

# CIVIL DEFENCE

## TASMAN FEB 2019 FIRES

**PREPAREDNESS**

- 26 DEC Last significant rainfall.
- 27 JAN All fire permits cancelled. Prohibited fire season declared.
- 31 JAN Stakeholders response meeting closes forests and access to high risk areas.
- 04 FEB Nelson Anniversary Day.
- 05 FEB Code Purple – no forest workers on site although forest patrols being conducted.
- 06 FEB Waitangi Day.

**STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED ACROSS NELSON AND TASMAN**

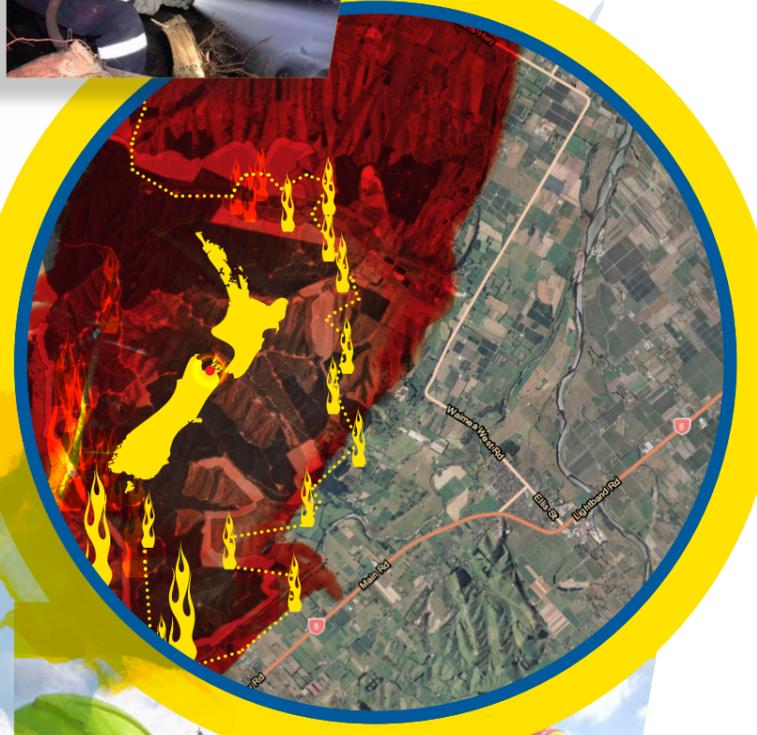
**DAY 01**

**FIRE STARTED MID AFTERNOON**

**RETURN HOME**

**RECOVERY**





A BIG **THANK YOU**  
TO ALL THOSE INVOLVED

**LEARNING FROM OUR EXPERIENCE**

This Lessons Learned Workshop was arranged to capture learnings following the Fires in the Nelson and Tasman area in February 2019. The aim of the review was to pull together key stakeholders that were involved or impacted by this event in order to capture any key learnings (what went well / opportunities for improvement) and agree any actions that can support improved emergency response in the future.

This Lessons Learned Report captures findings from a facilitated workshop with key parties involved in the Multi Agency, Civil Defence Emergency Management response. This review is one of a series of workshops and feedback initiatives that have been held post event to enable lessons learned by all key parties involved or impacted by the fires to be captured and improvement opportunities identified.

The following workshops have been facilitated by 41South and individual reports have been produced for each

Icon	Date	Duration	Facilitated by	Participants	Count
	20 MAY	DAY	FENZ National Incident Management Teams (NIMT)	4xNIMT teams	60
	21 MAY	3HR	FENZ Neighbours, Farmers and Foresters	Affected Parties	25
	21 MAY	3HR	Local Fire Fighters, Incident Management Teams (IMT), Machinery and Aircraft	Responders	65
	21 MAY	1.5HR	FENZ Unions and Associations	Feedback Session	12
	22 MAY	2HR	Civil Defence Emergency Management – Multi Agency Response		35
	VARIOUS		Other agency debriefs and feedback		

**REVIEW APPROACH**

The Civil Defence Review was facilitated by 41South who also facilitated wider sessions with FENZ as outlined above. The Review Workshop was an informal session aimed at identifying improvement opportunities. 41South encouraged a no blame environment whereby all participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on what went well and not so well. Workshop attendees then worked together to identify improvement opportunities and lessons that should be considered in preparation for future emergency events.

