

Planning the key to getting farms through a Civil Defence emergency

No. 8 wire may be the answer to a lot of things – but chances are it won't be enough to get farmers through a major Civil Defence emergency.

That was brought home by a virtual earthquake last month centered near Ngatea, which saw the Council office turned into an emergency operating centre. The training scenario was prepared by volcanologist Brad Scott of GNS (Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences), so while the disaster may not have been 'real' it was definitely realistic in highlighting the kind of challenges our farming community should be prepared for.

Power cuts would have left milking sheds unable to operate normally. Damage to Hauraki Plains roads and bridges would have resulted in major transport disruptions, especially to milk tankers and heavy machinery. Potentially, the quake would also have put our water treatment plants out of action, and cut off the supply of water to about 100,000 dairy animals for days or even weeks.

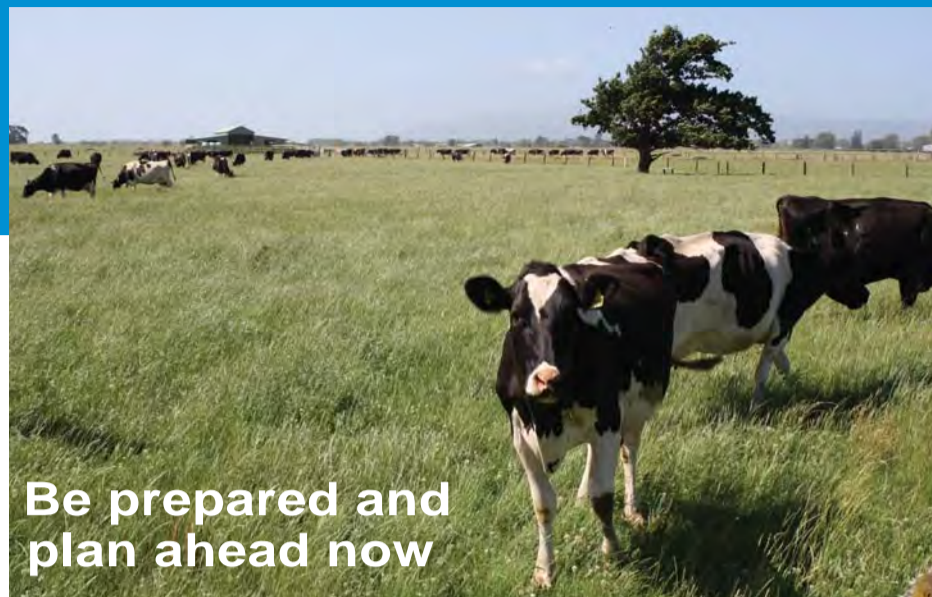
Successful farmers are good planners – and an agricultural business plan needs to extend to preparation for Civil Defence situations.

Deputy Mayor Bruce Gordon, who was involved in the July training exercise, says addressing animal comfort and stress is a priority. "If the recent virtual earthquake had really struck, at least it would have been in the season when most cows are dry. But we can't count on that. You never know how long the power will be out."

Many farmers now have mobile generators, and Bruce says it may be an option for neighbours to buy a shared one, though such an arrangement is not always convenient. Each milking shed needs to be wired for a generator, at a cost of about \$1000; and when work in one shed is done and the generator is needed elsewhere, the milk still needs to be kept cool.

If there's no tanker access to farms, milk will need to be dumped when storage capacity is reached, and forethought needs to go into that, too. "You can't spray it straight on to pasture or allow it to drain into waterways," says Bruce.

Sufficient water, stock supplies and household essentials should be on hand to last at least five days. It helps that farmers are likely to have a pantry full of food and are innovative, says Bruce. "They should make sure they're OK,



Be prepared and plan ahead now

then go and help others."

On a community level, some groundwork in Civil Defence preparedness has been done in recent years, such as identifying sports club and school venues where emergency shelters could be established. The next step is to seek funding to equip these with generators.

