

Media Advisory on behalf of Project AF8 – 7 March 2017

Project AF8 planning workshops for a major magnitude 8.2 Alpine Fault earthquake are continuing apace throughout the South Island. These workshops are part of a series being held in each of the six South Island Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group areas to understand the immediate consequences of a damaging earthquake and plan for the first week of responses to it.

Representatives from a wide range of organisations worked together in day-long workshops over the past two weeks, in Greymouth, Nelson, and Blenheim, to begin collaborative planning for the first week of response to a major earthquake. Representatives included staff from local and regional councils, emergency, health and social services, critical infrastructure, and various community, tourism, and economic development organisations within each region.

Angus McKay, Regional Manager Emergency Management Southland, said the project was a partnership between all of the CDEM groups in the South Island, funded by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, and led by Emergency Management Southland. “The project was initiated in 2016 with the objective of bringing together local, regional and national organisations to produce a robust emergency response plan. The workshops have had sharper focus following the 14 November Kaikoura earthquake and are having immediate and longer-term benefit to planning, preparedness and risk reduction for a large-scale, complex emergency.”

Jon Mitchell, Programme Manager Project AF8, said that rapidly meeting the needs of injured and vulnerable people, getting them to safety and providing them with ongoing support, is a primary focus of the workshops. “A lot of communities will be isolated, without water, electricity and other essential services for days or weeks – some for longer periods. Support will have to come from less affected parts of the South Island, the North Island, and from off-shore.”

“Every region in the South Island would be affected by an Alpine Fault earthquake to some extent. Modelling shows that the most damage would occur on the West Coast, Fiordland, western parts of Otago and Canterbury nearer the Alps, as well as in Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman districts. Communities, and the infrastructure they rely on, on or near the Alpine Fault, are likely to be the hardest hit and will require the most immediate support. The engagement we are achieving in the workshops reflects the real desire to be as well prepared we possibly can be,” Mr Mitchell said.

Science leader for Project AF8, Dr Caroline Orchiston of University of Otago, said Project AF8 was informed by the best current science on the nature and impact of Alpine Fault earthquakes. “We now know that the Alpine Fault ruptures on a very regular basis, approximately every 300 years, with the most recently rupture in 1717 – that’s 300 years ago. There is a 30 to 50% likelihood of a significant Alpine Earthquake in the next 50 years and an 85% likelihood in the next 100 years”.

“The scenario being used for the project is based on a 400 km section of the Alpine Fault rupturing, generating an earthquake of magnitude 8.2 – that’s around 10 times more powerful than the recent Kaikoura quake. The shaking would continue for more than 5 minutes in many areas, causing casualties, damaging buildings and infrastructure, sparking landslides and liquefaction hundreds of kilometers from the quake’s epicenter. The whole of the South Island, and the South of the North Island, will experience shaking and varying degrees of damage. Older and taller buildings will be vulnerable to shaking, and infrastructure of all sorts will be compromised in much of the South Island” Dr Orchiston said.

Mr Mitchell said development of a coordinated South Island Alpine Fault Earthquake Response (SAFER) Plan would follow the regional planning workshops, with the final plan to be exercised in mid-2018.

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Marlborough CDEM and Emergency Services Planning Alpine Fault Quake Response – 8 Feb 2017



Nelson Tasman Multi-Agency Alpine Fault Quake Response Planning – 16 Feb 2017



West Coast Multi-Agency Alpine Fault Quake Response Planning – 16 Feb 2017