

IGNITE

Te Hiringa o te Tangata | Issue 37 | March 2026

NGĀ TOHU RAUKURA
CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS

PROTECTING A TAONGA
AT TONGARIRO

DELIVERING BETTER-FITTING UNIFORM
FOR EVERY FIREFIGHTER



Ignite is the official magazine for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Te Hiringa o te Tangata – To have drive, zest, determination. To have heart and soul.

Ignite represents the voices of our people across the motu who dedicate themselves to protecting life, the environment and property in their communities.

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Contributions to Ignite

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-  **Kia tika** | We do the right thing
-  **Manaakitanga** | We serve and support
-  **Whanaungatanga** | We are better together
-  **Auahatanga** | We strive to improve



Kia ora koutou

Haere mai and welcome to the March issue of Ignite.

The first months of 2026 have flown by, and, as usual, we've hit the ground running. Thank you all for your continued mahi and dedication, day in and day out.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge our people involved in responding to the weather events across the North Island over the last few months. This is becoming a more familiar, but still unsettling, scenario for many as climate change continues to bring more extreme weather events. My thoughts go out to those who lost their lives in the Mount Manganui and Papamoa landslides, their whānau, their communities, and our people involved in the recovery efforts.

A big mihi to those who provided feedback on our organisational structure change proposal. We received more than 1,000 thoughtful and considered contributions on our proposal. As I've shared previously, your feedback has been valuable and has challenged our thinking. This is one of the reasons we have taken additional time to consider our decisions. There is more about the structure change in our Strategic Implementation Programme update over the page.

I acknowledge that this may be an uncertain period for you, and if you haven't already, I encourage you to reach out to your leader, and take a look at a range of wellbeing support options which are also available on the Portal.



We have a jam-packed issue this month, highlighting some of our most recent events. We highlight the mahi of the teams who attended the Tongariro fires. Thank you to everyone who gave their all to look after this important taonga. Inside, you can read more about the efforts and commitment shown during this challenging response, including our whanaungatanga with local iwi to protect the whenua.

On a different note, we profile the well-deserved winners of the Ngā Tohu Raukura Celebrating Success Awards, which took place late last year. These awards give us the opportunity to recognise, acknowledge, and value the great mahi being undertaken by many of you across the motu. I was proud to celebrate alongside our people.

Finally, we're making great progress in improving the fit of our Level 2 Personal Protective Clothing – an important step forward for the safety and comfort of our teams. Find out more inside.

I trust you'll enjoy the read.
Noho ora mai,

Kerry Gregory
Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive
Toihau a-Motu | National Commander

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Hon Brooke van Velden — Minister of Internal Affairs

It has been an extraordinary start to the year and I want to acknowledge the commitment you have all shown to your communities and to Fire and Emergency over these first few months of this year.

In particular, I want to acknowledge the immense effort and compassion shown by those who supported the response to the Mount Maunganui and Papamoa tragedies. I am confident that the professionalism and care you demonstrated during such a difficult time made a real difference for those communities and for those most affected. Your work did not go unnoticed.

It was also great to see two deployments of Fire and Emergency and partner agency personnel travel to Victoria, Australia to support those affected by the devastating

fires. The willingness of firefighters and specialists to step up to help those in need, even when it means time away from their home and families, is admirable. It is yet another observable example of the drive firefighters have to protect those in need. As well as benefitting the Victorian crews, deployments like this provide invaluable experience for personnel.

I would also like to extend my thanks to everyone who continued to serve and support New Zealand's communities throughout the Christmas and holiday period. Working and

being available through that time often requires personal sacrifice and your dedication ensured that critical support and services were there when they were needed most.

Finally, and as we look to the remainder of the year ahead of us, I am confident that the same professionalism, teamwork, and sense of service will continue to guide your work. Again, thank you for all that you do; here's to a productive year ahead.

Hon Brooke van Velden



HE KŌRERO WHAKAHŌU MŌ TE KAUPAPA WHAKAMAHI RAUTAKI UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

Change is a constant backdrop for all organisations. To be successful, organisations need effective responses to that change. Fire and Emergency is no different. We are seeing shifts in the communities we serve, changes in climate, and technological advancements. This is reshaping both what we need to respond to and how we need to respond to it.

One of the key initiatives that forms part of the Strategic Implementation Programme (SIP) is organisational structure change. The purpose of the structure change is to align our organisation so that teams and structures support us to deliver our strategic priorities.

