

Avian flu pandemic

Two WELG meetings have been held to discuss issues relating to the potential avian flu pandemic, the last meeting being on 2 December, 2005. This meeting included an update on where the government is at in terms of the pandemic, and an exercise based on a natural disaster occurring during the pandemic to emphasise the need for continuity planning with severely restricted resources, especially human.

The following are excerpts from a presentation prepared by Tony Fenwick, Director, Resources and Network Branch of the Ministry of Economic Development, and presented by Dave Brunston.

Background

- The WHO has warned that the current risk from bird flu becoming the next human influenza pandemic is high.
- Warning states that it is not a matter of "if" but "when".
- The Government (led by the MoH) is currently updating its pandemic influenza plan.
- A number of work streams to plan for and minimise the impact of associated risks from a pandemic have been established.

"What's the fuss about? It's just the flu, isn't it?"

Pandemic influenza is different to seasonal influenza.

- Not seasonal – may come at any time of the year.
- May impact on any age group.
- May have a very high attack rate, high case fatality rate.
- May come in several waves over months or years.
- Can't be predicted – but we might get some warning.
- Will come one day (maybe soon).
- Vaccines can't be developed until strain is known.
- Very wide government and community response required.

Overall Governance Structure

- MoH has lead role, working under the Health Act 1956:
 - Pandemic Action Plan (within NHEP) is being updated
 - A CIMS framework will be used
 - National co-ordination of activities via the National Crisis Management Centre
- MCDEM has key supporting role, including co-ordinating and assisting response at the "community" level

Pandemic Plan Strategy Aims

- Plan for it (Current phase)
 - Engage with all relevant agencies
- Keep it out
 - Border management
- Stamp it out
 - Cluster control operations
- Manage it
 - Public health measures (e.g. school closures), anti-virals
- Recover from it
 - Return to normal service delivery

Update on Whole-of-Government Planning

- Tamiflu
 - Government stockpile of 855,000 doses of Tamiflu
 - An interim Tamiflu allocation framework is being developed by an ethics committee
- Vaccines
 - A formal agreement has been agreed with an Australian vaccine company to supply the entire NZ population with pandemic vaccine (within 4-6 months of WHO declaring existence of a pandemic)
- Border control
 - Plans underway for managing air border closure
- Communications
 - Strategy for raising public awareness underway

To view the full presentation, refer to the WELG website, minutes of WELG Steering Group meeting December 2, 2005.

WELG membership and contacts

The following are current Lifelines Group Committee members and/or sponsors of the Waikato Engineering Lifelines Group

CDEM Group	Environment Waikato
Genesis Energy	Hamilton City Council
Hauraki District Council	Matamata-Piako District Council
Mighty River Power	Powerco
South Waikato District Council	Taupo District Council
Thames Coromandel District Council	The Lines Company
Transit NZ	Unison
Waikato District Council	Waipa District Council
Waipa Networks	Waitomo District Council
WEL Networks	

For more information about WELG or to be added to the newsletter distribution list, please visit our website www.waikatolifelines.org.nz or contact:

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WELG website

Access the WELG website www.waikatolifelines.org.nz to view, download or access copies of WELG newsletters, projects, meeting minutes and agendas. You can also send us an email to info@welg.org.nz.

If you have any information that you think should be on the website, please contact the WELG Project Manager. This could include emergency management training schedules, emergency management and lifeline utility related conferences and overseas projects.

Waikato Engineering Lifelines Group

WAIKATO ENGINEERING
Lifelines

Quarterly Newsletter No 4 December 2005

Chairman's comments

Alex Shaw, South Waikato District Council

It has been a busy year for emergency management throughout the world and there appears to be a resurgence of interest in emergency management. It is almost certainly attributed to the storm events in Tauranga, Matata, Gisborne, etc in New Zealand, as well as the Boxing Day Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the Pakistan earthquake and the potential avian flu pandemic.

