



# *Be Ready for an Emergency*

*Communities preparing together to respond together.*

**Absolutely**

**POSITIVELY**

ME HEKE KI PŌNEKE  
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

**Wellington**

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## ***Be Ready for an Emergency***

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# INTRODUCTION

Wellington residents know about the need to prepare for events such as earthquakes, but it is also important to be aware of other hazards that could cause emergencies in Wellington.

In a major emergency you could be on your own for some days without power, gas, water, sewerage or transport. Police, fire and medical support staff may be unable to help. They will be focusing on major public problems and some roads could be closed.

This booklet suggests ways you can stay safe before, during and after emergencies such as an earthquake, flood, fire or tsunami.

Senior citizens and those who have mobility, vision, speech or hearing impairments need to take extra precautions. Additional information for these people is on page 6. This information will also be useful for people with chronic illnesses like diabetes, asthma or psychiatric conditions. If you do have specific needs, it is important that you also read the general information in this booklet.

The Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office has set up voice-recorded information through the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind for those who are blind or vision impaired, or who for other reasons prefer recorded information to printed material. To access this information call 4-389 3858.

# BE PREPARED

## YOUR BE READY ITEMS

You need to be self-sufficient for at least three days. Items suitable are listed below, but remember this is a guide only – there may be items that aren't practical for you, or others you may think of. Try to build up by adding a few items at a time, so that it is suitable for the people in your family or group. Here are some ideas for you to expand on:

- torch
- radio (battery powered)
- spare batteries
- light sticks (available from camping shops and NZ Safety Ltd) or candles and matches
- plastic bucket
- plastic rubbish bags or liners
- disinfectant
- toilet paper
- soap
- bottled water – three litres per person per day BUT MORE IS BETTER (see “How to save and store water” on page 14 for more details)
- can opener
- first aid kit and manual
- fire extinguisher
- knife
- Personal medication or equipment (enough for seven days). Remember to rotate your emergency supplies with your normal supplies regularly to make sure they don't expire.
- note book and pencil
- emergency blanket (available from camping shops and NZ Safety Ltd) and sleeping bags
- alternative cooking source (for example a barbecue or camping stove)
- food (at least three days' supply):
  - skimmed milk powder, UHT milk and/or condensed milk
  - fruit juice (tinned or foil sealed)
  - dried fruit (eg sultanas/raisins)
  - tinned food (eg baked beans, spaghetti, fish, meat, vegetables, fruit – but avoid high acid fruits such as boysenberries)
  - pet food (as required)
- baby supplies if appropriate (for example nappies, baby food, formula)
- check food and water stored in your kit every 12 months
- Eat fresh food first, then refrigerated and defrosted food from the freezer. Eat tinned or non-perishable food last. Cook all defrosted food so it lasts longer.

## AT HOME

Have an emergency plan for your home – and practise it. This will save you time, money and maybe your life in an emergency. As part of your plan, you should:

- be ready to evacuate with:
  - your Getaway kit (know how to find it easily and in the dark)
  - important family documents such as wills, trusts, loans, insurance policies, tax documents, birth certificates, passports, credit card and bank account statements. You may need some of this information in order to claim assistance or access money. Keep copies in a safe place so you can access them quickly and easily
  - strong footwear, warm clothing and sleeping bags
  - sleeping and washing needs
  - a special needs bag (containing items such as personal hygiene, medication and baby supplies).
- make sure everyone in your family knows:
  - what to do in an emergency and what the escape routes are
  - where to meet if separated and what to do if you are not there
  - an “out of town” contact to call and leave messages with
  - who collects the kids from school.
- send at least one member of your household or family on a first aid course
- back up any important files on your home computer and print out a paper copy for storing
- secure all heavy appliances and furniture and put heavy items on low shelves
- put strong catches on cupboards
- have insurance for your building and contents
- secure your water cylinder and header tank (see page 16)
- reinforce your chimney
- install smoke alarms and get a fire extinguisher
- safely store chemicals in secure containers
- learn how to turn off the water, gas and power if you have to. Write down directions so someone else can do it if needed, and leave them where they can be seen easily
- learn how to turn off heaters or appliances individually if you can’t turn off the gas, power or water for your whole house
- stay off the phone. Only use the phone to contact emergency services for help or to report damage – the phone system can overload very quickly. It is still a good idea to keep a list of important contacts – such as your doctor
- try to keep your vehicle’s fuel tank at least half full. Don’t store fuels in or around your home – they can be extremely hazardous
- keep spare cash in a safe place as banking services may be disrupted.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

- Get to know your neighbours. Make arrangements to help each other in an emergency. Be prepared to share cooking, accommodation and toilets.
- If you spend time away from home at work or for sport or leisure activities, find out if the building you are in has an emergency plan.
- Make sure a friend or family member knows where you are likely to be in case of an emergency if you are not at home. Let someone know if you plan to be anywhere out of the ordinary.
- If you leave your home during an emergency, leave a note or tell your neighbours before you go.

