



# *Emergency Planning Guide for Childcare Centres*

*Communities preparing together to respond together.*

**Absolutely**

**POSITIVELY**

ME HEKE KI PŌNEKE  
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

**Wellington**

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide has been compiled to assist supervisors and staff of pre-school centres within Wellington City to develop emergency management plans for their own centre. It has been compiled by staff from the Emergency Management Office of the Wellington City Council. In addition, information from the Ministry of Education, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (USA), and the American Red Cross has been used where appropriate.

As staff at a childcare centre, it is very important to realise that you are caring for a group which is identified as being 'at risk' during an emergency. The fear which can be experienced by young children means that their reactions during an emergency are sometimes unpredictable. Most adults have some knowledge of what action they should take to protect themselves during an emergency, but young children often don't know what kind of behaviour is appropriate. They need careful guidance and reassurance from the adults around them at such a time.

For young children, life revolves around regular routines. They spend the day within the familiarity of their world, at home, with baby sitters, or at a pre-school. When there is an interruption to their normal routine, the child experiences anxiety and fear. How adults help the child resolve these 'problem times' may have a lasting effect.

The need for centres to have emergency and response plans is based on the following factors:

1. Wellington is one of the most hazard-prone capital cities in the world.
2. A major disaster can occur without warning during a childcare centre's normal opening hours. This could cause widespread damage.
3. Utilities such as gas, water, electricity, communication and transport could be unavailable or inoperative.
4. Emergency services may not be able to respond to a centre's needs for several hours.
5. Children and staff injured during the disaster will need to be cared for within the centre environment, or at the local medical centre, at least for the first several hours following impact. You should make sure your neighbourhood medical group knows of your centre's existence.

Every childcare centre has its own unique characteristics and location. Design features and functions differ greatly from centre to centre. It is important that your emergency plan is developed with the specific needs of your centre in mind.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide has been designed for you to work through step by step, using the checklists provided as a guideline. By working through the checklists and activities, you should be able to discover areas of both strength and weakness in the emergency planning procedures at your particular centre. The guidelines and scenarios published in the guide are intended to show you the ideal way to implement an emergency preparedness plan. For smaller or newly-established centres, some of these suggestions may not be possible because of financial or other restrictions. So, just do as much as you can now, and as your resources increase, you can constantly revise and improve your plan.

# POSSIBLE THREATS AND HAZARDS

Wellington is vulnerable to the effects of a range of hazards. The effects of these hazards will vary because of factors such as location, age and type of structure, and neighbourhood activities. For example, close proximity to a major road, a petrol station or a landfill would have to be taken into consideration. Each centre needs to assess its relationship to those threats. Some centres, by virtue of their location, building design or population may be more vulnerable to the effects of a particular hazard, while providing relative resistance to other hazard types.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

Each centre has its own characteristics. Design features differ from building to building and the functions conducted within each building are not the same. Each centre has a different population with varying needs. The emergency plan must be specifically designed to meet the individual requirements of each centre. At the planning stage, it is recommended that the following process be observed:

- Assess possible threats.
- Study the building's design features and installations to ascertain assets and deficits with respect to hazards.
- Consider the needs of the resident population.
- Identify key positions and personnel for dealing with the emergency.

## HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Most threats to life and property in a building can be either accidentally or deliberately caused. Threats which must be assessed are:

### 1. Natural hazards

- geological (earthquakes, tsunamis)
- hydrological (floods)
- meteorological (severe storms, cyclones)
- wildfire (bush fires).

### 2. Technological hazards

- storage
- manufacturing
- transport
- waste/contamination.

### 3. Fire

### 4. Bomb threats

### 5. Civil disturbance

### 6. Pandemic

In Wellington, common threats are earthquakes, severe storms and fires. While attention is focused on these, planning must consider all other risks as some centres are in locations which are at risk from storm damage, flooding and other specific hazards.



# DESIGN FEATURES – BUILDING CHECKLIST

- When was your centre built? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is your building?    single storey     multiple storeyed
- Are strong winds a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are heavy rains a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are floods a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are wildfires a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are earthquakes a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are tsunamis a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are hazardous substances a risk to your centre?    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does your centre have a vulnerable population which will have special requirements in an emergency? (e.g. children or people with disabilities)    
Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Yes No

- Does your centre have backup power supplies, emergency lighting, etc?

 

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Is your centre prepared for the hazards identified?

 

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Is your centre constructed to any particular design standard or with any special engineering features?

 

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# CONTENTS CHECKLIST

- Are there any large objects which are on wheels, but not secured? (e.g. pianos, heavy trolleys)

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there heavy objects stored above head level?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Do you have open shelving without restraining straps or 'lips'?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any cabinets which do not have child-proof catches?

- Are free-standing cabinets or appliances secured against falling?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are hanging plants or pictures secured against falling?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any televisions or computer monitors which are not secured to the floor/table?

- Is your water tank secured?

- Do you have any lighting or heating units which are not secured?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# EVACUATION ROUTE CHECKLIST

The key to developing procedures for a quick and orderly evacuation is a thorough assessment of the hazards likely to be encountered enroute from activity rooms to safe, open-space areas. Help with this assessment and subsequent planning steps may be obtained from the New Zealand Fire Service.