Closer to home is the 3.5 hour power cut, when the Hinuera power substation was struck by lightning. The power authority did a magnificent job of replacing a transformer in this time, but even so, if it was not for the prompt action with a septic tank truck to avoid sewage spillages the situation would have been more serious.

This resurgence appears to be emerging within the Engineering Lifeline Groups, especially the actual lifeline utility companies, as they realise the implications of potential disasters on business continuity and the understanding of dependencies on other, previously seemingly unrelated, utilities. The most obvious example being utilities attached to road bridges and the possible differences in priorities in the event of damage during a storm/earthquake event.

Councils are also becoming more aware of the need for risk analysis in their LTCCPs, and the lifelines development is another step in defining our vulnerabilities and what is expected from us under the Local Government and Emergency Management Acts.

The profile of the Waikato Engineering Lifelines Group appears to be growing and is being demonstrated by the increasing interest in the Steering Committee Meetings. This can only bode well for the future of the WELG and is a good stepping stone into 2006 with the significant work load already planned for implementation.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your involvement in this increasingly important activity and to express regret over the resignation of two of our members, Rod Blackburn and Grant Strang. I wish them well and thank them for their enthusiastic commitment to the Group's activities.

I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Interdependency

Project Manager's comments

John Harris, John Harris Consultancy

Has the focus of Civil Defence changed in the last 20 years? The answer may be no if based on a Herald article from 1984. The scenarios are very similar to the Civil Defence Preparedness documentary early this year and it is interesting to note that terrorism was a key issue then.

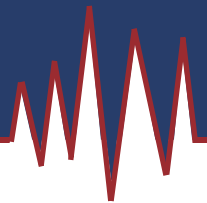
The article made references to technology and medical developments and this is an area that could be the subject of intense debate. Advances in automation and communications have increased the efficiency and reliability of lifeline utilities. The downside to this is staff reductions and that there are fewer staff able to operate/repair systems during an emergency event, especially where sites are isolated and difficult to access.

The dependency on electricity has increased significantly to allow the improved technology to operate and thus the need for alternative power sources, during an emergency event, is critical.

The development in communication systems has advanced to a point where virtually the entire population, irrespective of age, has access to a mobile phone and while this allows information to be spread quickly it has the downside of an increased risk of misinformation and the systems being at risk of overloading at critical times.

It seems that while every advance in technology has benefits that will assist in minimising or mitigating disaster events, there are often counteracting forces such as computer and phone viruses, increased public expectations, etc.

There are, however, encouraging factors in that lifeline utility companies are increasingly aware of the need to plan for business continuity and their dependence on other utilities to continue operating during disaster events and that the myth of thousands of CD personnel being available is slowly being dispelled.



Communications plan Update

The draft Regional Emergency Communications Plan has been circulated to the WELG stakeholders, and a limited number is available for interested parties upon request. Document holders are requested to check their information and advise the WELG Project Manager of any inaccuracies or omissions.

The Plan is intended to be available for those front line personnel responsible for handling emergency events. While it can be copied and used by staff internally, it will be the primary document holder's responsibility to ensure that it is not given to the public. A number of the agencies included in the Communications Plan require the public to use the numbers in the telephone directory, not those in the Plan document.

If you have any comments or questions in the meantime please contact the WELG Project Manager.



The Emergency Communications Plan must be available to the appropriate staff for its full value to be realised.

WELG Utility Vulnerability Workshop

The theme of this newsletter would have to be interdependency and to continue this critical component of business continuity planning the WELG is commencing a series of three workshops commencing in February, at a date to be set. The objective of the workshops is to identify measures and coordinate efforts to reduce the vulnerability of the Waikato's lifelines to hazard events. This includes improved service reinstatement after an emergency, allowing the community to recover as quickly as possible after a hazard event.

