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**Committee**            **Environment**  
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## **The Paekakariki Flood Event – 3 October 2003**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of the activities that took place during the flood event in Paekakariki on 3 October 2003.

### **2. Background**

This report was requested at the last meeting of the Environment Committee in November 2003.

A strong moist northwesterly airstream covered northern and central New Zealand during Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October bringing rain to most of the North Island and northern South Island. Between about 7.00pm and 9.30pm, narrow bands of very heavy rain formed over and to the west of Paekakariki.

The Met Service issued severe weather bulletins earlier on Friday 3 October outlining heavy rain and strong winds that could affect our Region. However, all warnings were lifted at about 9.20pm that evening.

This ‘extreme’ event, (which was estimated as a 125-year event), saw an estimated 75mm of rainfall in Paekakariki in three hours. The Tararua ranges received about 345mm of rain over a 24-hour period, while the total rainfall in Paekakariki fell well in excess of 100mm over the same period.

This amount of rain triggered a large number of slips in the Kapiti area, particularly the Paekakariki Hill area.

Paekakariki Hill was damaged by several slip washouts, which in turn buried and blocked culverts. The road edge fill collapsed in several places, which undermined the road. About 10,000 cubic metres of gravel poured down Paekakariki Hill and across State Highway 1.

The Belvedere Motel acted as sort of stopbank for the gravel, which resulted in the excess water, carrying silt, flowing down onto the railway track and into

the Paekakariki township. The water, mud and silt affected twenty-five residential and several commercial properties. Water from Smith's Creek, Te Puke Stream and adjacent streams also added to the flood damage.

The Kapiti District became isolated from Wellington by road, rail, sea and air, mainly because of the treacherous weather conditions.

A large number of people were attempting to return to the Kapiti area by rail and road from a rugby game in Wellington.

### **3. What happened?**

Kapiti District Council declared a Civil Defence Emergency at 00:30 on 4 October.

The Paekakariki Fire Service was the first responder on the scene and assisted with the evacuation of commuters from the train and motor vehicles. Commuters in vehicles were turned back to Wellington, and train services were terminated south of Paekakariki.

The initial response was to evacuate affected families from their houses and to re-house them. Thirty-seven properties, (25 houses and 12 businesses) were affected and twenty houses were evacuated with 5 left uninhabitable.

At 9:30pm a commercial aircraft crashed into the sea just off the Kapiti Coast. Local Police and other resources were diverted from Paekakariki to attend to this incident.

KCDC set up a Welfare Centre at the Surf Club which was later relocated to St Peters Hall in the township.

Wellington, and Hutt City Councils activated their Emergency Operations Centres to deal with their own local events. Upper Hutt City Council provided search and rescue and emergency management personnel to assist Kapiti Coast District Council.

Greater Wellington Regional Council (Emergency Management) monitored the situation throughout. Regional co-ordination and support was offered, but we were informed that it was not needed (**see Log of Events, Appendix 1**).

### **4. The Recovery process**

Paekakariki township was cleaned up within five days. The emergency declaration was terminated on 9 October. Within 3 weeks all commercial businesses (apart from one) were operating again.

At the end of January 2004 two families were still unable to return to their homes. The Belvedere Motel and the '1906' house are still in the process of being repaired.

## 5. De-briefing meetings

Several de-briefing meetings were held during October and November. The outcome of these meetings is summarised as follows:

### What went well?

- The evacuation and re-housing of the affected families was carried out effectively. Their needs for shelter, food, water, clothing and counselling were well looked after.
- The Paekakariki community worked well together and showed some resilience. More than 50 local and other agencies donated welfare funds and welfare goods, while many others provided assistance (Task Force Green, WINZ, Red Cross, Victim Support, etc.).
- Kapiti Coast District Council provided the necessary resources to enhance the recovery process.

### What did not go so well during the response phase?

- There was an initial lack of leadership. Every responder was ‘bogged-down’ with his or her own response tasks and no one took the initiative or the responsibility to build a ‘Big’ picture. Most responders in our region have received Co-ordinated Incident Management (CIMS) training, but it appeared not to have been applied on the night.
- With a lot of emergency personnel away due to the school holidays, thousands of commuters using road and rail, the treacherous weather conditions, and a commercial plane crash off the Kapiti coast, the available emergency resources were stretched.
- Motorists were exposed to rock falls while stranded in their vehicles parked along Centennial Highway. Rail commuters were not provided with information, and some walked between Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki rail stations, exposing themselves to several secondary threats.
- The management of information failed. Reconnaissance was not done properly (if at all). The community, emergency services, commuters, volunteers, property owners, etc. were all ‘left in the dark’ because information and warnings were not made available when it was needed (e.g. electronic bill boards on SH1 not utilised, commercial radio stations were not informed to warn motorists, Tranzrail and Transit staff were not informed to enable them to carry out traffic and commuter management, etc.)
- Emergency communications were inadequate. It was difficult to get hold of key personnel, contractors, etc.
- The marshalling of big trucks caused waves resulting in ‘floating’ cars crashing into each other.

- Local emergency services managed the initial response and did not inform Regional Police and Fire agencies.

### **Lessons learned from the event**

- Immediate notification to the wider emergency management and emergency service fraternity is important. Regional Police and Fire as well as Greater Wellington Regional Council's emergency management should have been notified. That could have resulted in better co-ordination, information management and assessment of damage and needs.
- Emergency Services should have isolated the area (e.g. at McKays crossing and at Fisherman's Table) to ensure that they could manage their part of the event.
- The community was angered by this event. Confidence in their local authority's ability to manage this event and to maintain public safety needs to be rebuilt.
- Public information to be made available as soon as possible to the community and the wider community.
- Leadership is necessary to get an overall picture as soon as possible by making use of resources, even if they are outside the District's boundaries.
- The Paekakariki community stood up and assisted each other in overcoming the event. Paekakariki showed itself as a resilient community. Kapiti Coast District Council and the Paekakariki community have since worked together in establishing a Civil Defence Centre (with adequate communications systems) and a Welfare Centre for the Township. A Contingency Plan has been developed and implemented.
- Additional and improved planning, training and exercising are essential – not just for small events like this, but also for the bigger ones.

## **6. Future issues**

It is essential that communication and information flow is quickly established between the affected area and the CDEM Group office. This will enable regional monitoring of the emergency situation and development of the 'BIGGER' picture. CDEM Group personnel could assist with co-ordination, assessment of damage and requirements, and information management. This measure has been discussed by the region's emergency managers and was implemented in November 2003.

It is also essential that Regional Emergency Services and other responding agencies be notified as soon as possible after such an event.

## **7. Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

- 1. receives the report; and*
- 2. notes the contents.*

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