- Are signs posted near lifts prohibiting their use in emergencies?    
*(Lifts are extremely vulnerable to damage from earthquakes. Ground shaking may cause counterweights and other components to be torn from their connections, causing extensive damage to lift cables and operating mechanisms.)*
- Are lockers, bookshelves, and other storage units which may line hallways or other access ways, fitted with secure latches?
- Are freestanding storage units secured to prevent falling?
- Are glass panels in hallways and/or doors made of safety (wired) glass?
- Have children been warned that following an earthquake, hallways may be cluttered with debris from ceilings, fallen light fixtures, broken glass, and toppled storage units?
- Is lighting dependent on electricity rather than sunlight?    
*(If the lighting system fails in enclosed hallways or stairways, resulting darkness will make it difficult to navigate safely.)*
- If emergency (battery-powered) lights are available, are they secured against falling?
- Do building exit routes pass through arcades, canopies, or porch-like structures?    
*(Columns supporting arcades or porches may fail and roof overhangs may sag or fall.)*
- Are there clay or slate tiles on roofs of centre buildings, or is the building faced with parapets, balconies or cornices?    
*(Roof tiles, parapets, balconies, cornices and other facades and decorations may fall during an earthquake. And, because they have been weakened, they may fall after the ground stops shaking.)*
- Have children been instructed to move quickly past building exits?    
*(Danger of injury is high in these hazardous areas.)*
- Are gas, sewer and power lines near outdoor assembly areas?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY HAZARD CHECKLIST

In an emergency, it is possible that your centre could be affected by hazards in your local area, even if the centre itself is not damaged. You should locate the following potential hazards:

- Are there facilities containing toxic, chemically reactive, and explosive materials?    
(*manufacturers and users – e.g. service stations or drycleaners*)

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are you close to high-voltage power lines?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Do transportation routes of vehicles carrying hazardous materials run close to the centre?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any major underground gas and oil pipelines nearby?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are you close to any power transformers?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are you close to any multi-storey buildings vulnerable to damage or collapse?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any unsecured water towers or water tanks vulnerable to damage or collapse?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Many of the above potential hazards are not readily apparent. Help in identifying their locations can be obtained from the Fire Service or Wellington City Council.

**Determine the vulnerability of your centre to the following earthquake effects**

- strong to violent ground shaking
- flooding from collapsed dams
- landslides
- tsunamis (seismic sea waves)
- school swimming pools.



# POPULATION CHECKLIST

Another thing which must be considered is that young children are a group which will be more 'at-risk' than others during an emergency. It is important to identify the special requirements which children have, and to be prepared to deal with them. Provision must be made for children who are too young to follow evacuation procedures by themselves, or to take shelter when the 'drop, cover and hold' command is issued during an earthquake.

• How many children are normally at the centre during the day? \_\_\_\_\_

• Do you have a 'peak' time (e.g. after school) when you have more children than usual?  Yes  No

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• What is the age range of the children at the centre? \_\_\_\_\_

• Have you made arrangements for children who have special requirements?  Yes  No  
(e.g. children too young to walk, medication needs, etc)

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Do you have lists of parents/caregivers, and ways of contacting them after the emergency is over?  Yes  No

*(Remember not to use the telephone after an emergency unless lives are in danger. The lines must be free for emergency services.)*

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• What arrangements have you made with parents/caregivers if children have to stay longer in your care?  Yes  No

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Have you discussed with individual parents/caregivers what their expectations of your centre are regarding care given following a disaster?  Yes  No

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# FLOOR PLAN AND MAP

A simple floor plan of the centre and grounds can be a useful planning aid. It can be used to note potential hazards, the location of utilities, emergency equipment and supplies.

It can also provide a basis for:

- establishing an evacuation route
- identifying safe, open space assembly areas
- developing procedures to conduct further emergency responses
- procedures such as search and rescue, first aid etc.

Mark clearly the names and locations of activity rooms, toilets, heating plant, hallways and all doors and closets. In addition, locate:

- main shut-off valves for water and gas
- electrical power master switch
- overhead power lines
- underground gas lines and power cables
- sewer lines
- stoves, heating/air conditioning equipment
- portable, battery-powered PA equipment/loudhailers/radios/lighting
- outside water taps/fire hoses
- fire extinguishers
- first-aid equipment
- rescue equipment
- open areas.

# EMERGENCY DRILLS

As you work through this and subsequent steps, make a list of your information needs, such as the locations of sewers and underground gas lines. Then contact the appropriate information source(s) in your district or community (e.g. the New Zealand Fire Service, local gas and electricity suppliers, or the Wellington City Council).

Because many emergencies strike with little or no warning, life-protecting actions must be taken immediately at the first indication. There will not be time to think through what to do. Therefore, of all emergency preparedness measures, emergency drills are the most important. Their purpose is to help children (and staff) learn how to react immediately and appropriately.

Emergency drills should be held regularly, preferably at least twice a year. Note: the New Zealand Fire Service should be notified in advance when fire alarms are involved. A log book should be kept which shows the dates of all emergency drills, and the time taken to complete each drill. The log book should also record any problems encountered, the corrective action to be taken, and the date upon which that action was completed.

## EVACUATION DRILL

Building evacuation during a flood, fire or following an earthquake is important due to the potential danger of explosions or collapse. If the building shows no structural damage, however, it may be safer to stay inside.

This section will help you determine:

- what dangers to expect during an emergency
- what quake-safe actions to take during an earthquake
- how to conduct emergency drills
- how to develop procedures for evacuating centre buildings during an emergency
- how to practice and evaluate the effectiveness of your emergency drills.

### The evacuation signal

This should be an instantly recognisable signal, such as an electric siren or the continuous ringing of a hand bell. Because the wires of an electric alarm system can be damaged in an emergency, it is advisable to have a back-up signal. The nearest alarm call point should be activated and the building evacuated as soon as possible. All staff should know the location of the nearest alarm call point and know how to activate the alarm.

