



Emergency Management

Group Brief – 7 May 2026

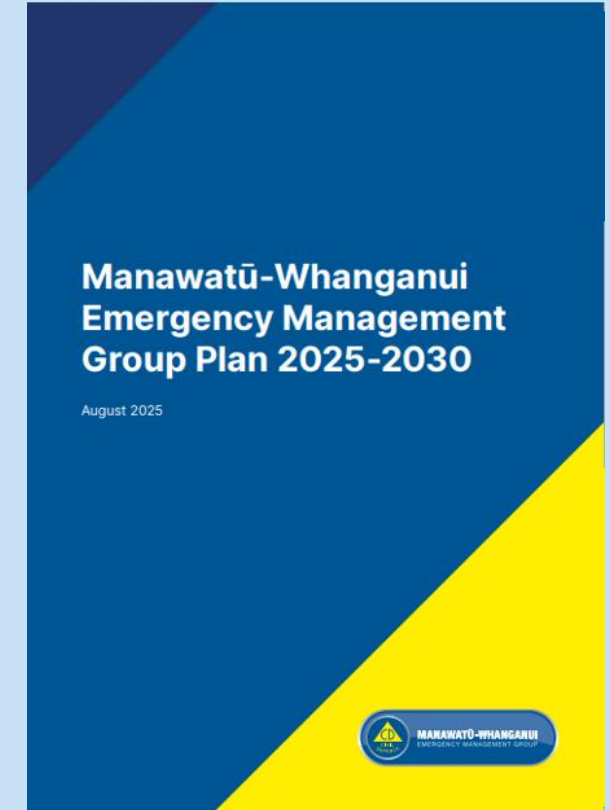


What is an emergency management Group?



In New Zealand, an **Emergency Management Group** is a **statutory body** established under the *Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002* (CDEM Act).

- An **Emergency Management Group** in New Zealand is the formal partnership of councils within a region, established by law, to lead and coordinate emergency management across all phases (Reduction, Readiness, Response, Recovery) in collaboration with partner agencies and communities.
- The Emergency Management **Joint Standing Committee** provides governance and strategic oversight of the Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group. It ensures the Group meets its legislative obligations under the CDEM Act and provides regional leadership before, during, and after emergencies.
- The **Coordinating Executive Group** is the **senior executive body** that supports the CDEM Joint Committee by providing advice, oversight, and leadership for emergency management across the region.



Manawatū-Whanganui Region Snapshot



Regional Snapshot

Area: ~22,220 km² (one of NZ's largest regions by land area)

Population (2023): ~251,412 people (5% of NZ total)

Density: ~11–12 people per km² (below NZ average of 18)

Urban Centres: Palmerston North, Whanganui

Districts: Tararua, Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Horowhenua, Ruapehu, PNCC, Whanganui.

Demographics

Age:

19% under 15 years

18% aged 15–29

43% aged 30–64

20% aged 65+

Ethnicity (2018):

74.1% European/Pākehā

25.1% Māori

8% Asian

5% Pacific Peoples

Median Income: \$36,400 (vs \$41,500 NZ average)

