

# AJEM FOREWORD

By Hon Rick Barker, Minister of Civil Defence, New Zealand

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New Zealand's wild and diverse landscape, our relatively isolated geographic location, and our reliance on primary production means that New Zealanders are, and will continue to be, at risk from a broad range of hazards. Earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, storms, severe winds, tsunami, landslides, droughts,

wildfires... New Zealand has them all and more! In the first quarter of 2008 alone the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management recorded 204 weather and geological events – almost half of these were earthquakes and about a quarter were heavy rain warnings. Fortunately, most of these events did not become emergencies, but they highlight the threat to New Zealanders that is always there.

Historically, natural hazards, and in particular flooding and earthquakes, have been the main focus of emergency management. Flooding is the most common natural hazard in New Zealand, and earthquakes and tsunamis are potentially the most damaging and disruptive. Probably the most underrated natural hazard is volcanic eruption. Technological development in New Zealand has created significant new hazards and risks, and increasing reliance on infrastructure has led to potentially greater community vulnerability. Hazardous substances, introduced organisms and diseases, and terrorism all may threaten public safety or adversely affect New Zealand's environment, health, and economy.

New Zealand's vision for civil defence emergency management is a 'Resilient New Zealand', with communities understanding and managing their risks. This vision can only be realised if we have participation and commitment at all levels, from the Government, local authorities, individual departments, businesses, and volunteer organisations, right down to individual families. Central to emergency management in New Zealand is an all-hazards, all-risks, multi-agency,

integrated and community-focused approach. This approach is based on the 4Rs – reduction, readiness, response and recovery.

One of my key focuses for the civil defence sector in New Zealand is developing and strengthening international relationships. As disasters worldwide increase in number and severity, enhanced international cooperation is required in order to manage these events. In response to this, the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management has developed an international engagement strategy, which I endorsed in December, in order to strengthen civil defence relationships with regional neighbours such as Australia and the Pacific Island countries, as well as key partners such as the United Nations.

New Zealanders are always ready to lend a helping hand in their local communities and we are taking steps to ensure we are also able to assist the global community in an emergency. Our international engagement approach is based on three objectives:

- We want to help others – we want to be a good 'global citizen'; and
- We want to learn – to increase our domestic resilience through increased Civil Defence Emergency Management knowledge.
- We want to be helped – ensuring that the appropriate arrangements are in place should we need assistance following an event in New Zealand;

With Australia being our closet neighbour, Civil Defence Emergency Management links between our countries are especially important and I look forward to continuing to strengthen this relationship in the future.

**Hon Rick Barker**  
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