
7.3	Incident Management (Incident Controller) (Name:.....)	
7.4	CIMS organisation (Incident Controller) (Name:.....)	

7.5	Media Liaison (Name:.....)		
7.6	Comment on preparedness for initial response (Name:.....)		
7.7	Comment on competencies and skills of personnel. (Name:.....)		
7.8	Other Briefs:		
7.8.1	Communications (Name:)		
7.8.2	Performance of Fire Equipment (Name:)		
7.8.3	Facilities (Name:)		
7.8.4	Food & Water (Name:)		
7.8.5	Fire ground rehabilitation (Name:)		
7.8.6	Others (Name:)		
8.0	Fire Plan Relevance (Are changes needed?)		
9.0	Other Stakeholders Name	Name	Comments
10.0	Recommendations & Action Points		
	<i>Debrief Reference</i>	<i>Action Required</i>	<i>Person to action</i>
			<i>Expected completion date</i>
11.0	Facilitator Summary (Points to cover)		
11.1	Identify the good things that happened	Notes:	
11.2	Pre planning	Notes:	
11.3	Cooperation between Fire Authorities	Notes:	
11.4	Fire fighting strategies	Notes:	
11.5	Notifications & turnout	Notes:	
11.6	Recommendations	Notes:	
11.7	Others	Notes:	
11.8	Conclusions	Notes:	

Signature (Facilitator/Chairperson)

Signature (PRFO)

12. Summary of attached documents (e.g. maps, debrief presentations, communication diagrams, accident reports, media comments, photos).