Asset and risk management considerations require that lifeline utilities manage the potential impact of hazard events, and be able to function during an emergency. However, to do this effectively, lifeline utility members require the identification of sites vulnerable to hazards (including natural, technological, chemical and biological) within the Waikato Region, to determine the risk, or vulnerability of their utility. This allows utility members to reduce the potential utility failure during a hazard event, reduce the potential disruption to communities, but allow for a more secure environment.

Assessment of vulnerability takes account of the importance of the lifeline component, that is the degree of disruption if the element is lost to the network. This aspect typically highlights the redundancy, or lack of it, in a system. The assessment of potential damage takes into account the impact of a hazard and includes the time and effort which is likely to be required to reinstate the component in addition to the cost of replacement. The assessment also takes into account the dependencies on other utilities, especially transportation as access is almost always a key issue.

As the workshops are progressive, it is essential that all three are attended, although it is expected that there may be individual meetings/deliberations of the respective utilities and internally so that the formal workshops are principally to compile and discuss the information.

All lifeline utility companies and local and regional councils are invited, including local authority Asset/Activity Managers. The effectiveness of the workshops is critically dependent on the involvement and commitment of all the lifeline utilities.

Whilst the exact date has not been set, it would be appreciated if all parties could register their interest as soon as possible to the WELG Project Manager, so that information can be sent out and an indication of the depth of interest is obtained.



Fielding Bridge after the 2004 flood gives a dramatic image of interdependency between utilities

What needs to be done?

Unity sector coordination

Developing inter-utility arrangements and planning within a sector (e.g. Water) to optimise service during emergencies requires cooperation. Levels of inter-utility cooperation will vary across sectors at risk, asset and emergency management benefits are tempered by the commercial realities of competition. The first step is for utilities to cooperate across sectors to address critical interdependencies e.g. Has an electricity generator made the Road Controlling Authority aware of their specific road access requirements in advance of an earthquake?

The second, and arguably the most difficult step is to gain internal sector cooperation. This may result in sector mutual aid requirements, or specific contingency planning to address shared risks linked to individual risk, asset and emergency planning. Key national and trans-regional sectors such as electricity, gas, telecommunications and transportation should adopt a national approach to internal sector co-operation. While the water sector is typically operated at local and regional levels, the NZ Water & Wastes Association provides a very effective structure for national issues.

Whilst the CDEM Act's planning processes and Lifelines Groups foster cooperation, neither aims to restructure the New Zealand's utility environment. The status and benefits arising from established sector representation must be developed and owned by sector members, not driven by external legislative forces. The Ministry and CDEM Groups will however take an active interest in promoting particular sector coordination where high national or regional risk could be reduced through improved sector coordination.

This is an excerpt from the Lifelines and CDEM Planning publication "**Civil Defence Emergency Management Best Practice Guide [BPG1/03]**", to provoke thought for those who are already familiar with it and to educate those who aren't.

2006 WELG training

Date	Time	Training	Location
February 9, 2006	1.00 - 1.30 pm	Coordinated Incident Management Systems Level 2 (first level, no pre-requisites)	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland
March 21, 2006	2.00 - 4.30 pm	Essentials of Civil Defence Emergency Management	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland
May 25, 2006	2.00 - 4.30 pm	Coordinated Incident Management Systems Level 2 (first level, no pre-requisites)	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland
July 4, 2006	9.00 - 11.00 am	Essentials of Civil Defence Emergency Management	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland
October 10, 2006	9.30 - 11.30 am	Essentials of Civil Defence Emergency Management	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland
December 1, 2006	2.00 - 4.30 pm	Coordinated Incident Management Systems Level 2 (first level, no pre-requisites)	Emergency Operations Centre, Bledisloe House, Wellesley Street, Auckland

Note: \$44.00 + GST for Coordinated Incident Management Level 2 training (NGOs and voluntary agencies exempt).

Please register for all courses with Tina Hessey email tina.hessey@aucklandcity.govt.nz

There is an Integrated Emergency Management Conference in February 2006, for more information visit www.confereenz.co.nz