Key Hazards

Flooding – major rivers, valleys, and plains prone to floods

Severe Storms – heavy rain, wind, coastal swells

Landslides – steep terrain and rain-triggered slips

Earthquakes – active seismic risk

Drought – affecting rural and farming communities

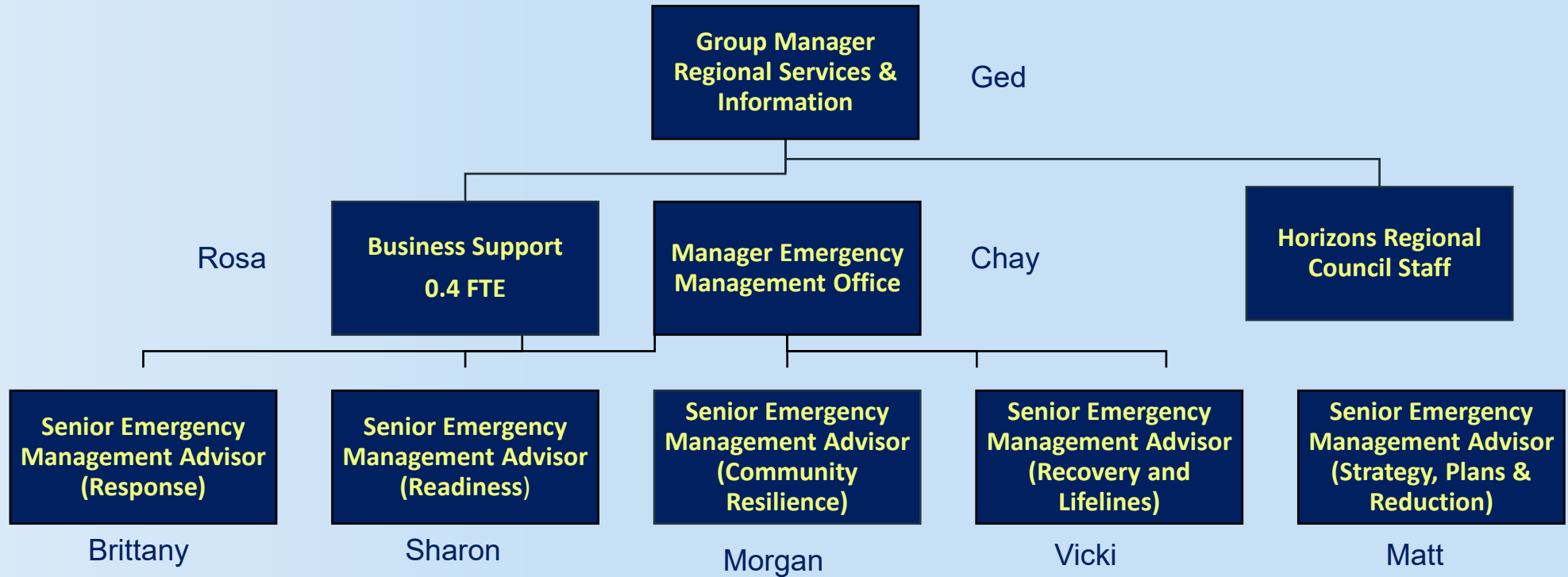
Pandemics – public health and social disruption

Coastal Hazards – inundation, erosion, and sea-level rise

Why This Matters

- Diverse hazards demand flexible and integrated planning
- Urban vs rural differences require tailored responses
- Aging population and strong Māori representation highlight the need for inclusive, community-focused resilience
- Climate change is amplifying existing risks

Group Office Emergency Management Team



Emergency Management Staff Across the Region



1



2



3



1.2



2



1 (Recruiting)



