

Marae and emergencies

History shows that marae are often well placed and willing to provide support and assistance to people affected by an emergency. The intent of this document is to advise and provide clarity in relation to support and resources available to marae assisting people in an emergency.

Hazards and impacts

The Hawkes Bay region is subject to a range of natural disasters, the top five being earthquakes, tsunami, volcanic ash, human pandemic and flood/storm events. Some impacts that these hazards may have on the community include injured or sick people, people having to evacuate, people unable to get home, people stuck at home, and households with no water, power, internet or phone. Having a facility where people may gather to look after each other in an emergency is important for community resilience. It is recognised that marae are often well located and well equipped to look after the needs of a community struggling with the impacts of an emergency.

Community –led versus Civil Defence-led

When used in an emergency most marae will most likely operate as a community-led facility. A community -led facility is run by members of the community, to offer support and assistance to people. A community-led facility does not fall under the direction of Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM), but may be supported by and operate alongside a CDEM response.

It is possible for marae to become a designated Civil Defence Centre, run under the direction of CDEM, during an emergency. It is anticipated that, should this occur, the marae would run the Civil Defence Centre in partnership with CDEM.

Resources

Following an emergency event, the majority of people will make contact with others around them and look after each other. However, if people are unable to look after their own needs, CDEM provides a safety net by coordinating a welfare response, to ensure affected people have the resources needed to meet their basic needs. This could be information, food, transport, etc.

When a community/marae is looking after the welfare of people affected by an emergency, communication with CDEM will ensure there is a good understanding of activities occurring in the community, and if there are resources required. It must be acknowledged however; in an emergency event it may take CDEM time to achieve coordination and resources will be distributed according to the information available and those with the greatest needs will be prioritised. CDEM may organise the delivery of resources, arrange a credit line with retailers to obtain resources, or authorise the spending of money to purchase resources to be reimbursed later.

Contacting CDEM

Local radio stations and the CDEM website (www.hbemergency.govt.nz) will give general information and advice during an emergency, and will advise which numbers to use to get support and assistance, during an emergency. Marae may also make contact with CDEM via Te Puni Kōkiri, who are part of the CDEM Welfare Coordination Group. The CDEM Facebook page (www.facebook.com/hbemergency) is also a good avenue for receiving and providing information.

CDEM reimbursement for resources after an emergency event

If CDEM approved purchases are made, receipts must be provided when requesting reimbursement. In the event that contact was not able to be made with CDEM prior to the purchase(s), necessary purchases directly related to the event would normally be accepted as valid and reimbursement available. However, until approved by CDEM, any costs incurred should be assumed to remain with individuals.

If people bring food to the marae this is seen as a donation and no reimbursement will be offered.

Work and Income financial assistance

Financial assistance may be available for families from Work and Income if a Civil Defence emergency has been declared, or the event meets the guidelines for a Civil Defence emergency. This may include payment for the costs of accommodating evacuees, food, bedding and clothing costs, and loss of income due to the emergency.

Payments are usually not income tested and do not usually affect other benefits. However, certain criteria must be met and if there is access to other help (e.g. food and resources have been supplied by CDEM, or by other means), or there is an intention to claim reimbursement for purchases from CDEM, Work and Income Civil Defence payments will not be paid. Work and Income will work with individuals to assess eligibility.

Health and Safety

The safety of people should always be considered.

- Buildings and surrounds should be maintained and regularly checked for hazards. No one should do anything or be asked to do anything that could put themselves or others at risk.
- The marae should ensure that smoke alarms are operational, fire extinguishers are inspected regularly, fire sprinkler systems are maintained, fire exits signs are visible and there is an evacuation procedure notice near exit doors.
- Consideration should be given to health and hygiene. Food handling and hand washing procedures should be put in place. If there are people who are unwell, consideration needs to be given to how to limit the spread of illness.
- Vulnerable people (eg due to health issues or age) may need extra or specialist support.

In regards to the Health and Safety in the Workplace Act (2015), a marae looking after affected people in an emergency can be compared to an organisation working for a community purpose that has no employees and is considered a volunteer association. It is not a person conducting a business or an undertaking (PCBU) and has no duty, responsibility or liability under the Act. However, consideration under other acts, such as the Building Act (2004), may apply.

Tangi

If a marae is being used to support and assist people during an emergency and the marae is needed for a tangi, the decision on how to proceed rests with the marae. CDEM is available to make other arrangements for the provision of support and assistance to people affected by an emergency as required.