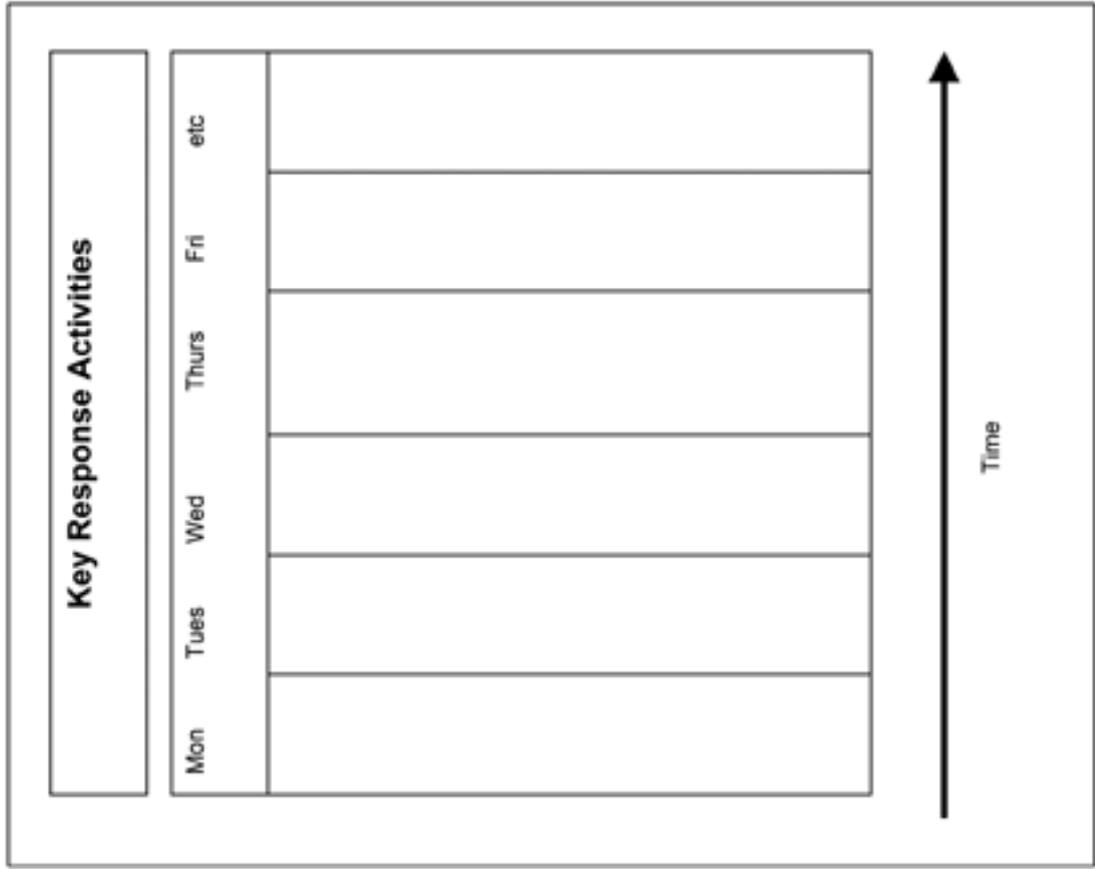
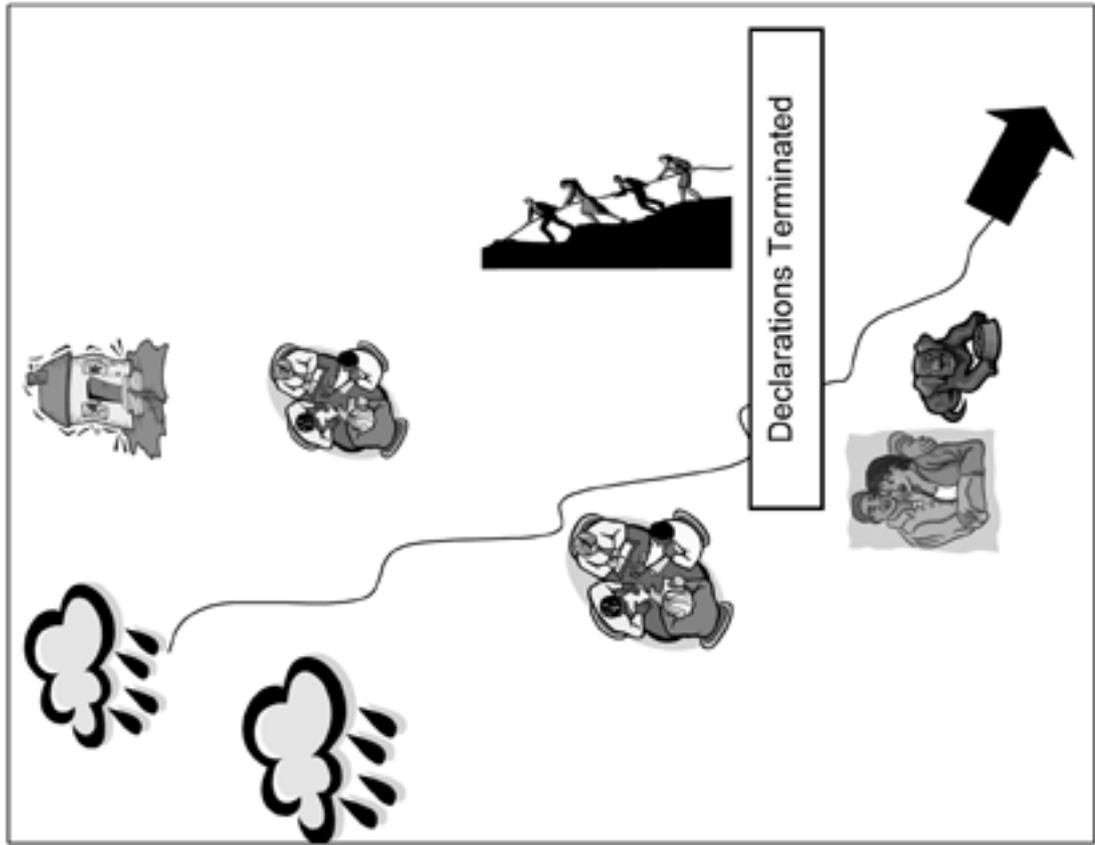
Annex A: Example of a structured debriefing plan

Structured Debrief (based on approximately 20 attendees) Experience: The response to the _____ emergency/event Date: / / Time: _____ minutes Participants (number): _____	
Introduction 4 minutes	Debrief Aims 1. To reflect on the experiences of staff involved in the _____ event from _____(day, month) until _____(day, month)_____(year). 2. Identify personal experiences. 3. Views shared and discussed to establish: (a) personal learning and the future positive use of that learning, and (b) ideas for the future of your organisation’s involvement in the response and/or recovery of communities from disasters.
Review 4 minutes	Visual aid (a prompt diagram) while participants consider their responses to the first two questions.
Ponder 10 minutes	What for me were the negative/worst/bad/lowest/least successful aspects of the _____ event? (a) (b) (c) What for me were the most positive/good/best/most successful parts of the _____ event? (a) (b) (c)
Sharing and discussion 54 minutes	Views shared during a facilitator-led discussion
Summary 2 minutes	Facilitator summarises main points raised
Ponder 6 minutes	(a) For me the most significant thing I have learnt during this event has been, and (b) If I was involved in the response and/or recovery of another disaster I would.....
Sharing 10 minutes	
Closure 2 minutes	
Debrief led & planned by:	_____(Name and Organisation)