## AT WORK

- Make sure your organisation has an emergency plan. The Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office can supply suitable information.
- Secure cabinets, shelving and equipment to desks or walls.
- Know where the nearest emergency exits and assembly areas are.
- Have Be Ready items at work as you may not be able to leave if access into and out of Wellington is limited.
- Arrange for neighbours or friends to check your house and family if you cannot get home.

## IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY OR SPECIFIC NEEDS

If you have a disability, specific needs or are a senior citizen, you may need to take some additional precautions and actions in an emergency. The suggestions below can be followed along with the guidelines already in this booklet. Not all suggestions will be appropriate to your particular situation, so pick the ones that are relevant for you.

### Before the emergency

- Let friends, neighbours and colleagues know beforehand that you might need their help. Arrange with them to check on you in an emergency. You could have a signal – for example a towel displayed in a window – to let neighbours know you're all right.
- If you use a wheelchair, try to have more than one exit in case your main access is blocked. Draw a floor plan of your home showing where doors, windows, stairways, large furniture, and gas, water and electricity shut-off points are. Indicate at least two escape routes from each room where possible.
- Have seven days' worth of spare prescription medications or other medical supplies. Rotate your emergency supplies with your regular supplies to make sure they don't extend beyond their expiry date.
- If you have a condition which might worsen in an emergency, such as a result of additional stress, take this into account when including prescription or other medicines with your Be Ready items.
- Fill in the assessment checklist on page 19 and make four copies – one to keep with your Be Ready items; one that you can display somewhere easy to see in case someone else needs to help you; one to keep with you in case you are not at home when the emergency happens; and one to give to a friend to keep.
- If you can, keep spares of any special equipment in a safe place where they can be easily reached. These could include:
  - spare batteries for a hearing aid
  - spare glasses (you could keep old pairs of glasses as you replace them, so you have more than one pair)
  - extra walking sticks
  - an extra cane at work and at home if you have severely impaired vision or are blind
  - extra supplies of catheters or bladder pads if you use them
  - spare inner tubes for tyres and a pump, if you use a wheelchair.

- Secure objects (especially large furniture items) that could fall and block your path. This is important for everyone, but especially for people who use wheelchairs.
- Teach those who may need to help you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment.
- Keep a notebook, pens or pencils and a whistle or torch in several locations if you have trouble communicating.
- If you are blind or have impaired vision, practise alternative escape routes at home and at work. The ones you are used to may be blocked.

### **During the emergency**

- During an earthquake – duck, take cover under a table or doorway and hold on. Get away from windows if you can. If you are in a wheelchair, lock the wheels of the chair once you are in a safe and protected position.
- During an earthquake, if you can't move safely and quickly, stay where you are. If you are in bed, cover your head and body with your arms, pillows or blankets to protect yourself from falling objects. If there is a gap between your bed and an interior wall (away from any windows), try to get down to the floor there – and stay there.
- Use your whistle or torch to signal others if you need help.

### **After an emergency**

- Get the attention of others by calling for help, knocking on doors, banging on walls, striking objects together or blowing a whistle if necessary. Remember if you have already arranged for friends, neighbours and/or colleagues to check on you, they are likely to be on their way.
- Make sure you have protective clothing such as sturdy shoes on.
- If you are hearing impaired, get others to give you disaster information and updates as they become available over the radio.
- If you are elderly, consider asking a friend or neighbour to check for gas leaks – you may not smell the gas leaking.

# FIRE

Fires are among the most common hazards in homes, so be well prepared.

- Have a smoke alarm, preferably one in each area of your house. Test them regularly and change batteries once a year. Smoke alarms cost around \$20 and are sold by hardware and department stores.
- Make sure each family member can alert others in your house to a fire (perhaps by using a whistle).
- Keep a fire extinguisher within easy reach for small fires.
- Have an escape plan which includes:
  - two ways out of each room, such as a window and a door
  - ways to help the young, elderly and people with disabilities to escape safely
  - somewhere to meet outside
  - details on how to call the Fire Service on 111 from a safe telephone.
- Practise using all the escape routes, keeping low to the ground. Keeping low helps prevent breathing in smoke or poisonous fumes, which rise and leave a layer of clearer air close to the ground.
- Check that all the locks and fastenings for doors or windows on your escape route open easily. Practise opening them in the dark.
- Make sure you can get to your arranged meeting place in the dark.

