



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Project AF8 Otago Planning Workshop**

Representatives of fifty organisations from throughout Otago met in Dunedin today to participate in planning for the first week of response to a major Alpine Fault earthquake. The planning workshop is part of a series being led by Jon Mitchell, Project AF8 Programme Manager, in each of the 6 Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group areas across the South Island in preparation for an eventual Alpine Fault earthquake.

“The project is a partnership between all of the CDEM groups in the South Island, funded by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, and administered by Environment Southland. The project was initiated in 2015, with the planning workshops commencing in late 2016” said Angus MacKay, Regional Manager Emergency Management Southland. Mr MacKay said “The first workshop held in Southland in late November, shortly after the Kaikoura quakes, has proven very useful already”.

“Major challenges for the Otago region from a significant Alpine Fault earthquake will include significant damage to homes, tourist accommodation and infrastructure in Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago. Numerous communities will be isolated and without electricity and other essential services for days or weeks due to shaking, liquefaction, and landslides onto or under roads throughout the region” said Chris Hawker, Regional Manager Emergency Management Otago.

“Planning to support Queenstown, Wanaka, Cromwell, and smaller communities in the West of the region was a focus of much of today’s planning. With support having to come from Dunedin, other regions in the South Island, the North Island, and from off-shore” said Jon Mitchell, Project AF8 Programme Manager.

Mr Mitchell said that “Meeting the needs of both residents and visitors in the event of a major earthquake requires pre-planning and a lot of coordination between emergency services, local authorities, government agencies, critical infrastructure providers, businesses, communities, scientists, and the media. Every region in the South Island would be effected by an Alpine Fault earthquake, with most damage being on the West Coast, Fiordland, Western parts of Otago and Canterbury near the alps, as well as in Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman districts. West Coast communities, and infrastructure they rely on, on or near the Alpine Fault are likely to be the hardest hit and will require the most immediate support.”

“Although responses to an emergency of the geographic scale and complexity of an Alpine Fault earthquake would be directed by the National Civil Defence Controller there would also need to be continuous and seamless coordination between CDEM Group Controllers and local agencies in all parts of the South Island.”

Science leader for Project AF8, Dr Caroline Orchiston, University of Otago, said “Project AF8 is 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, most recently rupture was in 1717 – 299 years ago. There is a 30 to 50% likelihood of an 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 – around 10 times more powerful than the recent Kaikoura quake. The shaking would continue for more than 5 minutes, causing damage, landslides, and liquefaction hundreds of kilometers from the quake’s epicenter. Both Dunedin and Christchurch are likely to experience shaking and liquefaction in low-lying areas” said Dr Orchiston.

“Development of a coordinated South Island Alpine Fault Earthquake Response (SAFER) Plan will commence once the regional planning workshops are completed in April, to be completed and exercised by mid-2018” said Mr Mitchell.