Annex B: Key considerations when debriefing

Introduction	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims – write up and keep in view (this can be done on a whiteboard, butcher’s paper etc) • Explain overall approach (stages) and the time the debrief should finish • Explain the presence of observers ie an initiator • Explain ground rules of organisational debriefing • Ask group to be as open and honest as they feel they can be • Remind – all views will be valued – focus is future positive • Not making group decisions or looking for consensus • Say what you intend doing with the debrief output
Review	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go for a clear visual outline – keep it simple • Introduce and keep in view • Its purpose is to stimulate thinking and provide hooks for their ideas
Ponder	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up your prompt questions if possible • Check understanding and ask for the ponder to be in silence • Possible use of ‘sticky notes’ (not always necessary) • Keep control of time, “A few seconds more...”
Sharing and Discussion	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell group “we now move on to the Sharing and Discussion Stage” • Divide your time between the prompt questions used (usually two). Consider the following subjects for prompt questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notification/activation - Deployment/mobilisation - Operational issues - Relationship management • Ask one person to speak at a time and control any side conversations • Deal with the negative views first • All to have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts • Create picture by mapping ‘sticky notes’ or key words • Ask facilitative questions to bring out/develop points made • Do not express your own views • Difficulty in making notes – consider options such as ‘sticky notes’, flip chart, a note taker • Be aware of individuals wanting to speak – bring them in • Encourage discussion between individuals • Keep an eye on the time • Move on to positive views for the second half of the period • Remember to remain neutral during feedback and provide encouragement when someone comments eg “thanks for that”, head nod
Summary	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be concise and do not try to evaluate what has been raised • Refer the group to what is before them if visually displayed • Remind the group that there will be no further structured opportunity for discussion
Ponder	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell group they are now starting the “closing stage” of the debrief • Write up the final prompt question • Consider using ‘sticky notes’ to write answers on • Check all understand – ask for this to be done without discussion • Keep control of time
Sharing	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind – no further discussion – listen to each other • Each to read out their known words in turn • Do not let anyone expand on their views • Collect ‘sticky notes’ and display on the prompt diagram
Closure	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank all for their participation • Say what you intend doing with their final views (the output) • Consider using a social occasion for continued relationship development if appropriate

Annex C: Examples of prompt diagrams for debriefing



Annex D: Example of an organisational debrief summary

Occasion/Event:	The Response/Recovery to the February 2004 Flood Event
Aim of debrief:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To reflect on the experiences of staff involved in _____ event from _____(date) until _____(date). 2. Identify personal experiences. 3. Views shared and discussed to establish: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) personal learning and the future positive use of that learning, and (b) ideas for the future of your organisation's involvement in the response and/or recovery of communities from disasters.
Place:	
Time:	
Debrief led by:	
Initiator/Client:	
Participants:	
Material output of debrief:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Original notes and response 2 Debrief summary (this document) 3 Responses made during the debrief (attached as an annex)
Debrief Report:	<p>Example only</p> <p>The debrief took place following an intensive period of both response and recovery activity by staff during the _____ event. Twenty-five staff members attended with representatives from the central office as well as field staff from the affected regions.</p> <p>The debrief focused on each individual's personal learning and its future use. All were given time to reflect, to generate and express personal views and to listen to others. Final responses were expressed to the whole group. All participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their roles and to contribute their views in discussion. The main issues raised:</p> <p>Main negative aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communications • catering • personal impacts • etc <p>Main positive aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teamwork • multi-agency relationships • staff welfare • etc <p>In closing the debrief participants were each asked to identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal Learning and its use 2 Ideas for the future <p>Attach sticky notes as an annex to this summary but list key points:</p> <p>Personal learning and future use of those learnings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase personal preparedness • Clarifying role and responsibilities • Strengthening communications • etc
Signed:	
Date:	
Roles taken:	Planner and Leader