### Telephone and radio

Practice in the use of the telephone to contact the appropriate emergency services should be included in practice drills. However, the telephone should not be used in an emergency except for contacting emergency services, when lives are in immediate danger. The use of a radio should be included in practice drills, where relevant.

### Doors and escape routes

All children and staff should be familiar with all possible escape routes available to them, and should be aware of any routes which could become unsafe exits during an emergency.

Children and staff should evacuate the buildings in an orderly manner by the shortest and safest escape route, moving singly or in small groups. All evacuation procedures must be planned so that occupants spend as little time as possible in potential danger spots. Lifts should not be used. All doors should be closed after rooms and other spaces have been evacuated. It is recommended that you have a pre-arranged signal, for example a note or sign, to indicate that a room has been vacated.

## **Primary escape route**

This should be the normal daily exit route.

## **Secondary escape route**

Secondary escape routes should be included in the regular evacuation drill from time to time. These could be an exterior fire escape, or a route through adjoining rooms. Windows should not be used as escape routes. In centres where external windows are the only alternative escape route, however, it is essential that they can be opened fully, can be secured in an open condition against aftershocks during the evacuation process, and that they lead to a safe exterior escape route. Check at regular intervals to make sure that secondary escape routes are not blocked.

## **Lifts**

Lifts must not be used during an evacuation as they may become inoperable in a power failure, damaged during an earthquake, or may be required by Emergency Services.

## **Checking rooms**

All toilets, and other places which may normally be occupied, must be checked to ensure that no-one remains in the building.

## **Emergency kit, first aid cabinet, fire extinguishers and rescue equipment**

All staff should know the location of these, and should practice using them. During drills and evacuations, staff should take the emergency kit and rescue equipment to the assembly area.

## **Assembly areas**

During an evacuation, children should move to a pre-determined assembly area well clear of buildings and flood levels, and away from hazards such as large trees and power lines. The location of the assembly area will depend on the type of emergency.

## **Roll call/name check**

Children's names should be checked against the list of those present on that day. A check should also be made to ensure that all staff members are present. The centre supervisor should visit each assembly area and ascertain how many children and staff, if any, are still in the buildings.

Ensure that each child is provided at the assembly area with an identification tag showing his or her name, address and age.

# **EARTHQUAKE DRILL**

The essential components of earthquake drills are group discussions, demonstrations, and exercises designed to help children learn and practice where to seek shelter and how to protect their heads and bodies from falling objects (e.g. debris from ceilings, light fixtures and shattered glass).

## **Effective earthquake drills simulate**

- actions to be taken during an actual earthquake
- actions to be taken after the shaking stops.

## Following the 'drop, cover and hold' Command, Children should



- Immediately take cover under counters or tables, and turn away from windows. Advise children to move with their 'shelters', as furniture is likely to travel during strong ground shaking. Lightweight furniture may topple, and children should try to keep it upright by holding onto the legs. Alternatively, if there is no "shelter" children should get in to the "Turtle Position" by crouching on all fours and then covering their heads with their hands.
- Remain in sheltered position for at least 60 seconds. The duration of ground shaking will depend on a number of factors.
- Be silent and listen to instructions. Children should be advised to anticipate the noise that accompanies an earthquake, and they should be cautioned to remain silent in order to hear your instructions.

## During the earthquake drill, you should:

- Take cover. When you (and other staff) take cover, your example reinforces the importance of emergency drills. This positive action will also assure children that adults will be safe and able to care for them.
- Talk calmly to children. Remind children to take deep breaths to help them stay calm, or encourage them to count softly (in whispered voice).
- Review procedures for evacuating after shaking ceases if it is not safe to stay inside.
- Remind children that after a large earthquake, they should be prepared for aftershocks, and that they may have to take further 'quake-safe' action.

## Safe distance

If the signal to evacuate the building is given, all occupants should proceed to the agreed assembly area, which must be at a safe distance from any buildings and other potentially dangerous structures, such as power poles and water tanks.

## A safe distance is:

- 20 metres from a single storey building
- 40 metres from a two storey building.

*Keep well clear of all overhead power lines.*

## FIRE DRILL

When the instruction to evacuate is given, all occupants must leave the building as quickly as possible by the safest route (see evacuation drill).

If a fire alarm connected to the local Fire Service is used in a fire drill, the Fire Service should be notified in advance.

## RESCUE DRILL

Teams properly trained in emergency management measures, including first aid and light rescue, should practice their procedures regularly.

## OTHER DRILLS

Establish and practice drills for other emergency procedures, such as the re-occupation of buildings and/or sending children home. It is a good idea to have parents/caregivers participate in an evacuation drill by having them come to pick their children up, as they would be required to do in an actual emergency.



# EVALUATION OF DRILL EFFECTIVENESS

Use the following checklist to assess the effectiveness of your current emergency drill procedures. If you have not, as yet, initiated emergency drills in your centre, use the checklist as a guide for developing and conducting meaningful emergency drills.