## During a fire

- Don't grab door handles straight away – test them with the back of your hand first. If there is a fire behind the door, the handle will be hot.
- Stay as close to the ground as possible if you have to move through smoke.
- If your clothes catch fire, STOP, DROP to the ground and ROLL around to put the flames out.
- Close doors behind you if possible.
- Use the stairs – not the lifts.
- Get out and stay out! **NEVER** return to a burning building.

# BUSHFIRE

With its hills, bush and wind, Wellington is vulnerable to the effects of wildfire. There are a number of actions you can take to reduce “fire-traps” around your property.

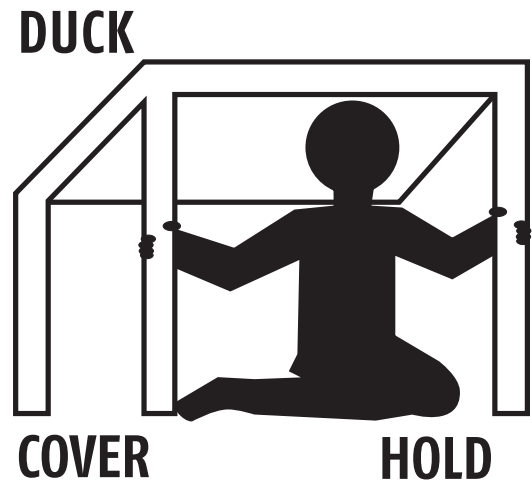
- Consider the type of vegetation around your house. Native vegetation is less flammable than gorse or exotics.
- Make sure you have a clear space around your house.
- Stack your woodpile away from the house, not against it.
- Trim overhanging trees or branches away from the roof and walls.
- Don't let timber and junk accumulate on your property. These are a source of fuel for a fire.
- Make sure your incinerator is strongly built, has a lid and no rust. Use it away from fences and buildings.
- Store petrol and other fuel containers in a proper shed or garage, away from the house.
- If your property is rural, make sure it can be easily identified and has an accessible water source.

# EARTHQUAKE

Know what to do before you need to do it.

## When the shaking starts

- Stay away from windows and chimneys.
- Don't run outside.
- Don't rush for the doorway if you are in a crowd – others will have the same idea. Move away from shelves containing objects that may fall.
- If driving, pull over to the side of the road and stop. It can be difficult to sense an earthquake – it may feel like the brakes or steering are faulty.
- Don't park under overpasses or power lines. Stay in your car until the earthquake is over. If the earthquake was severe, don't try to cross bridges or overpasses as they may be damaged.



## When the shaking stops

- Turn on your transistor or car radio for damage reports and details.
- Put on shoes to protect from broken glass and spills.
- Don't run outside as there may be falling debris and masonry.
- Check for hazards.
- Put out small fires. If this isn't possible, leave your home immediately, alert your neighbours and call the Fire Service on 111.
- Check for injuries. For medical attention see your local doctor or medical centre first. Don't go to a major hospital unless there is no other option – it is likely to be overwhelmed.
- Check the building for cracks or damage, especially chimneys and masonry walls.
- Turn off the electricity and water if there is any structural damage but don't turn off the gas unless you can smell it. Don't turn on the gas or electricity again until your power supplier has checked it is safe.
- Don't flush the toilet until you are sure sewage pipes are undamaged. This will also help to save water. If necessary, use a plastic bag lining in the toilet bowl or dig a deep hole in the garden.
- Don't touch downed lines or appliances. Treat all power lines as live.
- Check closets and cupboards. Open doors carefully, as objects may fall out.
- Check your neighbours.
- Don't use your vehicle. Keep streets clear for emergency vehicles.
- Be prepared for aftershocks. They can go on for weeks or even months.
- If you think you can offer help in your area, contact your nearest Civil Defence Centre.

# TSUNAMI

A tsunami is a series of sea waves generated by earthquakes or large slips on the seafloor.

A system is in place to allow an emergency warning to be broadcast on local radio.

- Be prepared to evacuate immediately, but only if the official radio statement authorised by the Fire Service, Police or the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office directs you to do so.
- If you are on the beach or near a river when a strong earthquake occurs, leave the area immediately.
- Tsunamis usually 'draw up' water before they come inland, so if you see the water level at a beach or river go down quickly after an earthquake it is probably a tsunami. Leave the area immediately.
- Aim to go at least one kilometre inland or 35 metres above sea level.
- **Don't go to a river or beach to watch the waves come in. If you see the tsunami it will be too late to get to safety.**

# STORM

Wellington can be exposed to bad storms. You can reduce the risk of damage or injury during storms:

## Before the storm

- Bring pets inside.
- Fix any loose boards or roofing iron.
- Clear away anything outside that may become a flying missile in the wind.
- Put strips of tape across large windows, close curtains and stay away from them.