It is intended that this review is the start point for implementing improvements. Findings from this session and proposed actions should be carefully considered and a more detailed action plan including clear scope, resources and timescales developed in order to support and encourage continuous improvement.

**BACKGROUND**

The Tasman fire began on 5 February 2019 and damaged forestry, farms and property in an area spanning more than 2400ha and a perimeter of over 35km. At the peak during the emergency 3500 people were evacuated. Some of those evacuated were prevented from returning home for several weeks. Due to the size of the fire and the risks to life and property, a State of Emergency was declared the morning after the fire broke out (6 February). The Nelson Tasman CDEM EOC was activated. Firefighters and other emergency responders were called in from across the country to assist. The Nelson Tasman CDEM Group was the lead agency for this multi-agency response. Four National Incident Management Teams (NIMT's) were deployed for a week at a time to manage Fire and Emergency's response. Because the ongoing threat to life and property and the close proximity to Nelson, Richmond and Wakefield; there was intense media and political interest for the duration of the fire.

The fire started as a result of agricultural activity but quickly spread into the surrounding forests and land. The last significant rain had fallen on the 26 December 2018. With only 3-5mm of rainfall in January the Nelson Tasman area was experiencing severe drought conditions. All fire permits were cancelled from 20 January 2019.

The fire started on a Tuesday, the day after Nelson Anniversary Day and the day before Waitangi Day on the 6 February. Many people in the region had taken the day off to make an extra-long weekend. This meant that while forest patrols were being conducted, there were no forest contractors working on the 5 February 2019.

During the response to the Tasman Fire, emergency services were required to reallocate resources to respond to other nearby fires on Rabbit Island (6th Feb), Atawhai (8 Feb), Moutere Hill (27 Feb) and Dovedale hill (6th March). These were fought and quickly contained by the resources from the Tasman fire.

The intention is that findings from these various reviews are used to inform improvements that can be implemented both collectively by the various agencies involved and for improvements within each partner organisation. Findings from these reviews will also be provided to Australian Fire And Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) who will be conducting an independent operational review on behalf of Fire Service New Zealand (FENZ). Key findings are summarised below with more detail provided in the attached Improvements Register. It is recommended that the register is used as a start point for improvement. Improvement plan(s) should be developed to detail improvement actions, action owners and timescales for implementation. The register should then be used to track progress and close out of agreed actions.



# KEY FINDINGS + RECOMMENDATIONS

There was a quick and effective Civil Defence emergency management and multi-agency response to the fires. No lives were lost and although one house was destroyed, many more were saved. The fire was prevented from reaching Wakefield Township. The huge commitment and enthusiasm from the team that responded to the event was evident throughout the various reviews.

With any event there are always opportunities to learn and improve. Organisations that embrace continual improvement and seek to learn from experience are more likely to perform well in future events. The overarching insights from this operational debrief are listed below. Key learnings and recommendations are summarised below with more detail included in the attached improvements register.

01

**A TEAM EFFORT**

There was a strong multi-agency response to the fire with all parties pulling together to respond to this major incident. All parties committed resources and worked extremely hard both on the ground to control the fire and also to control the event from various command centres. Those involved worked long hours in challenging conditions to support the effort.

It was noted that the team worked extremely hard during the event but there is opportunity to improve interaction and communication within the team. Better planning of resources and facilities in advance of the event would support more effective delivery and put less stress on individuals involved.

02

**PLANNING & PREPAREDNESS**

There was some inconsistency in the system, processes, terminologies and approaches taken by the various agencies involved. Opportunity exists to agree and streamline process and ensure all parties are appropriately trained. If possible, a cross agency training exercise should be arranged once key parties are trained in order to test and fine tune practices in advance of future events.