It will help Fire and Emergency respond to the challenges and changes we are facing, sustainably and effectively.

At the end of 2025, we completed the consultation on the second phase of our structure change. Consultation opened on 12 November and, in response to feedback during the period, was extended until 10 December. During those four weeks, we received over 1,000 pieces of feedback from across the organisation.

The feedback was meaningful and considered. It has helpfully challenged our thinking, given us additional information and asked questions of us we need to answer before we can make our final decisions. In February, we ran targeted re-consultation processes in a small number of areas. We also met with the unions and associations to test our thinking, especially on how we are addressing your feedback.

Structure change is just one of the initiatives we are working on to move the dial over the next five years. Initiatives are included in the programme because they will help us to deliver the strategic shifts outlined in Tā Mātou Ahunga Rautaki, Our Strategic Direction, which came into effect on 1 July 2025. Our Strategic Direction is our shared plan. It shapes how we lead, what we focus on, and what work gets funded and delivered.

Find out more about the Strategic Implementation Programme, Our Strategic Direction, and the organisation structure change on the Portal.



Visit the Strategic Implementation Programme page on the Portal.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

You will be involved. We know the best solutions come from working together. That's why you can expect:

- opportunities to shape future changes that impact you
- honest, open communication throughout the process
- clear, relevant information shared with those impacted
- genuine opportunity to give feedback and have it considered before final decisions are made
- your input to be carefully considered.



STAYING INVOLVED AND INFORMED VIA THE PORTAL PAGE

We've created dedicated pages for the Strategic Implementation Programme on the Portal, which we'll keep updated.

The Portal is the "one source of truth" for all updates.

You can find background information on why this work is needed. You can also register for the next monthly CE Town Hall, an open, 30-minute session hosted on Microsoft Teams where you can hear directly from leadership, ask questions, and stay connected. Recordings and Q&A summaries will be available for those who can't attend live.

In addition to the Portal, there are two SharePoint sites that have important information:

- The Leaders' toolkit of selection process
- Employee pathways



SUPPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM

If you have concerns, start by speaking with your manager. There are also several support options available:

- peer support network
- Kāpehu coaching through Speak Safe @ Fair Way
- Vitae 24/7 counselling
- wellbeing resources on the Portal.

We talk a lot about culture, and for good reason. Now, more than ever, it's important that we honour the trust our communities place in us by living our values every day. That means looking out for each other, being inclusive, showing respect, uplifting those around us, and focusing on the future by finding ways to make things better.

The way we act, together, must be the foundation for how we move through this change to build a stronger, more sustainable Fire and Emergency.

NGĀ TOHU RAUKURA – CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS

The Ngā Tohu Raukura Celebrating Success Awards are annual awards that formally recognise the awesome mahi and mana of Fire and Emergency teams and individuals who have demonstrated outstanding excellence and contribution to our organisation and the communities we serve.

These awards give us an opportunity to recognise, acknowledge, and value the great mahi being undertaken by our people across the five Regions and NHQ.

Te Hiku – Kirk Davis

SCANNING THE FUTURE OF FIRE INVESTIGATION

Kirk Davis, Te Hiku Risk Reduction Advisor, is breaking new ground in fire investigation with the use of 3D scanning technology. Over the past 18 months, Kirk has integrated mobile phone-based Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) scanning apps into his work, capturing entire fire scenes in remarkable detail. Unlike traditional photographs, these scans stitch together hundreds of images to create a virtual model of a building, room, or object – accurate to within a centimetre.

This innovation allows investigators to revisit a scene virtually, uncovering details that may have been overlooked in person. The scans can be shared instantly with colleagues, enabling real-time collaboration and training opportunities. Police have also found the technology invaluable, as it eliminates the need for lengthy handovers between officers.

Kirk's pioneering use of 3D scanning has already been tested in court, where it was accepted as expert evidence. In one case, the scans were used to demonstrate the relationship between burn patterns on the floor and the position of objects in the room, helping to resolve a disputed cause of fire.

The courts have since recognised Kirk as an expert in 3D scanning technology, a first for Fire and Emergency.



Kirk Davis, Te Hiku Risk Reduction Advisor (centre) with Ron Devlin, Te Hiku Region Manager (left) and Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.



Virtual model of a fire scene in a kitchen using the LiDAR app.