## During the storm

- Stay indoors.
- Shelter in the strongest part of the house. This is usually the smallest inside room.
- Open windows on the sheltered side of the house to relieve pressure on the roof.
- If your house is seriously damaged, call your local Fire Service. Stay away from damaged areas.

# PANDEMIC

A pandemic influenza is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus. Symptoms can include high fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, fatigue, cough, sore throat, or a runny nose.

Influenza can be a mild or severe illness depending on the type of influenza virus causing it, and the age and general health of the person affected. It may take up to three days to show symptoms when you catch the flu.

Anyone can get the virus – being fit, active and healthy is no protection against the virus.

## Have a plan

- Who could help with food and supplies if you and your household are ill.
- Telephone numbers of people who live near you as well as your doctors.

## Build up your Be Ready items

- Have a supply of food and drinks to last for at least a week.
- Paracetamol is good for aches and pains, and for reducing high temperatures. Don't use anything else for children unless you talk to your doctor or pharmacist first.
- Masks worn by sick people can help stop the spread of germs. A mask can be worn only for a short time, and needs changing when wet from sneezing and coughing.
- Have tissues (or toilet paper) and plastic bags for used tissues.

## Steps to take from spreading the virus

- Wash and dry your hands before you prepare foods and eat, before and after looking after sick people, and after you cough, sneeze, wipe or blow your nose and use the toilet.
- Keep coughs and sneezes covered, preferably using paper tissues, and put the tissues in the rubbish bin.
- Give people who have a fever and/or diarrhoea plenty to drink.
- Give paracetamol for fever (do not give aspirin to children under 12).
- Try to keep well people and sick people apart.
- Sharing bedding, clothing and utensils may spread infection, but you do not need to wash a sick person's bedding, clothing and utensils separately from the rest of the family.

# FLOOD

Floods are one of New Zealand's most frequent hazards. If you live in an area that could be flooded:

- Check with Wellington City Council for information about your neighbourhood and its flood history. Find out the highest level flood waters have reached.
- Keep valuables, documents, some clothing and food above the high water mark. Attics or upstairs rooms are good places for storage, as long as there is easy access.
- Store chemicals in a high, safe place. If a flood occurs, leaks of these chemicals could be dangerous.

## When a flood warning is issued

- Listen to your radio or television for instructions.
- Keep your Be Ready kit and personal family documents at hand.
- Fill your car with fuel in case you need to evacuate. Fuel may be hard to get later if underwater storage tanks become flooded.
- Fill large containers with tap water for drinking and cooking.
- Secure outdoor items that might be washed away.
- Move valuable household items to high levels.

## When flooding starts

- Shut off the power and water to your home. If this is not possible, turn off or disconnect all electrical appliances.
- Do not attempt to drive or walk on a flooded road if the water is above knee-level or moving.
- Never enter flood waters on your own. They often carry loose objects which can be dangerous.
- Abandon your car immediately if it stalls and won't restart. Seek higher ground.
- Seek refuge upstairs, in the ceiling or on the roof if you can't leave your house. Take warm clothes, your radio, torch, light sticks, food and drink with you.
- Don't drink floodwater – it will be contaminated.

# TECHNOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Technological hazards result from manufacturing, storage and transportation accidents involving hazardous or dangerous substances.

## Hazardous substances accident

- Accidents involving hazardous substances will usually be indicated by diamond “◆” shaped warning signs. Call 111 immediately. Don't approach the accident.
- Move children and pets inside.
- Close all doors and windows and stay indoors. The safest place to be is at home.
- Listen to the radio and be prepared to evacuate if directed.

## Transportation accidents

- Don't go sightseeing. Extra people will hinder emergency services.
- Don't approach an accident if a vehicle carrying hazardous or dangerous substances is involved. Check for diamond shaped “◆” warning signs on any vehicles.
- Keep a safe distance, do not touch any liquids and avoid any smoke or gases. Remember, many gases are invisible.
- Don't smoke or use naked flames. Many substances are highly flammable.

# ONCE THE EMERGENCY IS OVER

If you left your home, make sure it is safe before you return.

If your home was damaged, you may not be allowed to return until Wellington City Council has inspected it, and approved it as safe. If you are not sure call the Council on 4-499 4444 or fax on 4-801 3138.

You can also arrange for your home to be inspected by the Building Research Association NZ (BRANZ). Call them on 4-237 1170 or fax on 4-237 1171.