03

**RESOURCES**

While the Nelson Tasman CDEM Emergency Operations Centre is a fantastic facility it is not big enough to accommodate a large-scale event and additional space was required. Sourcing resources to support the response was also challenging at times – desks, telephones, radios, computers etc.

There were also challenges securing facilities, transport and accommodation for resources from out of town.

04

**PEOPLE WANTING TO HELP**

Various stakeholders and individuals wanted to support the emergency response. Iwi partners, Red Cross, and others provided invaluable support and there is an opportunity to build on this. There were also a lot of individuals wanting to help and in some cases they “self-deployed”. This presented a safety risk for response agencies and frustration for those wanting to help.

05

**AFFECTED PARTIES – PREPAREDNESS**

The fire covered a large area (over 2400ha) destroying forests and farmland and resulting in the evacuation of over 3500 people. Evacuations are stressful and happened at short notice. Cordons meant people could not return to their property to collect belongings or tend to animals. Vulnerable persons in the community need special attention. An opportunity exists for property owners to be better prepared in advance of a future event.

06

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

The fire affected a large area of farm and forest land which was home to livestock and pets. The process for evacuation and safety of animals was inconsistent and a significant concern for effected parties. Use of the A&P showground and HUHA (Helping You Helping Animals) worked well for accommodating evacuated animals. An opportunity exists to better plan for animal welfare in preparation for future events.

07

**RECOVERY**

While the Fire Service was able to protect all but 1 house from serious fire damage, the fire caused considerable damage to property – farmland, forest and gardens (including the construction of temporary fire breaks). Recovery post fire is ongoing and is likely to take some time to close out.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Develop a more robust resource plan for managing emergency events. This should consider resources required to support the CIMS structure and availability / capability of local and national resources. Opportunity to develop a database of key resources including training, experience and likely availability to support an emergency event. The resource plan should also consider management of business as usual activities and minimum levels of service that will be provided in emergency conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Review and update the emergency response plan as required to support improved response to future events. Consider how information flows between different management systems (CIMS and AIMS), support systems and technologies, roles and responsibilities. Once the plan is updated, key resources should be trained to ensure shared understanding and if possible, a training exercise arranged.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Develop a resource management plan in preparation for future emergencies. Consider availability of temporary accommodation, process to make this available and resources required to support operation. Also consider support services – accommodation, transport, facilities for non-locals supporting the event.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Discuss with Iwi Partners and key stakeholders (e.g. Red Cross) how we can better prepare for future events – understand the support that each can provide and how this can be integrated to support the response effort. Consider process for individuals to support future events – register interest in advance including training and experience, support resources available (machines / specialist skills etc.). Discuss with local communities and explain dangers of self-deployment and the process to get involved.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Build on already established community and stakeholder relationships. Consider a close out session to share learnings and advise how to better prepare for future events. Then maintain regular contact especially at the start of high risk seasons – summer fire / winter flood to reinforce and provide support / advice.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Work with animal welfare agencies to develop a more detailed plan for managing animal welfare during an emergency event. This should then be discussed with local farmers and community groups (lifestyle blocks) to help prepare for a future event – set expectations about how to prepare in readiness for a future event.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Need to better understand and plan for recovery post emergency event. Opportunity to develop a standard recovery plan that incorporates learnings from the Tasman Fire. Consider legislative and insurance implications (may need specialist input) and resources that will be required.