Beyond investigations, the scans provide powerful tools for training, floor plan generation, and storytelling – illustrating how fires spread and where they began.

Kirk's innovative work was recently recognised with a Highly Commended Award at the Te Hiku Ngā Tohu Raukura Awards, highlighting how technology can transform fire investigation practice.

TE HIKU FULL LIST OF AWARDS:

Community Enrichment

- **Winner** – Emma Goldsworthy, Advisor Community Readiness and Recovery, Counties Manukau
- **Highly commended** – Chris Steffen, Firefighter, Kaitia Volunteer Fire Brigade

Safety, Health and Wellbeing

- **Winner** – Clare Morgan, Coordinator Learning Facilities
- **Highly commended** – Emma Carey, Senior Firefighter, Manurewa Station and Pōkeno Volunteer Fire Brigade

Operational Efficiency

- **Winner** – Dave McKeown, Group Manager, Counties Manukau
- **Highly commended** – Kirk Davis, Advisor Risk Reduction, Counties Manukau

Leadership

- **Winner** – Eddie Randall, Senior Station Officer, Mount Wellington Station
- **Highly commended** – Roger Dephoff, Station Officer, Kawakawa Volunteer Fire Brigade

Culture Champion

- **Winner** – Emma Carey, Senior Firefighter, Manurewa Station and Pōkeno Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Highly commended** – Te Wai Unasa, Firefighter, Kaiaua Volunteer Fire Brigade

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Ngā Tai ki te Puku – Sally Cale

Sally Cale's outstanding efforts during Cyclone Gabrielle won her the National Commander's Certificate of Commendation for exceptional bravery, selflessness, resilience and dedication during and after Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023, demonstrating unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of others in extraordinary circumstances.

A volunteer firefighter at Whatatutu Volunteer Fire Brigade, Sally risked her own safety to rescue people and fellow brigade members stranded in floodwaters.

Cyclone Gabrielle directly impacted the Whatatutu community, which has an approximate population of 300, during the early hours of 13 February 2023. The flooding caused by the cyclone rendered both the Whatatutu and Te Karaka communities completely inaccessible.

Amid the isolation caused by swollen rivers, a collapsed bridge on one side and a heavily flooded bridge on the other, and the confinement of brigade crew members to their homes, Sally bravely took the initiative, despite the genuine risk to her personal safety, to operate the Whatatutu fire appliance by herself. Sally single-handedly managed to rescue, assist, and care for over 20 individuals within the first ten hours of the emergency.



Sally Cale receiving her Award from Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.

Sally also attended to her community's health and welfare requirements. She sprang into action, procuring generators and the fuel to power them, aided community members in maintaining their health services, organised the distribution of welfare packages to families, arranged for one person to be medically evacuated out of Whatatutu, and collaborated with the local Civil Defence team.

Over the course of two weeks following the cyclone's landfall, with the support of the local marae, she extended her assistance and support to over 60 individuals, including whānau, within the Whatatutu community. In the days that followed, Sally's instigation of daily 9am meetings to keep the Whatatutu community informed was a lifeline, providing valuable information about what was happening around the Region.

Sally demonstrated unwavering perseverance and incredible bravery, prioritising the well-being of the community she has called home for decades and where she raised her own family.

NGĀ TAI KI TE PUKU FULL LIST OF AWARDS:

Special Recognition Awards

- **Building Connected Communities** – Mere Wete, Senior Firefighter, Kawhia Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Championing Positive Workplace Culture** – Lisa Atkinson, Qualified Firefighter, Te Awamutu Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Operational & Organisational Excellence** – Waikato Risk Reduction Team: Frankie Noble, Bex Dakin and Peter Hallett
- **Operational & Organisational Excellence** – Catherine Kepa, Tairāwhiti Business Services Coordination Team Leader
- **Leadership** – Luke Burgess, Community Risk Manager, Bay of Plenty
- **Supporting Health, Safety & Wellbeing** – Abi Lawrence, Advisor Community Readiness and Recovery, Waikato
- **Promoting Fire Safety & Safe Practices** – Morné Germishuys, Advisor Risk Reduction, Waikato