- Wear sturdy shoes and rubber gloves while tidying spills or broken glass.
- Check with Wellington City Council that the water supply and sewerage systems are safe to use if your house was flooded.
- Throw away any food exposed to flood waters unless it is in an airtight container.
- Dry out carpets and furnishings as soon as possible. Take larger items outside if you can.
- Check for damaged property. If you think you will have to make an insurance claim, get in touch with your insurance company as soon as possible. After an earthquake, you may also be able to claim from the Earthquake Commission (EQC) on 0800 652 333.
- Keep a note of anything you throw away for insurance purposes.
- Take photographs of any damage you plan to claim for before tidying.
- Make sure you deal only with registered tradespeople if your property needs repairs. For a list of registered tradespeople in your area, call one of the following numbers:
  - Wellington Registered Master Builders Association, phone 4-381 2850 or fax 4-381 285
  - Wellington Master Plumbers Association, phone 4-384 4184 or fax 4-384 2456
  - Electrical Contractors Association NZ, phone 0800 506 688.
- Restock your Be Ready items.
- It is normal to feel anxious or afraid after a disaster. If you need to talk, your doctor will put you in touch with someone who can help.

# SAVING AND STORING WATER

## HOW TO SAVE AND STORE WATER

### Why do you need to store water?

Drinking water supplies will almost certainly be disrupted in a major emergency. You will need water for hygiene, food preparation and laundering, so it is an essential part of your Be Ready kit.

### How much water should you store?

Store three litres per person per day of drinking water. MORE IS BETTER. Pets will need drinking water too. Additional water is needed for hygiene and food preparation.

### Preparing water

- Use large-size plastic soft drink bottles. Don't use milk containers as milk residue can be difficult to clean from plastic milk bottles.
- Wash the bottles thoroughly in hot water.
- Fill each bottle until it overflows.
- Place the lids on tightly, making sure there are no air gaps.
- Label each bottle with the date the water was prepared and should be renewed.
- Water prepared in this way will still be drinkable after 12 months.

### Storing water

- Store bottles away from direct sunlight to help keep the water clear.
- Check the bottles every 12 months. If water is not clear, throw it out and start again.

### Using the water

- A few drops of lemon juice will freshen the taste, as will exposing the water to fresh air for a while. Also, try pouring it into a different container.
- Keep the bottles and refill them when the emergency is over.

## GETTING WATER OUT OF YOUR HOT WATER CYLINDER

The water in your hot water tank is a valuable source of clean water if the header tank in the ceiling is secure and the pipes have not been broken.

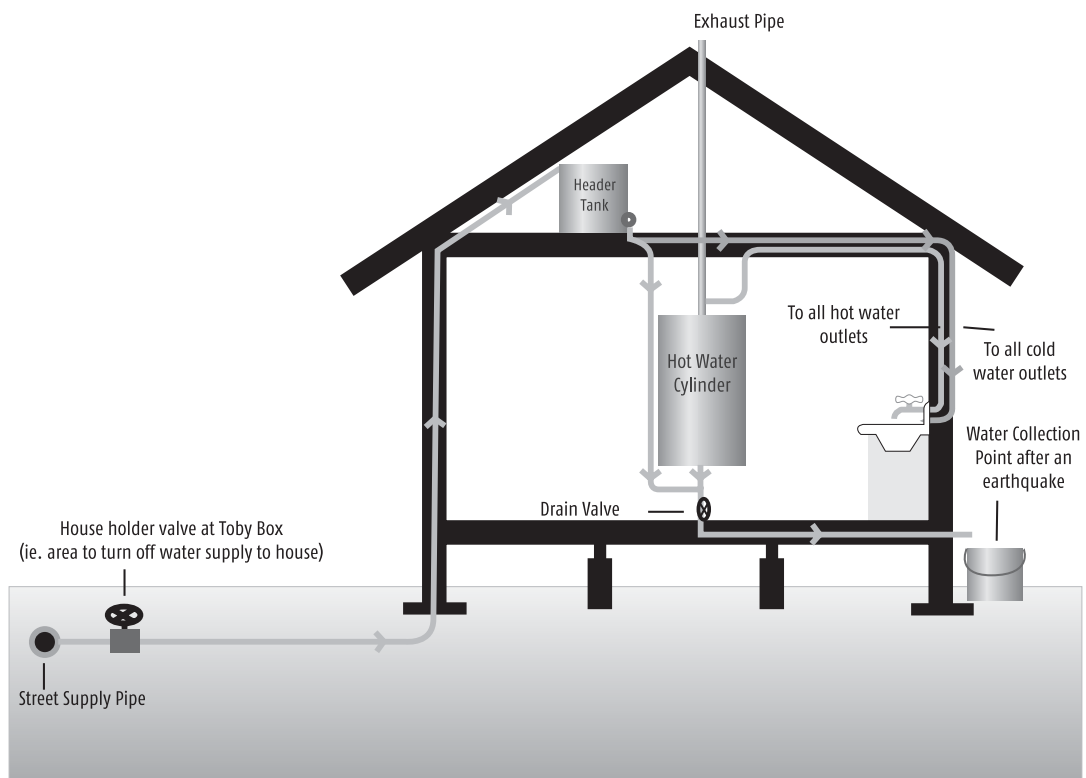
There are two main types of hot water tank systems used in New Zealand houses – low mains pressure and low pressure systems. For both systems:

- Shut off your water supply at the toby-box outside your home. This will prevent any contaminated water from broken pipes on the street siphoning into your plumbing.
- If any pipeline is damaged between the toby-box and your plumbing system, clamp the pipe with a G-clamp or improvise with a set of vice-grips. Another option is to bend the pipe 180° to stop the leak.