- Are all children and staff familiar with the 'drop, cover and hold' procedure?
- Have all children (who are old enough) demonstrated their ability to take immediate and correct actions?
- Do staff take cover with children during drills?
- Is there sufficient shelter space under tables, desks, and counters for all children?
- Do all children know how to protect themselves if no shelter is available?
- Are staff and children prepared to remain in quake-safe positions for up to 60 seconds?
- Are children encouraged to be silent during drills?
- Are staff prepared to maintain relative calm, and reassure children?
- Are children evacuated from classrooms to a safe outdoor area during a fire drill, or following a simulated earthquake?
- Are all children and staff familiar with both primary and secondary escape routes?
- Does your post-earthquake building evacuation procedure consider that strong after-shocks may occur within minutes after the main event?
- Do staff remember to take the register/list of names and response checklists to outdoor assembly area(s) during emergency drills?
- Have staff who have been assigned emergency response duties practiced their roles during your emergency drills?
- Have children been given ample opportunity to discuss their fears and concerns about emergencies?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Have children been instructed on how they can help each other?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Are emergency drills viewed as an opportunity to discuss emergency preparedness in the home?
- Have parents/caregivers been informed about your emergency safety procedures?
- Have staff members been encouraged to prepare their own families to cope effectively during and after an emergency?

# EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

All the procedures listed under 'Emergency Drills' will also apply in an actual emergency. All staff and children should be familiar with these procedures. In the event of an actual emergency, there are other procedures which should also be followed.

## Appliances, power, fuel and water supplies

Before leaving the premises, staff must turn off appliances, as well as power, fuel and water supplies. Please note, however, that you should only turn off the gas if it is leaking (you will be able to smell it). If you do turn the gas off, you will not be able to turn it on again manually for safety reasons. You will have to wait until someone from the gas company can turn it on, and in a major disaster this could take several days. All switches, valves and fittings must be easily located and operated, even in darkness.

Do not turn off water mains which supply fire-fighting equipment.

## Clothing

If time permits, staff should ensure that children are adequately clothed prior to evacuation. This is particularly important during cold or wet weather.

## FIRE EVACUATION

Where a fire is not able to be easily extinguished, the first priority of centre staff is to evacuate the building immediately. As many fire alarm systems are not connected to the Fire Service, it is essential that, in the event of a fire, the Fire Service is notified.

## EARTHQUAKE EVACUATION

The first indication of a damaging earthquake may be a gentle shaking. You may notice the swaying of hanging plants and light fixtures, or hear objects wobbling on shelves; you may be jarred first by a violent jolt; or you may hear a low (and perhaps very loud) rumbling noise. A second or two later, you'll really feel the shaking, and find it very difficult to move from one place to another.

It's important to take 'quake-safe' action at the first indication of ground shaking. Don't wait until you are certain an earthquake is occurring. As the ground shaking grows stronger, danger increases. For example:

- Free-standing cabinets and bookshelves are likely to topple. Wall-mounted objects (such as clocks and artwork) may shake loose and fly across the room.
- Suspended ceiling components may pop out, bringing light fixtures, mechanical diffusers, sprinkler heads, and other components down with them.
- Door frames may be bent by moving walls and may jam the doors shut. Moving walls may bend window frames, causing glass to shatter, sending dangerous shards into the room.

The noise that accompanies an earthquake cannot cause physical harm. However, it may cause considerable emotional stress – especially if you are not prepared to expect the noisy clamour of moving and falling objects, shattering glass, wailing fire alarms, banging doors, and creaking walls. The noise will be frightening, but a little less so if it is anticipated.

### **If indoors**

- Stay inside; move away from windows, shelves, and heavy objects and furniture that may fall. Take cover under a table or desk, or in a strong doorway and hang on.
- Although doorways have traditionally been regarded as safe locations, it is important to anticipate that doors may jam shut during an earthquake.
- In halls, stairways, or other areas where no cover is available, move to an interior wall. Turn away from windows, kneel alongside a wall, bend close to knees, cover sides of head with elbows, and clasp hands firmly behind neck.
- In libraries, immediately move away from windows and book shelves, and take appropriate cover.

### **If outdoors**

- Move to an open space, away from buildings and playground equipment. Lie down or crouch low to the ground (legs will not be steady). Keep looking around to be aware of dangers that may demand movement.
- If in a vehicle, stop the vehicle away from power lines, bridges, overpasses, and buildings. Children should remain in their seats and hold on.

Indoors or outdoors, when an earthquake occurs:

- **TAKE ACTION AT THE FIRST INDICATION OF GROUND SHAKING**

## **OTHER EMERGENCIES**

Agreed evacuation procedures for other types of emergencies should be established and followed.

# IMMEDIATE RESPONSE AND CARE REQUIREMENTS

A major emergency will mean that local emergency personnel will be severely overtaxed. It may be several hours before they are able to respond to every centre within the affected community.

Your responsibility to ensure the care and safety of children during the immediate aftermath of an emergency is especially critical. First aid is likely to be required. The whereabouts of every child should be known. Small fires must be controlled before they get out of hand, and utility systems must be secured.

Because emergencies often occur without warning, there will not be time to read through a shelf plan before designating roles and responsibilities. This section addresses how you can prepare to carry out effective first-hour emergency response actions. It covers:

- what to anticipate
- how to evaluate staff resources and training needs
- how to facilitate immediate action.

## ANTICIPATING FIRST-HOUR PRIORITIES

During the first hour after an emergency, centre staff will have to handle many important tasks:

- attend to the first-aid needs of injured children and centre personnel
- account for all children
- locate missing children and personnel
- extinguish small fires before they get out of hand
- check damage to utility systems and appliances; if necessary, shut off main power, and water (only turn off the gas if you can smell it)
- seal off and indicate areas where hazardous materials have spilled
- calm and reassure frightened children
- anticipate an influx of concerned and anxious parents/caregivers
- keep records of children released to parents/caregivers or other authorised persons
- where possible, establish communication with emergency services and the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office.

Determine who does what, where, and how as you work through the steps in this section. The key to effective response is thoughtful preparation that includes planning, training, and practice. Base your initial preparation efforts on your current capabilities. Plans and procedures can then be steadily upgraded as you gain new skills and resources.