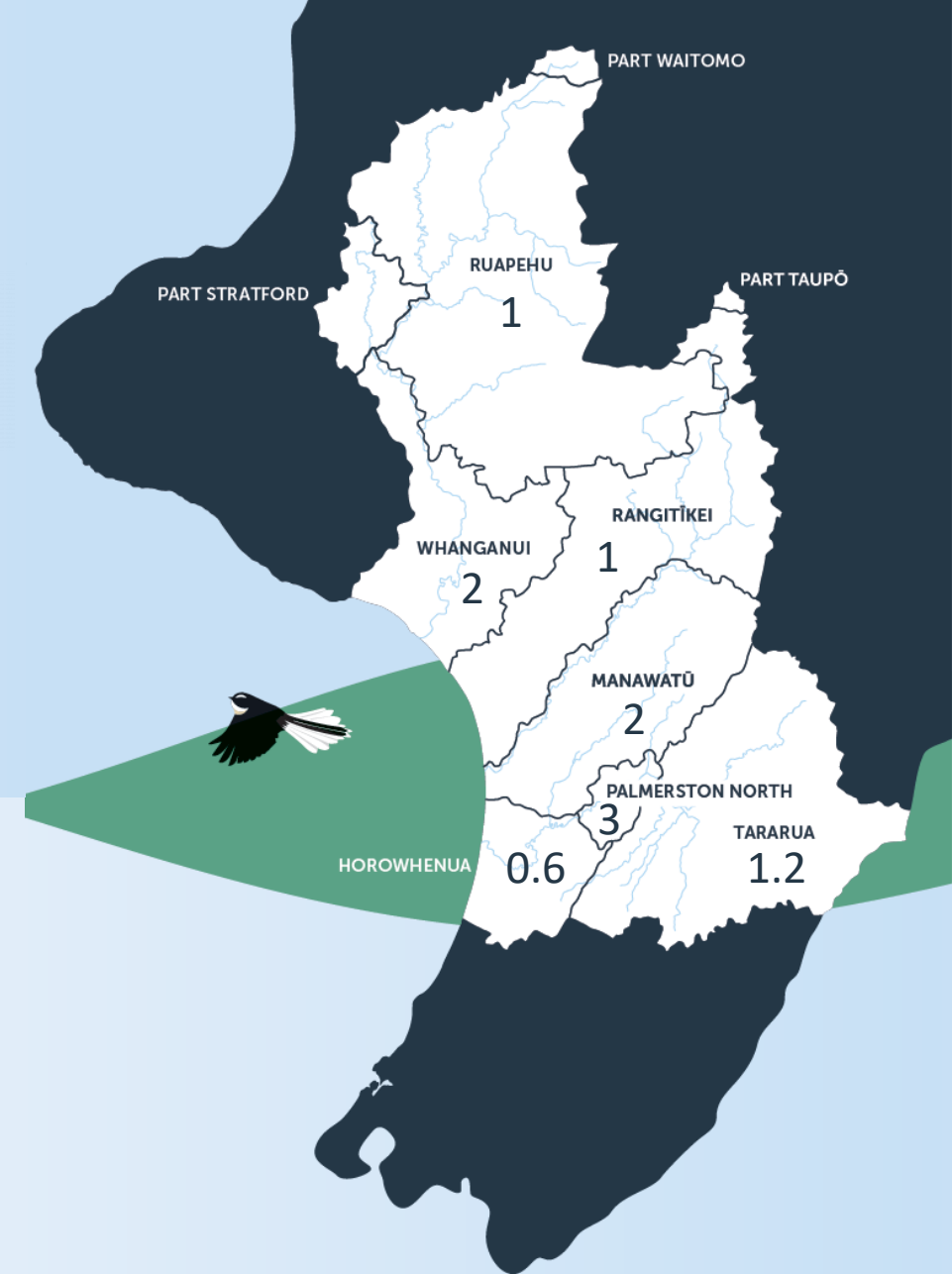
0.6



6.4 (.5 of these FTE is Harbour Master)

17.2

Total staff providing emergency management services across the Region



How Does Our Regional System Work?



- **Local ownership and delivery**

Emergency management staff are employed, managed, and funded by individual councils, who deliver operations within their communities.

- **Regional coordination function**

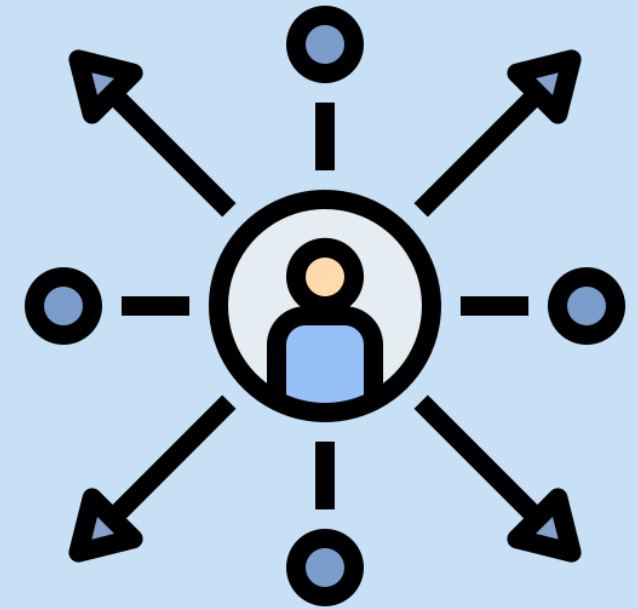
The Group Office supports the system through regional planning, training, exercises, and facilitation of multi-agency coordination.

- **Collaborative governance arrangements**

Policies, frameworks, and procedures are developed collectively to promote consistency across councils.

- **Escalation and support model**

During larger or multi-district events, councils rely on coordination, mutual aid, and support facilitated through the Group.



Advantages and Disadvantages



ADVANTAGES

- Strong **local knowledge and relationships** inform decision-making
- Flexibility to tailor approaches to **local risks and community needs**
- Councils retain **clear accountability** for local delivery

DISADVANTAGES / SYSTEM PRESSURES

- **Variable capability and resourcing** across councils limits regional consistency and equity
- **Coordination capacity is constrained**, particularly during prolonged or concurrent events
- **Interoperability challenges** across systems, tools, and practices
- Difficulty achieving **timely shared intelligence and situational awareness** at a regional through to National level
- Increasing expectations from **NEMA and Ministers** amplify these weaknesses

GOVERNANCE SIGNAL

Rising preparedness, assurance, and information demands are exposing the limits of the current model and accelerating the need for stronger regional coordination and common systems.