For both systems, extract water by opening the drain valve at the bottom of the hot water cylinder and collecting from the external drainage point.

Turn off the electricity if you drain the hot water-cylinder. This will prevent the element from burning out.

## HOW TO GET THE WATER OUT OF YOUR HOT WATER CYLINDER



## SECURING YOUR WATER CYLINDER

Your water cylinder is an excellent source of water, but needs to be secured to make sure the water in it will be available when you need it.

Securing your hot water cylinder is relatively straightforward, and the parts you need can be purchased cheaply from most hardware stores. Alternatively, it would be an easy job for your local builder.

### If you decide to do the job yourself, you will need

- A strong epoxy-type glue
- Blocking 50mm thick
- Nails
- Metal straps 25mm wide x 1mm thick.

You can follow the diagram below to ensure your hot water cylinder is secured properly.

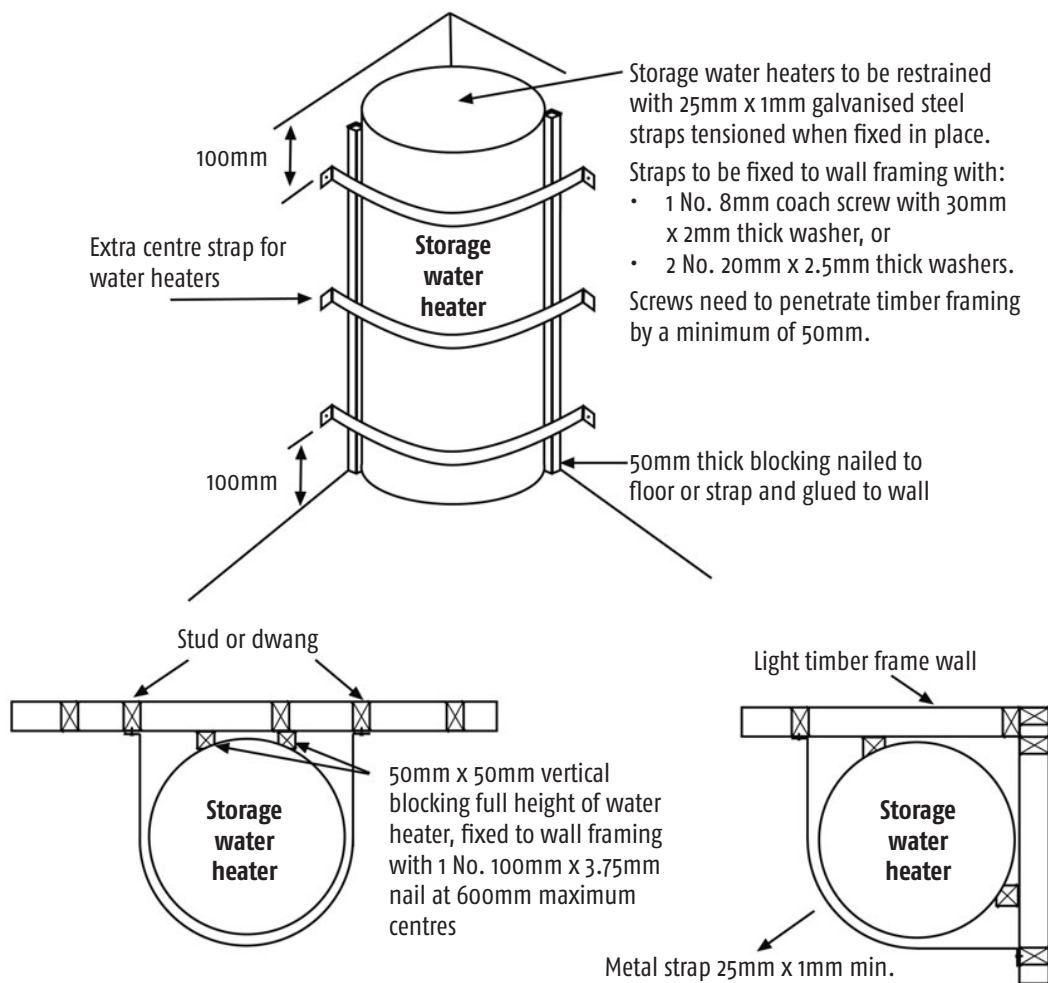
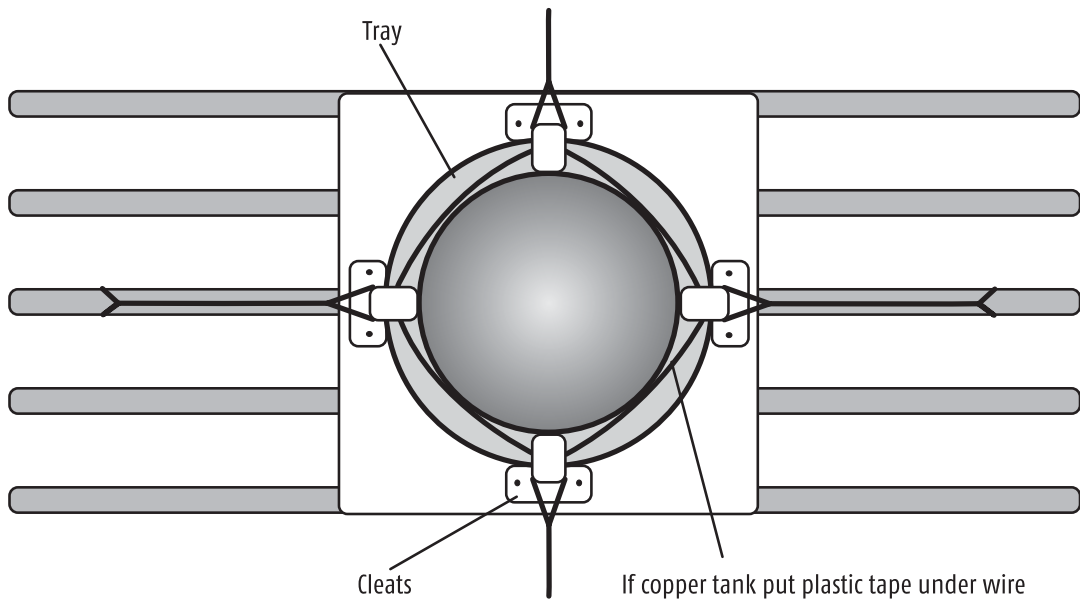
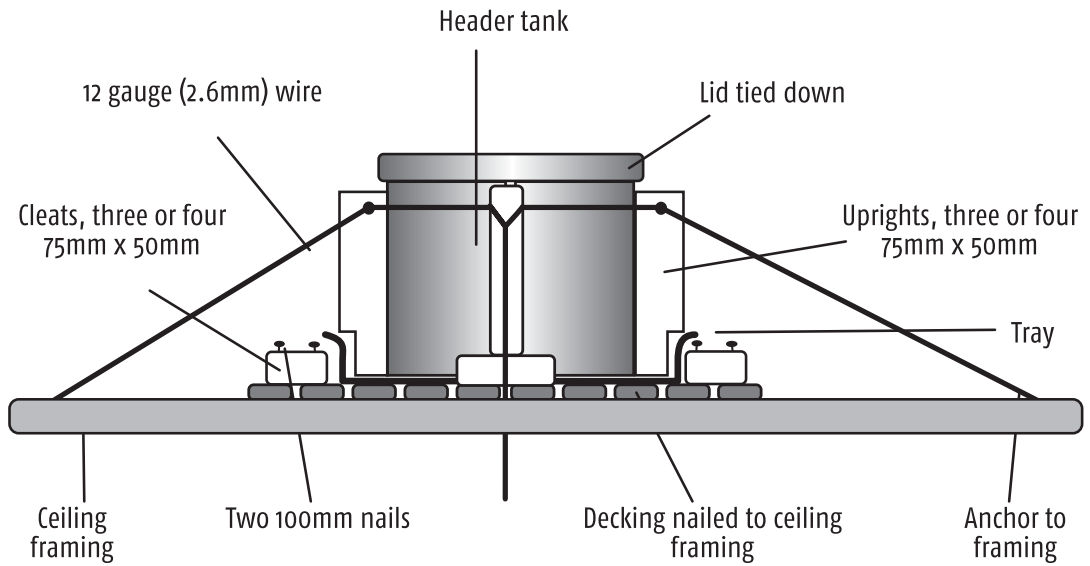