# ASSESSING STAFF SKILLS

Many of the actions identified in the first hour require special knowledge and training. The following checklist and suggestions will help you determine and improve the current capability of your staff to carry out emergency responsibilities.

- Do you keep up-to-date lists of staff certified in first aid/CPR?
- Do you have procedures for checking gas leaks, turning off utilities (if necessary), and extinguishing small fires?
- Are staff members trained in fire control?
- Are you able to provide or enhance fire safety training?  
*(Discuss with the Fire Service how to develop a programme for training staff and children. Course content could include fire detection methods, proper use of fire extinguishers, and appropriate response to fire and smoke.)*
- Do you have procedures for coping with hazardous material spills?  
*(When you encounter a hazardous material spill, the safest procedure involves sealing off areas, posting signs, and restricting building entry until Fire Service professionals can assess hazards and carry out clean-up operations.)*
- Have staff prepared themselves to reduce children's anxiety and fear during this period?

## IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER AND PREPARE

- Children will be concerned about parents/caregivers, friends and pets. They will need continuous reassurance and encouragement to express their concerns.
- Convey the likelihood that parents/caregivers may be delayed for several hours because of traffic. Remind children that parents/caregivers have been told that you will take care of them until they arrive.
- Dispel myths about earthquakes. ("The ground will not open up and swallow you.")
- Encourage children to express their feelings through drama, art, writing activities and music (where appropriate).
- Encourage children to comfort each other. Physical contact helps reduce feelings of separation and isolation.
- Discuss the chores that may await them at home. Emphasise the importance of their role in restoring order. After an earthquake, advise children to anticipate aftershocks and review quake-safe actions.
- Have you ensured that children have discussed disaster planning with their families, and that their family emergency plan fits in with your centre emergency plan?
- Are your staff prepared to cope with their own fears and anxieties?  
*(Your community mental health services may be able to provide training sessions on how to deal with psychological trauma.)*
- Have staff taken steps to prepare their own family emergency plans?  
*(Encourage staff members to read and apply the emergency safety measures. They should plan for the possibility that they will have to stay at the centre, and be separated from their own families until the emergency is over.)*



Yes No

- Are any staff members trained to carry out search and rescue?

 

*(The purpose of search and rescue is to locate and free people trapped in damaged buildings and to recover critical equipment and supplies.)*

Invite a representative from the Fire Service to one of your planning meetings, to discuss how the centre staff can carry out light search-and-rescue operations. Topics to consider include:

- Developing a method of searching every room and cubby hole systematically for missing staff and children.
- Coping with anticipated and unanticipated hazards such as flooded basements, live electrical wires, and aftershocks.
- Determining when rescue should not be attempted, and when trapped and/or injured people should not be moved.

Discuss your emergency response plan with children. Determine and discuss with them their roles and responsibilities. For example, children should be told why it is important to remain at the centre, how you will care for them, and what they can do to help.

Exercise your response plan. The surest way to increase your capability to carry out emergency actions is to practice them. Conduct emergency drills at least twice a year. At least once a year, include an exercise and test of staff roles as part of your emergency drill.

# EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

- First Aid kit
  - antiseptic cleanser (liquid and ointment)
  - bandages
    - 4–6 triangular bandages (use old sheets)
    - 4–6 crepe bandages, 3–7.5cm
  - one packet of adhesive plasters
  - wound dressings (mixed sizes)
  - sterile dressings
    - 12 gauze pads (large)
    - 20 gauze pads (small)
  - adhesive tape
  - roll of cottonwool
  - pair of scissors
  - pair of tweezers
  - one packet of safety pins
  - container for soiled dressings e.g. plastic bag
  - eye wash receptacle
  - notebook and pencil for recording treatment given
  - current first aid manual
  - antihistamine ointment
- flash light and spare batteries, cyalume 'light sticks'
- checklist of priorities and response actions
- small transistor radio and spare batteries
- up to date register of all children attending the centre.

This list is intended as a guide only. If there are items on it that are not practical or applicable to you, use your own judgement regarding additions or replacements.

# COMMUNICATION

Following an emergency, all systems of communication that are dependent on electrical power or telephone lines may be partially or totally disrupted for several hours – possibly even days or weeks. An effective communication plan addresses this problem and presents alternative ways to receive and convey messages.

If parents or caregivers are not aware of the centre's emergency plans, they are likely to risk their own safety and impede the operation of the centre's response plan in order to retrieve their children. A plan for communicating with parents and caregivers before and after an emergency is critical. It may not eliminate the problem, but it will help to reduce congestion, confusion, and anxiety. This section addresses how to convey emergency information to parents and caregivers.

## ADVISING PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

If parents and caregivers are not repeatedly made aware of your emergency safety policies:

- expect a flood of telephone calls (if the system is working)
- expect a major traffic jam in front of your centre (if the roads are open)
- expect people (neighbours or friends) volunteering to take children home.