Change required



- **STRONGER REGIONAL COORDINATION CAPABILITY**

Increased resourcing and clearer authority to enable effective coordination during complex and multi-district events.

- **COMMON SYSTEMS AND TOOLS**

Adoption of shared information, intelligence, and situational awareness systems to support interoperability and timely decision-making.

- **DEFINED REGIONAL SURGE AND SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS**

Formalised mechanisms for scaling leadership, planning, and operational support across councils.

- **CLEARER ROLES, EXPECTATIONS, AND ASSURANCE**

Improved clarity on preparedness standards, escalation pathways, and performance reporting across the system.

- **SHIFT FROM VOLUNTARY ALIGNMENT TO DELIBERATE INTEGRATION**

Moving beyond goodwill-based coordination toward intentional, system-level design aligned with the EM Bill, EMSIP, and EMS-OS.

- **Governance takeaway**

- *The Regional system requires targeted intervention to remain fit-for-purpose under rising legislative, ministerial, and community expectations.*

What does the group office do in BAU?



The Group Office provides coordination, leadership, and support to ensure that councils and partner agencies in the region are prepared for and resilient to emergencies. Under BAU, their focus is on building capacity, relationships, and systems rather than direct response.

1. Strategic Planning, Governance & Policy Development.
2. Training, Exercising & Capability Building.
3. Partnerships, Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination.
4. Community Resilience & Public Education.
5. Operational Readiness & Support.
6. Assurance & Continuous Improvement.
7. Recovery Preparedness.
8. Risk Reduction.



Group Office Functions in an Emergency Response:



During an emergency, the Group Office becomes the operational backbone of the region running the ECC, supporting councils, coordinating across agencies, and keeping the response aligned, resourced, and connected to NEMA.

1. Coordination & Leadership
2. Situational Awareness & Intelligence
3. Planning & Action Management
4. Resource & Logistics Coordination
5. Communications & Public Information
6. Welfare & Community Support
7. Liaison & Interagency Coordination
8. Transition to Recovery



What else do we do?



CDEM INTERNAL TO HORIZONS – HORIZONS EOC

- Hazard & Risk Monitoring
- Infrastructure & Asset Readiness
- Emergency Operations Management – IMT / EOC
- Capability & Training for ECC and EOC staff
- Business Continuity & Resilience
- Response Framework & Documentation
- Partnership and multi agency coordination
- Continuous improvement and assurance
- Intelligence and information management
- Recovery and response planning and coordination
- EOC – ECC response activation and response management
- Public information and warnings
- Regional Group Plan requirements.



Moutoa floodgates were built in 1962 and are getting a few improvements this year.

What else do we do?



Maritime Transport Act 1994 (MTA) and associated supporting Maritime Rules:

- Navigation Safety
- Marine Oil Spill Response

TIER 2 MARINE OIL SPILL RESPONSE – REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Prepare & maintain a Tier 2 Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan (reviewed every 3 years, per MNZ requirements).
- Test & exercise the Plan twice yearly in line with MNZ direction.
- Store & maintain MNZ-provided response equipment.
- Maintain a minimum of 12 trained responders (as set by MNZ).
- Appoint a Regional On Scene Commander (trained & approved by MNZ).
- Respond to marine oil spills within the region



What else do we do?



HARBOUR MASTER AND NAVIGATION SAFETY

Regional Navigation Safety

Whanganui River: Navigation safety relies solely on Maritime Rules 91 and general maritime law.

No local navigation bylaw in place.

Emphasis on safe vessel operation and hazard awareness.

Our role: monitor compliance, provide education, and respond to incidents.

Manawatu River: Governed by the **Manawatu River Navigation Bylaw** in addition to Rule 91.

Bylaw provides:

Speed limits in certain areas.

Designated zones for different activities (e.g., recreational boating, commercial use).

Safety requirements for signage, markers, and vessels.

Our role:

Enforce bylaw provisions.