Category Awards

- **Building Connected Communities** – Ōtorohanga Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Championing Positive Workplace Culture** – Geoff Edwards, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Te Aroha Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Operational & Organisational Excellence** – Alan "Doc" Doherty, Group Manager, Waikato District
- **Empowering Resilient Communities** – Paul Hunter, Advisor Risk Reduction, Bay of Plenty
- **Leadership** – Bryan King, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Otorohanga Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Supporting Health, Safety & Wellbeing** – Hels Wilkes, Qualified Firefighter, Te Awamutu Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Promoting Fire Safety & Safe Practices** – Andy Mackay, Senior Firefighter, Mt Maunganui Station

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NGĀ TOHU RAUKURA – CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS

TE ŪPOKO FULL LIST OF AWARDS:

- **Building Resilient Communities** – Harry Gaddum, Firefighter, Kereru Volunteer Fire Brigade and John Hunt, Volunteer Support Officer, Hawke's Bay
- **Collaboration, Partnerships & Influence** – Alicia Lenz, Business Services Coordinator, Wellington
- **Intelligence-Led, Evidence-Based Decision** – Taranaki Volunteer Support Officers Warwick Stewart, Kris Gilmour and Nicky Hughes
- **Keeping Pace with Change** – Hayden Bodell, Volunteer Support Officer, Hawke's Bay
- **Growing our People & Enhancing Our Culture** – Tim Tautau, Senior Firefighter, Palmerston North Station
- **Overall Te Ūpoko Award** – Alicia Lenz, Business Services Coordinator, Wellington

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Te Ūpoko – Alicia Lenz

Alicia Lenz, winner of last year's Te Ūpoko Ngā Tohu Raukura Overall Award and the Collaboration, Partnerships and Influence Category Award, has led two outstanding initiatives that are transforming fire safety outcomes for older people across the Wellington District. Even more remarkable, she achieved all of this during a six-week secondment as a Community Readiness and Recovery Advisor, a role she'd long hoped to experience.

In the past five years, nine people aged 60 and over have lost their lives in house fires where no working smoke alarms were present. Determined to reduce this statistic, Alicia initiated a pioneering partnership with Tū Ora Compass Health, whose 58 GP clinics support thousands of older patients.

Working alongside clinic staff, she's helped implement a prompt in their patient management system that appears when individuals meet certain risk criteria, prompting clinicians to offer a free Home Fire Safety Visit. Eight clinics have already adopted the process, with Wairarapa practices the next focus. This simple shift is making fire safety part of everyday healthcare conversations, reaching those who may otherwise slip through the cracks.

Alicia also developed a creative partnership with Driving Miss Daisy, enabling drivers to start friendly conversations about smoke alarms with clients. A QR-coded poster inside each participating vehicle links directly to the Home Fire Safety Visit referral form, making support instant and accessible. The trial is underway in the Wairarapa and primed for wider rollout.



Alicia Lenz, Te Ūpoko Ngā Tohu Raukura Overall Award and the Collaboration, Partnerships and Influence Category Award winner, and Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.

'Winning was surreal. I never set out to be recognised, I was just passionate,' Alicia says. She will continue supporting both projects alongside her substantive Business Services role. 'Sometimes it just takes one person to give you an opportunity, so grab it.'

Phil Soal, Wellington Community Risk Manager says, 'Alicia's out-of-the-box thinking has created two initiatives that directly protect our most at-risk group. Her mahi should inspire others.'

Te Ihu – Andrew Turner



Andrew Turner, Senior Station Officer (centre), with Brad Mosby, Region Manager (left) and Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.

Andrew Turner, Christchurch Senior Firefighter, received the Region Manager's Award at last year's Ngā Tohu Raukura in recognition of his work encouraging firefighters to donate plasma regularly as a means to reduce the levels of "forever chemicals" in their blood.

Andrew has taken the lead in Christchurch in relation to firefighters' exposure to carcinogens. Efforts that began with his own watch have expanded to other watches and stations.

As well, Andrew has been liaising with the New Zealand Blood Service along with medical experts at universities and within Fire and Emergency to establish whether it is possible to test levels of PFAS and PAHS in firefighters' blood levels. It is suggested that by donating plasma regularly, the levels of damaging chemicals in a person's blood may be reduced, as the body creates new plasma without the carcinogens after each donation.

Dave Stackhouse, Canterbury District Manager, described Andrew's proactive

approach to reducing exposure to harmful chemicals as 'a powerful example of leadership and care for our people.'