**PLANNING & PREPAREDNESS** *How prepared were we for the event / Planning of Response activities*

WORKED WELL	LESSONS LEARNED	PROPOSED ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
<p><b>COMMANDER CONFERENCE CALLS</b></p> <p>Kept teams informed and connected with the event while maintaining BAU in other areas.</p>	<p><b>COMMAND SYSTEM</b></p> <p>Lacked a single command system to manage the event. Various partner organisations using different systems.</p>	<p><b>EVENT MANAGEMENT SPACE</b></p> <p>Need to better plan event management space. The EOC is a great asset but will need to be supplemented with additional space when managing large scale events.</p> <p>Noting that it is not economically viable to have a major event centre sitting empty ready for use. Develop a management plan detailing what space will be made available to support emergency events and how these will be serviced – communications links, power and equipment required.</p>		
<p><b>RESOURCE PLANNING</b></p> <p>Resources worked extremely hard in difficult conditions to support the emergency response – thank you to all those involved.</p>	<p><b>LACK OF SPACE</b></p> <p>Limited space and resources available at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Noted that this is a great facility but not big enough to manage such a large event. Need to set up other management centres.</p> <p>All partners committed resources but difficult to allocate to tasks as skills and training were not known.</p>	<p><b>RESOURCING – SKILLS AND CAPABILITY</b></p> <p>Need to review resources that we need to effectively manage large scale emergency events and then assess this against available resources (gap analysis). Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIMS structure and resources required to support this</li> <li>• Training and competency of existing resources – cross agency and develop register</li> <li>• Consider additional support required to manage event and maintain BAU operation.</li> </ul>		
	<p><b>RESOURCES</b></p> <p>Insufficient resources available to manage such a large-scale event and maintain BAU functions.</p>	<p><b>Resource Plan – Need to develop a cross agency resource plan in readiness for any future events. Consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-agency approach</li> <li>• Skills and capability</li> <li>• CIMS trained and resources required</li> <li>• Availability (local / national)</li> <li>• 2 or 3 shifts/day</li> <li>• Support resource to manage BAU.</li> </ul>		
	<p><b>DATA MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Using a variety of data management and GIS systems.</p>	<p><b>DATA MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Agree preferred cross agency data management systems that will be used during emergency events.</p>		
	<p><b>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</b></p> <p>Evolved during the event rather than a planned approach.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</b></p> <p>Review and update communications channels and distribution lists. Ensure these are kept up to date and available to all.</p>		
		<p><b>COMMAND SYSTEM</b></p> <p>Agree cross agency command system to be used during emergency events.</p>		

## OPERATIONS *Co-ordination and supervision of response activities*

### WORKED WELL

#### PIM MESSAGING

Generally consistent and timely public information provided through Mayor updates, community meetings and media.

Lacked a common operational overview at times. Good working relationships meant that communications teams knew who to ask.

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### INDUCTION PROCESS

Lacked a good induction process to help manage and coordinate resources as they arrived to support the emergency response.

People wanting to help and support the team but lacked a good onboarding process.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS

#### EVENT INDUCTION PROCESS

Develop event induction process (part of CIMS) to induct all personnel involved in the event. This should include:

- Overview of CIMS process
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Description of individual role
- Welfare provided, accommodation / food / rest areas etc.
- Record of individuals skills and experience
- PPE requirements (or request)
- Local area familiarisation

Use of a GPS TAG system should be encouraged to help tracking of resources. This will also support better coordination of resources.

### DATE

### COMMENTS

#### BRIEFINGS AND UPDATES

Briefing and update process was inconsistent and lacked concise information.

- Briefings often too long
- Sit reps slow often late
- Event log not current

Lacked clear process and ownership.

Opportunity to streamline briefing process by aligning agencies operational shift schedules.

#### HANDOVER PROCESS BETWEEN SHIFTS

Could be improved, inconsistent and lacked detail. Decisions made on a previous shift not always well documented.

#### DECISION MAKING

Must clearly define roles and responsibilities between the various agencies and ensure an integrated team structure is adopted.

#### INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Developed as the event unfolded rather than a planned approach.

Multiple parties involved and often using different approach.

#### IT SYSTEM

Lack of capacity and consistency across agencies.

Consider use of App / video to enable information to be shared quickly and stored.

Opportunity to streamline and co-ordinate technology used to manage the event. Need to ensure this is efficient, effective and all parties are trained and familiar with agreed systems.

## CONTROL *Inter-Agency Working / Resources*

### WORKED WELL

Resources – Team pulled together to manage an extremely challenging event. Huge commitment from all those involved to support incident response.