While Hauraki Plains drainage has been significantly improved to cope with potential flooding, residents who have moved into the area and never experienced this kind of event may not realise how devastating it can be, says Bruce.

The Council intends working with emergency services, local farmers, and industry groups such as Federated Farmers, Dairy NZ and Fonterra to raise awareness of the need to be ready, and assist with cohesive planning. Watch for more information on this soon. Meanwhile, everyone should at least do the basics!

Win-win for water upgrades

Improved quality water and more of it – it's now on the way as the Council starts construction on a number of water supply upgrades for Paeroa, Waihi, Karangahake, Mackaytown, Waikino and Ohinemuri.

At the Paeroa and Waihi treatment plants, the treatment process will be upgraded to membrane filtration. This work will substantially reduce the amount of chemical used to treat the water, improve the quality of the water, and reduce the risk of waterborne disease in line with Government regulations.

It will also increase the capacity of the Paeroa plant to supply the communities of Karangahake and Mackaytown and the Ohinemuri rural scheme; and Waihi's capacity to supply Waikino.

Building a long-planned additional Waihi water intake from the Ohinemuri River will alleviate problems in summer, during times when the current intake struggles to meet the town's needs.

A pipeline will be run from Waihi to a new reservoir in Waikino; and the existing Waikino water source, treatment plant and reservoir decommissioned. Another pipeline from Paeroa to a new reservoir in Mackaytown will feed Mackaytown and Karangahake, allowing us to decommission the existing intakes and treatment plants. These projects mean we can withdraw from some historic water takes which are no longer able to get long term resource consents, and will cut the number of water supplies that Council operates, reducing the costs of supply.

At the same time, the upgrades will alleviate water shortage issues in several areas: a win-win result.

We expect the work at the Paeroa and Waihi treatment plants and the new Waihi intake to be completed by March next year. The Karangahake, Mackaytown and Waikino connections should be finished by July 2015.

Upgrade now sealed off

New seal has just been laid on the second half of a 1.6km section of Pukekauri Road – completing rehabilitation work which began in late autumn. The project has been carried out under the current Area Wide Treatment roading contract which was awarded in mid April with a total contract value of \$615,050. This contract also included the rehabilitation of a 1km length of Kaihere Road near State Highway 27.

Upgrades to further sections of both roads are planned in the near future.

Rehabilitation involved placing additional base course material on top of the existing road surface, mixing this with the existing base course and then re-shaping it to an improved line, width and form before applying a new sealed surface. This work improves road safety and efficiency.



Reservoir half full

A year after water was first diverted from the Waitakaruru River into the old Tetleys Quarry pit, the reservoir is 50% full – and projected to reach its 830 million-litre capacity in about two months if current weather conditions continue.

This is essentially what was expected, with some raw water already piped to the Waitakaruru treatment plant through the new 4km pipeline that was commissioned early this year. From now on, water will be drawn from the pit in times of summer shortage, and supplies replenished during winter peak flow times.

Clear drinking water back on tap

We are serious about the quality of our water supplies – especially when water appears to be dirty, is discoloured or contains suspended particles when you turn on the tap!

Some complaints have recently been received about dirty water in the Plains supply area. This problem is traced to corrosion and metal deposits in old pipes, and can occur quite widely.

We would like to reassure users that we have a regular water sampling programme, and water from our treatment plants complies fully with New Zealand Drinking Water Standards.

While the water supplies are safe it's not advisable to drink or cook with any obviously discoloured water. If you notice this, run your taps until the water runs visually clear.

If the flow is still not clear after running the tap for 2 minutes, please call us on 0800 734 834 at any time of the day or night, or lodge a service request on our website www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz by clicking the 'FIX IT' logo. Our service crews will respond and flush the pipes in the area.

We believe that we have effectively dealt with the problem which led to the recent complaints. Please call us if there are any recurrences.

