

## **Community Resilience Planning in Martinborough**

Volunteers within the community recently met for the second time to start working on a plan for the town and surrounding areas, in the event of a major disaster. These meetings have been facilitated by Scott Dray and Darryl McCurdy from the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO) who are actively encouraging communities to be prepared for natural disasters, and in particular a big earthquake that could result in lost access, communications and lifelines such as power and water. These planning sessions incorporate lessons learned from communities affected by disasters in Christchurch and overseas.

At the first meeting your local Community Resilience Planning team discussed the essential need for effective coordination and communication at the time of a disaster, having realistic expectations with regard the capabilities of council and emergency services, and the need to be fully aware of the role the community can play in a disaster - hence the need for some pre-disaster planning. Also, key to an effective community response is the need for strong connections and relationships to exist within the community; discussions evolved within the team about groups that currently exist and how further projects might be developed in the community to further develop social capital. Scott cited two examples of how projects have developed through the Community Response Planning process in Kapiti where the Kapiti Lions initiated the Long Walk Home from Wellington, and where members of the local MenzShed offered to assist homeowners install WREMO water tanks, leading to Kapiti recording some of the highest tank sales in the region.

Most of us are aware that the 'Civil Defence Centre' (soon to be potentially renamed Community Emergency Hub) is located at the Lions' Den in Martinborough, but many are not familiar of the role played by a Civil Defence Centre in the event of an emergency. Basically, it is not a welfare centre but rather the first port of call (after community members have administered to their own families and neighbours) for residents to get information and work together to pool community resources and skills to address the community's critical needs until outside support arrives. The Centre is manned entirely by the community and WREMO runs volunteer training courses so that people know how to make one work (and we desperately need more trained volunteers - to go to:)

There is also a Civil Defence Centre Operating Guide stored within the Civil Defence Centre kit which can be used to help get a Centre operating successfully. This Guide is a template that outlines how a Centre can be successfully set-up and run, and in a way that is common to all other Civil Defence Centres across the region. The Community Response Planning process plays a vital role in adding community specific information to the Guide, so that local decision makers working within a Civil Defence Centre can match community needs with community resources on the day of a disaster. Making a Civil Defence Centre work is really quite simple - it's about coordination, cooperation and good information management. None of it is rocket science, but it does require a willingness to work collaboratively with others and the confidence to 'give it a go'.

The second of our planning meetings focused on detailing what assets we had in the community to address critical needs such as: water, shelter, food, sanitation, medical assistance, and rescue/checking on people (especially the vulnerable). We brain-stormed what resources, skill-sets, relationships and contacts could be utilised. This initial high level scan will be recorded in our Martinborough Civil Defence Centre Operating Guide. Future reviews (which are planned for every 18 - 24 months) will further expand and add detail to this list. So eventually it will become a very useful decision making tool for our local community responders. The Martinborough Civil Defence Guide will be presented to the Mayor and councillors to ensure it integrates with provisions that the South Wairarapa District Council already has in place.

The next and final meeting for this round of the Martinborough Community Response Plan is scheduled for **11 am on Saturday 25 June at the Lions' Den, 3 Oxford Street, Martinborough**. This third planning session will explore ideas or initiatives that the community could lead to build resilience and further strengthen connections and relationships. We hope to have South Wairarapa District Council representatives in attendance, as well as business leaders from the community, Civil Defence volunteers, representatives from community groups, and anyone else from the community who would like to be involved.

The Community Response Planning process is our chance to strengthen our community's capacity to respond and recover quickly from a disaster. It really is up to us. WREMO is here to help facilitate the development of our plan and they have even offered to put on a BBQ to celebrate the completion of our Civil Defence Centre Operating Guide and this latest round of response planning.

Please come and join us to discuss the Martinborough Community's Emergency Response Plan on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> of June from 11am to 1pm at the Martinborough Lions Den Hall.

Similar Community Response Planning process are to follow in other communities throughout the Wairarapa.