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Committee Civil Defence and Emergency Management
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Exercise Cruickshank

1. Purpose

To inform the Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management Group about Exercise Cruickshank, an exercise that has been developed to test New Zealand's all-of-nation arrangements for responding to a pandemic influenza emergency.

2. Background

Annual influenza outbreaks are a fact of life. Their impact can be reduced through annual vaccination programmes. However, pandemic influenza is a much more serious disease, which attacks about three times every century. People have no immunity to a virus that develops from a novel strain making it extremely serious.

The Ministry of Health's (MoH) planning for the threat of a pandemic was heightened some 18 months ago with the spread of the avian influenza virus H5N1. Since then the health sector and government as a whole have been developing plans to prepare the country for such a threat.

The MoH is co-ordinating a Pandemic Exercise Programme over 2006/07. The programme consists of two major exercises, Makgill and Cruickshank. The Exercise Programme aims to assess New Zealand's plans for responding to a pandemic.

The MoH ran Exercise Makgill on 9 November 2006 over a 12 hour period to assess the health sector's ability on cluster control during the "stamp it out" stage of response to a pandemic. This exercise used an "enhanced" table top approach in order to realistically simulate the kinds of things that could happen in a real pandemic.

Lessons learnt from this exercise will be applied to Exercise Cruickshank.

3. Scope of the exercise

Exercise Cruickshank will be the largest exercise of its type attempted in New Zealand and it is the first time that a pandemic response will be exercised to this extent.

It is a whole-of-nation exercise that will be led by the MoH over four full days in May 2007. Exercise Cruickshank will practice the plans set out in the New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Action Plan (NZIPAP) and will validate the intersectoral response at all four stages. Exercise days are spread over four weeks, and will cover national, regional and local responses.

Local participation and response will be the responsibility of each agency.

To gain the most benefit out of Exercise Cruickshank, plans will be practiced to the most realistic extent possible (within the limits of ensuring business as usual for participating services are maintained). The extent of operational deployment will be finalised and communicated after consultation. Exercise Cruickshank will include a combination of tabletop and discussion exercise formats and a limited amount of operational deployment.

4. Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Exercise Programme are to:

- Gauge the capability and capacity of the health sector and central and local government agencies to respond to and recover from an influenza pandemic.
- Review the processes for co-ordination, communication, leadership and governance during a pandemic.
- Provide a forum for intersectoral review and discussion of pandemic plans.

5. Timeline

Exercise Cruickshank will be run in four distinct stages all occurring in May 2007.

- Stage 1 "Keep it out" 10 May 2007
- Stage 2 "Stamp it out" – 16 May 2007
- Stage 3 "Manage it" – 17 May 2007
- Stage 4 "Recovery" – Regional workshops on 23 May 2007 and a National workshop on 30 May 2007.

6. Assumptions

The underpinning assumptions of Exercise Cruickshank are that:

- It will be a learning activity designed to educate agencies on roles and responsibilities, arrangements and connections at both national and regional levels through exercising a common set of objectives contained in the Exercise Co-ordinating Instruction.
- Exercise evaluation will be based on the performance indicators for each objective.
- It will enable participating agencies to have the opportunity to exercise according to their own arrangements and plans, and use the exercise to evaluate their response capability.
- Standard emergency radio, telephone and internet infrastructure is fully operational, reliable and free from error.

7. Wellington CDEM Group role

The New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Action Plan (NZIPAP) requires CDEM Groups to prioritise and co-ordinate regional CDEM interagency responses during an influenza pandemic. This will include:

- The provision of (or the arrangement for) competent emergency management personnel and effective operational structures for CDEM.
- The provision of (or the arrangement for) making available required resources (welfare needs such as water and food and other critical supplies, equipment, information, etc.) in support of the Health Sector.
- Responding to and managing the non-health adverse effects of the pandemic.
 - Assessment of status and needs (determining immediate needs and priorities, determining status of key infrastructure, identifying obstacles, interruptions or break points in operations, relief efforts or service deliverability.
 - Co-ordination of all role-players in the Wellington CDEM Group area as well as supporting territorial authorities in their responses when requested.
 - Information management (receiving, processing, analysing and disseminating of information, including decision-making and media management.
 - Application of Business Continuity Plans (staff welfare, business and service continuance, support in the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), antiviral and antibiotics etc.

8. Conclusion

Exercise Cruickshank is clearly a very important means of reviewing and renewing interest in the serious problem of New Zealand's all-of-nation arrangements for responding to a major disaster resulting from an influenza pandemic outbreak.

The major advantage for all participating agencies is to understand and practice the respective roles and responsibilities of local, regional and national agencies in response to the exercise scenarios and what the connections are between local, regional, national and international agencies.

Another advantage for participating agencies is the amount of planning, relationship building and preparation work to have staff, business continuity plans, operating procedures and operations' centres effectively in place before the exercise itself. This lead up time avails itself as an opportunity to identify obvious gaps in emergency preparedness and to address serious shortfalls.

9. Recommendations

That the CDEM Group:

1. *receive the report; and*
2. *note the contents.*

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