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Committee Co-ordinating Executive Group (CEG)
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Office

Exercise Back Blast

1. Purpose

To inform the Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group (CEG) about the exercise for the Wellington Regional Response Teams.

2. Background

At its meeting on 2 April CEG requested officers to prepare a report on Exercise Back Blast for discussion at its next meeting.

In the Wellington Region there are four Response Teams, namely WCC Tawa Rescue NZ-RT8, Victoria Rescue, NZ-RT7 Upper Hutt Community Rescue NZ-RT9 and Hutt City Emergency Response Team NZ-RT18.

Each team has purchased equipment, trained members and developed Standard Operating Procedures in accordance with the National USAR Steering Committee, Best Practice Guideline for Response Team Registration. The teams have subsequently been audited and obtained registration with the Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management.

In accordance with the Best Practice Guideline the teams are required to engage in at least two CDEM Group approved USAR Response Team exercises per year, preferably with other registered USAR Response teams. Exercise Back Blast was one of these exercises.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Exercise

3.1 Aim

To provide members of the Wellington Response Teams with a meaningful exercise to fulfil their requirement for registration and as part of the Wellington CDEM Group annual exercise programme.

3.2 Objectives

- To practice the Response Team abilities to operate in an environment without support.
- To practice teams in combined operations.
- To practice teams to work with USAR trained engineers.
- To practice an Incident Management Team over the period of the exercise.
- To involve secondary school teams as “casualties” in a learning exercise.

3.3 Exercise Overview

The exercise commenced at 1600 hrs on Friday 16 February 2007 and continued overnight until 1700 hrs on Saturday 17 February 2007.

The scenario was based on an explosion from a petroleum refinery in Wainuiomata affecting a large number of buildings within the suburb. The Response Teams were tasked with reconnaissance and subsequent removal of any casualties from buildings within the former Wainuiomata College site, Moohan Street, Wainuiomata.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) was established to manage and task the Response Teams during the exercise. The IMT was staffed by volunteers seeking to complete their CIMS Level 4 qualification.

3.4 Participants

In addition to the four Response Teams the following organisations participated in the exercise in the below mentioned capacity:

Red Cross Emergency Response Units from Porirua and Upper Hutt – casualty management

Devereux-Blum Training and Development Ltd – exercise development and in the Incident Management Team

Salvation Army Lower Hutt – catering for exercise casualties and coordinating committee

Lower Hutt Secondary School students – exercise casualties

Wainuiomata Whanau Family Trust – lease of the site

3.5 Budget

The proposed budget for the exercise was \$5000.00. The final expenditure came to \$4524.00.

4. Observations

The Response Teams proved their abilities to operate in an environment without support. The teams also showed their capability to work in combined

operations together, with USAR Trained Engineers and Red Cross Emergency Response Units.

The Response Teams reported that the exercise was the most successful exercise they had participated in.

The exercise while designed for the Response Teams also provided an opportunity for the USAR engineer to practice operating with the teams in a “live” situation, hence providing training and learning opportunities to both the teams and the USAR engineer.

The Incident Management Team made use of the Wellington Region Mobile Emergency Operation Centre caravan and associated tent. This proved useful but the facility is in need of some improvements in terms of communications, printers, computer capabilities and additional accommodation.

Staffing of the Incident Management Team was proposed to be by members of the wider CDEM Group who needed to complete their CIMS Level 4 qualification. Due to insufficient response, members of the Response Teams provided staffing of the Incident Management Team. While this made a significant impact on the purpose for which the teams were attending the exercise, it provided an opportunity for those team members to develop their IMT skills.

5. Recommendations

That the CEG recommends to the CDEM Group that:

- 1. an exercise for the Response Teams be part of the annual exercise programme for the Wellington CDEM Group;*
- 2. members of the Incident Management Team for an exercise be drawn from the Emergency Management Offices, including Controllers; and*
- 3. Greater Wellington consider an upgrade of the Wellington Region Mobile Emergency Operations Centre in terms of communications, printers, computer capabilities and additional accommodation.*

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