At the beginning of each year, parents and caregivers should be advised of the centre's emergency plans and especially of the centre's emergency safety policies. These policies and the rules you expect parents and caregivers to follow should be firmly stated at meetings and in frequent letters to them. Your 'Letter to Parents and Caregivers' might include the following:

### In the event of an emergency

- No child will be dismissed from the centre unless a parent or caregiver or other previously designated adult comes for them.
- No child will be released to leave the centre with another person, even a relative or baby sitter, unless the centre has written permission to that effect. Alternatively, the nominated person could be listed as an emergency contact. With this in mind, please ensure you have provided us with an up-to-date contact list. It is important to ensure this list is kept up to date.
- All parents and caregivers, or designated parties, who come for children must sign for their release.
- We are prepared to care for your children in times of critical situations. If you are not able to reach the centre, we will care for your child here. We have a number of people with first aid certificates, and we will be in communication with various local emergency services. We do ask for your help in the following areas:
  - If you are at home when disaster strikes, tidy and prepare the family home as much as possible before you fetch your child. That way, it will be less dangerous and less frightening for family members.
  - Do turn your radio to the local radio station. Information and directions about the extent of the emergency will be given over the radio.
  - Please do not call the centre – we must have the lines open for emergency calls.
  - Following an earthquake or other emergency, please do not immediately drive to the centre – streets and access to our centre may be cluttered with debris. The access route and street entrance areas must remain clear for emergency vehicles.

# POST-EMERGENCY SHELTER PLANNING

Within a few hours of a major emergency, most parents and caregivers will have come for their children. However, many parents and caregivers may be unable to reach the centre for several hours because of damage to transportation routes. Some of them may be casualties.

Children should not be released to travel streets cluttered with debris from damaged structures and fallen power lines. Even if they manage to get home, how will they cope if no one is there?

In some cases (e.g. bad weather), it may not be desirable or reasonable to hold the centre population in an open area over an extended period. Centre supervisors may need to make a reasonable judgement concerning re-entry to the centre building(s).



# ESTIMATING REQUIREMENTS

Determine the number of children with both parents and caregivers working (or one, if a single-parent family). With this information (supplemented, if possible, with travel distance), estimate probable separation time and number of children to be cared for at the centre. For example:

- 20 children may require care for four hours
- 10 children may require care for eight hours

With the help of the local medical services, determine how long you may need to shelter children requiring special care or medication.

- Are you prepared to cope with adverse weather conditions?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Have you considered how you would reduce anxiety and fear during this period?    
*(Until children can be reunited with their families, they will continue to worry. With each passing hour, they will become more anxious and afraid that they may be left alone. Although you may have addressed this problem during your immediate response planning effort, it is important to provide continuous reassurance and encouragement)*

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- If you are ordered to evacuate the centre grounds, have you considered how you will conduct the children to another site?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Have you considered how you will communicate the location of the evacuation site to parents and caregivers?

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# IDENTIFYING LONG-TERM REQUIREMENTS

## **Supplies which may be needed for extended care and shelter**

- first aid supplies
- soap, towels, cleaning and sanitation supplies and equipment
- food and cooking equipment
- clean water
- bedding
- additional provisions for outdoor cooking (barbecue grills, charcoal, portable camp stoves).

## **Other considerations**

- emergency toilet needs
- sanitation and hygiene considerations
- continued use of centre buildings for shelter
- emergency heating requirements
- special needs (e.g. medication requirements) of staff members and children.

Except for some very basic supplies, it may not be practical for centres to store large quantities of water, food, or bedding. Make sure that those supplies you do have, especially hot water cylinders, are secured. Parents or caregivers and neighbours may be recruited to store and deliver these items when needed.

# POST-EVACUATION PROCEDURES

## RE-OCCUPATION OF BUILDINGS

After an evacuation, children and staff must not re-enter the buildings until all rooms have been checked and the supervisor is satisfied that the buildings are safe for re-occupation.

### Inspection by engineer or architect

If there appears to be any structural damage, the supervisor should arrange for a qualified professional person, such as a registered engineer or architect, to inspect the buildings in order to determine whether they are safe for immediate re-occupation.

### Health and safety hazards

Check for the following:

- obvious cracks in walls
- dislodged bookcases or fittings which could fall in any earthquake aftershocks
- leaks in gas and water pipes
- breaks and/or blockages in sewage drains and fittings
- breaks in electric wires (these can cause fires)
- spillage or insecure storage of hazardous goods
- any fires which have not been completely extinguished.

### Water

Water is precious in an emergency and should be conserved. Save water in tanks and cisterns and turn off the water mains to prevent water loss from damaged pipes.

Do not turn off the water mains which supply fire-fighting equipment.

Bottled water – three litres per person for three days – BUT MORE IS BETTER.

### Use of sanitary fittings

Toilets should not be used or flushed as drains may be blocked, causing sewage to overflow back through the gully traps or toilet pans.

## SENDING CHILDREN HOME

Any decision to send children home should be made by the supervisor. Following severe flooding or an earthquake, roads may be impassable, and transport services may be disrupted. Children should be kept at the centre until collected by a parent or caregiver. Alternatively, they could be grouped according to the location of their homes and escorted home by an adult – once it has been established that there is someone there.

Centres should keep lists of people authorised by parents and caregivers to collect children after an emergency. Accurate records should be kept of the children's names and the name of the person escorting them home. No child should be released from the assembly area before the name of the person who has collected and assumed responsibility for that child, has been recorded. Children whose parents/caregivers (or a designated adult) are not available to collect them should be kept at the centre.

# EMERGENCY RECOVERY PROCEDURES

These procedures cover the stages by which a centre is able to return to a near-normal condition following an emergency. The recovery process includes keeping people informed, cleaning up the premises, replacing resources, protecting the property, planning for replacement accommodation (if necessary), and the associated administrative arrangements.

## KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED

Everyone affected by the emergency needs to be kept fully informed of the progress made in recovering from the emergency. The relevant people should be consulted before major decisions are made. Parents and caregivers should be informed when children are able to return to the centre. This could be through the media (e.g. community radio), by telephone, or by other means.

### Newsletter

It is recommended that, if possible, children be provided with a newsletter to take home at the end of the first day following the emergency to let people know what to expect during the following week.