### LESSONS LEARNED

External Resources – Some challenges integrating external and local resources. Different knowledge, expectations and approach.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS

Inter-Agency Relations – Opportunity to build on inter-agency relationships to support implementation of improvements ready for next event. This should include:

- Regular formal and informal catch ups
- Joint group to agree, develop and implement improvements in advance of future event
- Joint training exercises

### DATE

### COMMENTS

**ESTABLISHED REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Strong working relationships were already established through existing forums such as CEG's and other events. Strong personal relationships greatly supported the strong response.

**PROCESS AND SYSTEMS**

Variable understanding, knowledge and application of CIMS / AIMS across the various agencies.

- Using different terminologies
- Roles and Responsibilities not well defined
- CIMS or AIMS?
- Using different communication systems

**INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CIMS)**

Review / develop cross agency incident management system. This should consider:

- Agree / confirm if using CIMS or AIMS
- Use consistent terminology
- Roles and Responsibilities well defined
- Training for all those likely to be involved in an incident (including senior managers)
- Training exercise to test the system

**STATE OF LOCAL EMERGENCY**

Nelson and Tasman Mayors worked well together and quickly declared a state of local emergency to support emergency response activities.

**RESOURCES**

Insufficient resources available to support such a largescale event and maintain BAU. Training and experience of resources was highly variable and inconsistent across agencies.

**DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY**

Develop a comprehensive briefing pack to support and enable elected members to make early informed decisions regarding a declaration of emergency. Include legal input to ensure all understand the implications of a declaration and associated powers.

This should be closely linked to early mobilisation of recovery resources.

**MANAGING VIP'S**

VIP's need to be carefully managed to ensure safety and not distract from incident management operations. Consider;

- A dedicated resource to manage VIP's
- Ensuring clear and consistent messaging both locally and nationally
- VIP's to support and encourage team on the ground
- Developing and implementing VIP management plan

**EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE (EOC)**

The EOC was a fantastic asset ready to support the emergency response. This provided an incident ready facility.

Noted that the facility was too small for such a large event but not reasonable to have a large scale facility sitting empty.

**EOC / ICC**

Need to ensure there is sufficient space, equipment and technology available to support a largescale event.

Not cost effective to have an operations centre sitting empty and operationally ready but need a plan detailing space available, how this will be used and made available. Support resource that will be required (equipment and technology).

**PUBLIC INFORMATION & WELFARE** Registration / Inquiry / Needs assessment / Children and young people / Psychological / Household goods & Services / Shelter & Accommodation / Financial assistance / Animal Welfare / Managing VIP's

**WORKED WELL**

**AFFECTED PARTY COMMUNICATIONS**

Generally good information and engagement with local community to keep informed. Positive community feedback.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

Lacked a co-ordinated plan to manage animal welfare.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – THANK YOU**

This event had a huge impact on local communities. There is an opportunity to thank the local community for there understanding, support and input during the fires.

This is also a great chance to raise awareness and promote better understanding of emergency events and how to be more prepared.