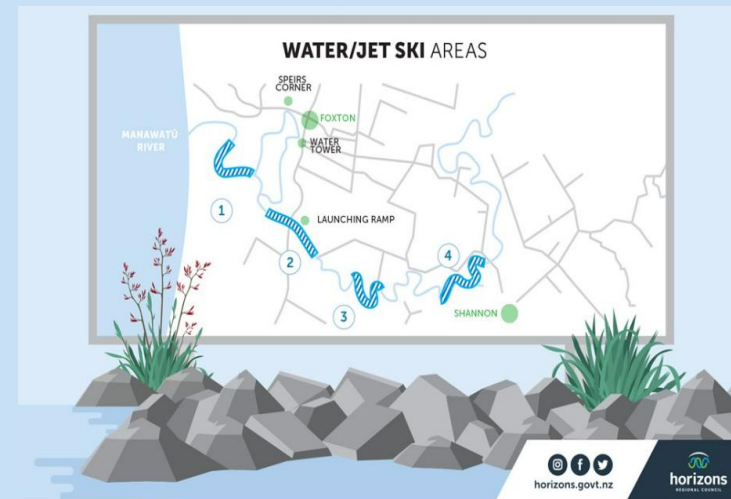
Conduct patrols and inspections.

Provide guidance and support for river users.

Ensure safe passage for both commercial and recreational traffic.

Regional Functions & Services:

- Risk monitoring and hazard identification on all rivers.
- Public education and awareness campaigns for safe navigation.
- Incident response and investigation.
- Collaboration with Maritime NZ local councils, and other stakeholders.
- Supporting regional recreational while minimising safety risks.



What is going on Nationally – EM Bill



New Emergency Management Bill What's changing

- Replaces the CDEM Act 2002 with a modern, all-phases framework
- Stronger focus on **risk reduction, readiness, and system assurance**
- Clearer expectations for **capability, interoperability, and leadership**
- Increased emphasis on **national consistency with local delivery**
- Stronger community preparedness, clearer expectations, and more coordinated support before, during, and after emergencies.
- Reflects lessons from recent severe weather and climate impacts

What this means for regions

- Shift from advisory to **more directive system settings**
- Higher expectations for **common operating picture, information management, and surge capability**
- Stronger governance, assurance, and reporting requirements

Indicative regional uplift impact

- **Capability uplift:** workforce, leadership pathways, surge planning
- **Systems & tools:** alignment (e.g. D4H), interoperability, data standards
- **Planning & assurance:** plan refreshes, exercises, compliance activity
- **Estimated impact:** *medium–high ongoing cost*, with upfront transition investment required (order of magnitude: **\$0.5–\$1.5m p.a., region-dependent**)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (EMSIP)



What it is

- A **national 5-year system improvement roadmap** to strengthen New Zealand's emergency management system
- Implementation roadmap approved; **funding bid submitted December 2025**

Why it matters

- Shifts the system from fragmented delivery to **consistent, scalable national capability**
- Aligns with the **new Emergency Management Bill** and lessons from recent events

Key system improvements

- **Regional surge support teams**
- **Expanded Resilience Fund**
- **Stronger partnerships** with iwi, businesses, and communities
- **Professionalised EM workforce** and career pathways
- **Improved systems and tools**, including a Common Operating Picture and smarter procurement

Bottom-line message

EMSIP provides the “how” for lifting capability and consistency across the system over the next five years.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS (EMS-OS)



What it is

- A **national suite of operational technologies** to underpin a modern, interoperable emergency management system

Purpose

- Provide **trusted data, shared situational awareness, and reliable communications** across the sector

Core components

- **Sector Foundational Data Platform** - Centralised, authoritative emergency management data
- **Sector Data & Visualisation Tool** - A national **Common Operating Picture** to support decision-making
- **NEMA Operational Tools** - Systems to support national-level coordination and response
- **Alerting & Communications Tool** - An updated or new **National Warning System (NWS)** for timely public alerts

Why it matters *EMS-OS enables consistency, interoperability, and faster decisions across local, regional, and national response.*

WHAT WE'RE ALREADY SEEING IN THE SECTOR



- **Higher preparedness expectations** – earlier readiness actions and pre-positioning of people and equipment
- **Lower thresholds for warnings and alerts** – alerting is becoming more proactive and precautionary
- **Earlier and more engaged political interest** – Ministers and central agencies engaging sooner, during monitoring and early escalation phases, not just during declared emergencies
- **Increased demand for real-time information** – significantly higher expectations from NEMA and Ministers during monitoring and response
- **Stronger emphasis on assurance and visibility** – clearer lines of sight on capability, status, and decision-making
- **Shift from reactive to anticipatory response** – monitoring, intelligence, and early action now expected as standard

Key signal

The operating environment is already changing, with behavior's, engagement, and expectations moving ahead of legislation.

Questions?