## RE-OPENING THE CENTRE

### Safety of damaged areas

The return of children to centre buildings should be delayed until all damaged areas, including walls and beams, have been made safe, and dangerous areas sealed off. The return of children must be authorised by the supervisor.

### Cleaning up

In the event of a fire or other emergency involving investigations by the police and/or the Fire Service, cleaning up should not commence until their investigations into the cause of the emergency have been completed. The supervisor should then establish that the buildings are safe to re-enter, and liaise with the police and/or the Fire Service regarding re-entry to the area.

Before engaging any commercial firm to provide cleaning services, you should establish who will fund the work (insurance, centre owner etc).

The physical work of shifting furniture and equipment, and cleaning damaged areas should be carried out by any group that can be engaged at short notice. Groups such as local service clubs or sports clubs may be able to assist.

Damaged furniture, equipment and other resources should be written off only in consultation with the centre's insurer.

## ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

### Inventories of resources

If the centre's inventories of furniture, equipment and other resources are destroyed, a visit to another centre of similar size and type may assist in establishing lists for insurance claim purposes.

### Borrowing resources

If the resources and items of furniture and equipment required are not immediately available, borrowing may be considered. A careful inventory of these items must be kept to assist their safe return. Centres should check with their insurers about arrangements for coverage of goods which are borrowed or lent.

### Replacing resources

Decisions should be made about what furniture, equipment and other resources are required to replace those lost in the emergency. When buying replacement resources, equivalent or updated equipment may be purchased rather than actual replacements.

## PROPERTY PROTECTION

During and immediately following any emergency there is a series of procedures which should be followed to ensure that property is protected from further damage and that interested parties are notified.

### Immediate action

Reasonable precautions to protect the property from further damage could include:

- calling emergency services
- turning off gas (only if necessary) and power mains
- turning off the water mains (not those supplying fire-fighting equipment)
- providing security patrols until the buildings are secured
- boarding up broken windows or doors to prevent weather penetration.

### Immediate notifications

The following people and organisations should be notified where appropriate:

- the owner of the centre, and/or the local Childcare Centre Association
- the Fire Service (if the damaged buildings are a fire risk, e.g. after vandalism)
- the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office
- the Police
- the centre insurer/s.

## **PROPERTY RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY**

Immediately following any emergency involving major damage to the premises, there are procedures to be followed by both the centre and the owner to ensure the smooth recovery of centre property.

Consider:

- the extent of disruption to the centre's programme
- whether emergency accommodation is required
- the use of re-locatable rooms or permanent buildings
- how soon the replacement accommodation will be available for occupation.

Following the assessment, reporting and consultation process, decisions can be made about the course of action which will allow the centre to continue its role during the recovery process, with the minimum disruption.

## **ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT**

Emergencies, such as major fires or earthquakes, affect people in various ways. Consideration, support and consultation with all affected parties and individuals is essential. Counselling may help to reduce emotional stress for those involved.

## **SUMMARY**

After working through the checklists and suggestions in this guide, you should now have some idea of what you can do to increase emergency preparedness at your centre. If you have any queries about the information provided, please contact the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office (WEMO) on 4-499 4444

# BEING PREPARED FOR DISASTER

We trust that this booklet will assist supervisors and staff of pre-school centres within Wellington to develop emergency management plans for their own childhood centres. However, in order for you to be of use in an emergency situation, it is important that you make your own personal preparations.

Like all modern cities, Wellington is confronted by a range of natural and technological hazards. Although we can never be sure when or where a disaster may occur, we can be ready for them.

We do know that history can repeat itself. Disasters can occur in areas previously hard hit by a disaster.

Disaster preparedness is not something done for you. It is something you must do for yourself.

**For more information contact the Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office, phone 4-499 4444.**

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

# APPENDIX A

## CONTENTS HAZARD INVENTORY *(Room by Room)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Room: \_\_\_\_\_

### Indicate number of

Unsecured bookcases: \_\_\_\_\_ Unsecured wall shelves: \_\_\_\_\_

Free-standing cabinets: \_\_\_\_\_ Hanging plants: \_\_\_\_\_

Unguarded heating appliances: \_\_\_\_\_ Flammable materials stored: \_\_\_\_\_

### Tick if applicable:

TV monitor on unsecured platform

TV monitor on wheeled cart

Piano on wheels

Heavy objects on high shelves

Electrical appliances misused

Dangerous chemicals stored at low levels

# APPENDIX B

## COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

- tally hazards from Contents Hazard Inventory forms
- recommend remedies/objectives
- develop and assign tasks.

### Planning problem

*Rooms/hallways contain:*

- unsecured bookcases
- rolling pianos
- unsecured wall shelves
- hanging plants
- unsecured freestanding cabinets
- heavy objects on high shelves
- unsecured TV monitors
- unguarded heating appliances
- misused electrical appliances
- flammable materials stored
- dangerous chemicals stored at low levels.

*(Give numbers of bookcases, cabinets, etc involved)*

### Recommendation

Determine and implement best procedures for securing bookcases, cabinets, wall shelves, televisions and rolling pianos. Make alternative arrangements for storage of flammable materials and dangerous chemicals, and ensure appropriate use of all electrical appliances.

### Tasks

- meet with maintenance personnel at centre
- determine whether or not parents/caregivers can be recruited to help
- determine cost of bolts, brackets, etc
- identify possible funding support
- establish work schedule
- conduct project.