**DATE**

**COMMENTS**

<p><b>IWI SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Good engagement and support from Iwi partners.</p>	<p><b>VULNERABLE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>Could have done more to inform and support those needing additional assistance in the community.</p>	<p><b>Iwi Engagement – Opportunity to build on Iwi relationships and better involve in planning for future events. Consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a Te Tau Ihu – Top of the South Iwi / CDEM Group</li> <li>Iwi presence on WCG and CEG</li> <li>CDEM to engage with local Marae to understand support they can provide and process to mobilise in an emergency</li> <li>Iwi involved in Emergency Operations Centre event planning and training</li> </ul>	
<p><b>ANIMAL WELFARE</b></p> <p>HUHA (Helping You Helping Animals) used the A&amp;P showground as a temporary accommodation centre for evacuated animals which worked well proving to be a great facility.</p>	<p><b>SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS</b></p> <p>People wanted to help, in some cases “self-deployed” to support the response team. This was at times difficult to manage, created safety issues and frustrated those wanting to help.</p>	<p><b>ANIMAL WELFARE</b></p> <p><b>Finalise the Animal Welfare Plan. This should consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning from and being consistent with other local, regional and national plans</li> <li>Roles and Responsibilities</li> <li>Involvement of Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) / Animal Welfare (part of IMT?)</li> <li>Involve / consult with animal welfare agencies and develop MoU</li> <li>Formalise arrangements with A&amp;P showground</li> </ul> <p><b>Continue Sub-function committee meeting to ensure this is done.</b></p>	
<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS</b></p> <p>Generally kept community and stakeholders well informed. Community and stakeholders were generally supportive of the emergency response and efforts being made.</p>	<p><b>EVACUATION &amp; CORDON MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>A large number of people were evacuated at short notice.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p><b>Opportunity to build on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce fire risk associated with rural living and how to prepare for future events</li> <li>Update on evacuation process and being prepared (bag packed, plan for animals etc)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>MEDIA BRIEFINGS</b></p> <p>Generally well managed and provided good information. There is also an opportunity to reinforce importance of not breaching cordons.</p>		<p><b>SUPPORT AGENCIES &amp; VOLUNTEERS</b></p> <p><b>Develop process for managing support agencies and volunteers. This should consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-line information available including process to volunteer services. Could be in advance of events</li> <li>Staging area for training and provision of PPE for volunteers</li> </ul>	
<p><b>EVACUATION &amp; CORDON MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Properties were quickly and efficiently evacuated and cordons established to prevent access for safety and security reasons.</p>		<p><b>EVACUATION &amp; CORDON MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p><b>Need to review and update process to ensure this is fit for purpose. Consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roles and responsibilities clearly defined</li> <li>Where possible involve local resources to support (know the area and the community)</li> <li>Robust risk assessment process</li> <li>Consider complexities of evacuation – business needs, personal circumstance, animals</li> <li>Type of evacuation – out only or return under escort</li> <li>Simple update process to keep people informed before and during evacuation</li> </ul>	
<p><b>SUPPORT AGENCIES / GROUPS</b></p> <p>Strong support from various support groups such as Red Cross.</p>			

## LOGISTICS – SUPPORT THE RESPONSE TEAM *Facilities and Services to support response activities*

WORKED WELL	LESSONS LEARNED	PROPOSED ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
<b>TEAMWORK</b> Team pulled together to support each other. Strong working relationships.	<b>RESOURCES / WORK HOURS</b> Team worked long hours which are not always compensated.	<b>WELFARE OFFICER</b> A dedicated welfare officer should be part of the IMT. Should be focused on welfare of the team and not have operational responsibility.		
	<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b> Cross agency welfare was inconsistent and at times below an acceptable standard. Working extremely long hours, facilities not fit for purpose. PPE not always available or fit for purpose.	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL / SOCIAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need for better understanding of emotional cycles and timeframes</li> <li>Pre-identify and train navigators</li> <li>Better planning / prep for social environment in recovery</li> </ul>		
		<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b> Use risk / safety CIMS function in EOC and agencies.		

## RECOVERY *Post emergency clean up and close out*

WORKED WELL	LESSONS LEARNED	PROPOSED ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
	<b>REMEDIATION</b> Process to remediate and/or compensate for damage caused during the event is not well understood. As a result, this is taking longer than expected to resolve and frustrating those involved. Need to involve commercial sector (insurers) at the planning stage.	<b>REMEDIATION PROCESS</b> Need to develop and document the recovery and remediation process. This should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal and statutory obligations</li> </ul>		
	<b>MAYORAL DISASTER RELIEF FUND</b> While recognised as a positive step, the management and administration of this during the event could have been improved with greater resourcing.	<b>MAYORAL DISASTER RELIEF FUND</b> Opportunity to establish process and systems to manage disaster relief funds in advance of a future major event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative requirements and statutory obligations</li> <li>Donation and distribution system and process agreed up front</li> <li>Resource Requirements</li> <li>Inter-Agency Approach</li> </ul>		
	<b>RECOVERY RESOURCING</b> Did not allocate sufficient resource early enough to manage recovery. Utilising external (contract) resource to focus on recovery was noted as a positive step as this took pressure of the team managing the event.	<b>RECOVERY RESOURCING</b> Need to consider recovery resourcing at the start of the event and have a clear plan in place. This needs to be separate from managing the day to day operations of the emergency event.		