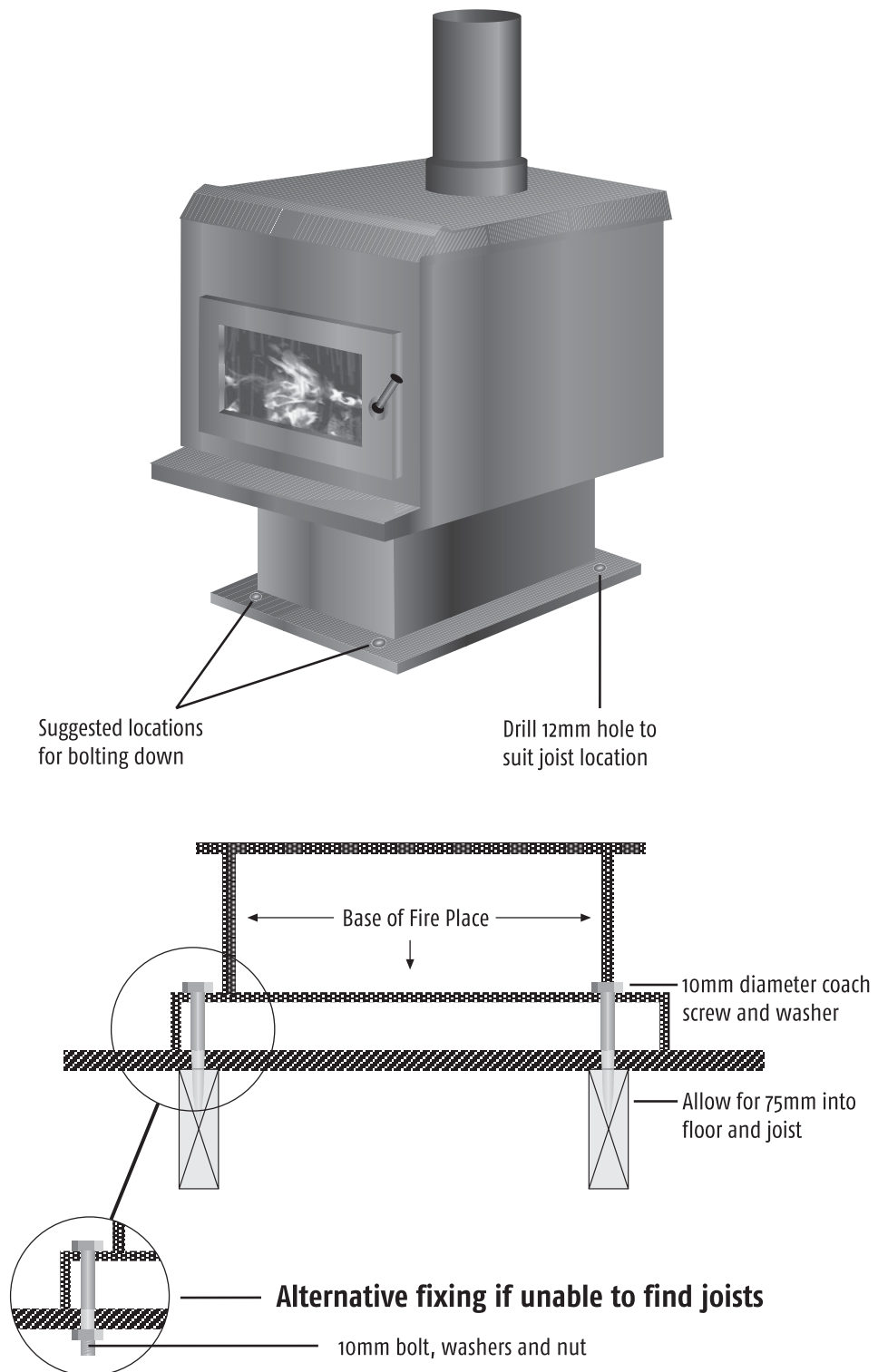
Diagram courtesy of Building Industry Authority (BIA).

## SECURING YOUR HEADER TANK



## SECURING YOUR FREE-STANDING FIREPLACE

In the event of a major earthquake, an unsecured free-standing fireplace could shift or topple, with serious consequences if in use at the time. Bolting the base to the floor will lessen this damage.







## **FOUR SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO:**

1. Develop a household plan
2. Find out where your nearest Civil Defence Centre is located
3. Learn First Aid
4. Call the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office for details on 499 4444

## **OTHER PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE WELLINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE:**

- *Business Emergency Planning Guides*
- *What to do after an Emergency* (for households)
- *Home Survival Planner* (brief checklist available in English, Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Maori, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, Chinese, Somali and Arabic)
- *Make a Clean Break: Live in a Safety Zone*
- *Emergency Planning Guide for Childcare Centres*

**You can contact WEMO by phone on:**

**Phone: 4-499 4444**

**Email: [wemo@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:wemo@wcc.govt.nz)**

**[www.Wellington.govt.nz/services/emergencymgmt](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz/services/emergencymgmt)**