Person Responsible: \_\_\_\_\_

Report Due: \_\_\_\_\_

# ANNEX A

## EARTHQUAKE SIMULATION EXERCISE

The earthquake simulation exercise below is designed to help reduce children's anxieties and increase children's confidence in their ability to take immediate 'quake-safe' action. It is recommended that this exercise be carried out before conducting earthquake drills. It will aid you in preparing children for the consequences of a major earthquake.

- Prepare to time children's response to your command, 'Drop, cover and hold!' (must be controlled).
- Issue command: 'Drop, cover and hold!'.
- Note response time. Most children can be safely under counters and tables within five seconds.
- Advise children to stay (freeze) where they are; then note and immediately correct children displaying any inappropriate behaviour.
- Commend children who remembered to turn away from windows and remain silent.
- Ask children to return to where they were.

The above exercise should be conducted when children are at their assigned places, and also during mobile periods (i.e. when children are at various activity stations). The purpose of varying this exercise is to convey the idea that children should take cover under the nearest shelter.

Be prepared to expect confusion during the first exercise of the latter variation. For example, some children may scramble to seek cover under their assigned counters or tables. Also, too many children may seek protection under the same 'shelter'. Make sure children know how many of them can shelter under one table or desk, and emphasise that if there's room for more than one person, it's all right to share. Ensure that children too young to take shelter for themselves have someone to help them.

You may wish to simulate many of the sounds mentioned below to make the effect more realistic, e.g. by dropping books, sliding chairs, shaking tables, etc.

*"The building is creaking and rattling now, books in the room are falling to the floor... hanging lamps and plants are swaying and some may fall... the windows are rattling... one window just shattered onto the floor... the furniture may be sliding... try to stay in your quake safe position. If your shelter starts to move, hold on to its legs and move with it."*

*"You hear many noises... dogs may be barking... people may be shouting... the fire alarm may go off. The ground is still shaking. Inside the room, doors are swinging and banging, wall hangings are falling to the floor... some ceiling parts may have shaken loose... the lights may be flickering or may go out." (Have someone turn off the lights)*

*"The ground has stopped shaking now." (End timing)*

*"Everyone take a deep breath, remain quiet, and return to your seats."*

### **Essential follow-up activities**

Immediately following the exercise, it is imperative that children be given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their fears and concerns. Psychologists have also recommended that other activities, such as drawing pictures and telling stories about these experiences, will help to bring children's anxieties into the open for further consideration.

### **Recommended follow-up activities**

Assemble a centre emergency kit, which should be carried by a staff member during emergency drills and following an actual earthquake or other emergency. Explain to the children what you are doing, and why, and show them the various items which will go into the kit. The presence of this kit, hanging near the centre exit, will increase children's appreciation of their efforts to be prepared.

### **Take home activities**

Following assembly of your emergency kit, you may wish to encourage children to prepare similar kits to keep at home or in the family car.

# ANNEX B

## CENTRE EMERGENCY KIT

### Purpose

An emergency kit will provide staff with immediate resources to account for children, care for minor injuries, and occupy children during outdoor evacuation/shelter period. The kit is intended to be carried by a staff member when the children evacuate the building after an emergency or following an emergency drill.

### Method

*Ask children for ideas and thoughts about how the finished kit will look, where it will be kept etc.*

- design a logo
- determine fabric type and colour
- determine construction methods (use a sewing machine or sturdy lacing)
- decide on size and style
- obtain fabric and other materials needed to make the kit
- make a pattern
- cut and stitch (or lace) kit – paint, sew or glue on logo.

Request donations of remnants from fabric store and supplies from various sources. Send benefactors a photo of your kit with a note of thanks.

*The above steps are optional, as you may wish to purchase a backpack or similar type of bag to use instead.*

- identify and obtain supplies
- hang completed kit with contents near the classroom exit.

## SUGGESTED CONTENTS

### Essential items

- copy of register of attendees
- checklist of priority response actions
- first aid kit
  - antiseptic cleanser (liquid)
  - gauze pads and two gauze eye pads
  - adhesive tape
  - small scissors
  - adhesive bandages
- flashlight and spare batteries
- whistle
- stick-on labels
- marker pen(s)
- small transistor radio.

## Optional items

- small pad of paper and pens or crayons
- games/musical instruments e.g. guitar, mouth organ
- hard sweets (barley sugar)\*
- lightweight, plastic rubbish bags to sit on or wear as parkas – cut holes for neck.

\* This is a suggested immediate emergency comforter for children. Remember that you could well be required to remain at the centre for several hours, even overnight. Other emergency food supplies could include dried fruits, muesli bars and other items according to the age of the children in your care.



# CENTRE IDENTIFICATION

Name of Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Function: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of Operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Peak Use Times (*season/day/time*): \_\_\_\_\_

Normal number of staff on duty: \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of users: \_\_\_\_\_ Peak number of users: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of water stored: \_\_\_\_\_ litres

On the premises and/or

Arranged with a nearby parent/caregiver or neighbour

Amount of food stored: Enough for \_\_\_\_\_ people, to last for \_\_\_\_\_ days

On the premises and/or

Arranged with a nearby parent/caregiver or neighbour

Alternative cooking facilities available

Emergency bedding available

Digging utensils and land available for alternative toilets

Date of construction: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of floors: \_\_\_\_\_

Manager responsible for centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone: (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Night) \_\_\_\_\_

Senior teacher/co-ordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Position title: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please complete this summary page and return it to: Wellington City Council Emergency Management Office, PO Box 2199, Wellington. This will enable us to keep an up-to-date record of centres throughout Wellington City.*



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

- *Business Emergency Planning Guides*
- *Be Ready for an Emergency* (for households)
- *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](tel: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)**