'I acknowledge and commend Andrew for his outstanding initiative in championing firefighter health and wellbeing. This work not only enhances the long-term health of our firefighters but also contributes to the wider community through increased availability of blood and plasma. Andrew's dedication reflects the very best of our values, and I congratulate him on this important achievement.'

By encouraging firefighters to give blood and plasma regularly, Andrew is not only promoting safety, health and wellbeing within the firefighting community, the increased donations are benefitting everyone who needs a blood or plasma transfusion.

NB: PFAS stands for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances and PAHS are Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons. Firefighters are frequently exposed to both.

TE IHU FULL LIST OF AWARDS:

- **Safety, Health & Wellbeing** – Bella Clark-Melchers, Chief Fire Officer, Appleby Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Eke Taumata He Tangata** – Waimate Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Response Capability** – Karl Patterson, Planning and Performance Manager
- **Community Risk Management** – Donna Lindsay, Senior Advisor Readiness and Recovery, Mid-South Canterbury
- **Volunteerism** – Spencerville Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Creating a safe, positive & inclusive environment for everyone** – Stephen Mann, Senior Station Officer, Woodend Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Leadership** – Jordan Cudmore, Deputy Rural Controller, Kokatahi and Kowhitirangi Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Region Manager's Award** – Andrew Turner, Senior Firefighter, Christchurch

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NGĀ TOHU RAUKURA – CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS

Te Kei – Katherine Lamont

Katherine Lamont's campaign to extend ACC coverage of work-related injuries to volunteer firefighters not only thrust her into the national spotlight in 2025, it won her recognition at the Te Kei Ngā Tohu Raukura Awards when she was presented with the Judges' Special Award.

Katherine is a support member of the Queenstown Volunteer Fire Brigade and also acts as the Brigade Secretary. She was motivated to launch a petition seeking increased ACC coverage for volunteer firefighters after a neighbouring brigade's Chief was declined ACC cover for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder triggered by a fatal crash their brigade responded to last year.

He had to step down from his role with the brigade and take time off from his day job but was not eligible for ACC support because his trauma stemmed from what he experienced as a volunteer.

Katherine launched a petition asking: 'That the House of Representatives change legislation to give volunteer firefighters the same ACC coverage and benefits as their paid counterparts.' In particular, she advocated that volunteer firefighters should be eligible for cover relating to mental trauma and gradual workplace injuries.

The petition attracted 36,549 signatures in just two months and was presented to Parliament in May 2025 for consideration by the Education and Workforce Select Committee. The Committee recommended in December 2025 that the House note its report, which identified that the cost of extending the increased coverage would be \$244,533 per year. The Select Committee noted that: 'while we are sympathetic to the cause we are concerned about the precedent that extending ACC cover to volunteer firefighters might set.'

Katherine is still working behind the scenes and says that the Select Committee's report validates the reasons she launched the petition. 'It acknowledges that changes are needed, that volunteers are necessary and important, and that the workload is varied and ever-increasing.'

The citation for Katherine's Award noted that she consistently demonstrates Fire and Emergency's values – and particularly Kia Tika (we do the right thing) and Auahatanga (we strive to improve) by holding herself to the highest standards and courageously advocating for improvements to volunteer conditions, 'embracing change, learning from the past, and working towards a better future for all firefighters.'



Katherine Lamont received her award from Neil Gillespie, Awards judge and Otago Local Advisory Committee Deputy Chair (NB: Neil is also Chief of the Cromwell Volunteer Fire Brigade).

TE KEI FULL LIST OF AWARDS:

- **Going Above & Beyond** – Michele Lindsay, Team Leader, Otago District Business Services Coordination Team
- **Risk Reduction** – Tane Rogers, Station Officer, and Kirsten Rogers, Firefighter, Oamaru Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Operational Efficiency** – Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Leadership** – Daniel Wark, Chief Fire Officer, Waitahuna Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Community Engagement/Service** – Olivia Weatherburn, Qualified Firefighter, Waikaka Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Innovation** – Jason Bryant, Chief Fire Officer, Ravensbourne Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Championing Diversity & Inclusion** – Dennis Hika, Station Officer, Kingswell Station
- **Safety, Health & Wellbeing** – Balfour Volunteer Fire Brigade
- **Judges' Special Award** – Katherine Lamont, Queenstown Volunteer Fire Brigade support member

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In Te Kei, the "Symbols of Excellence" have a physical presence.

Eight taonga (treasure) were created for Te Kei by local artist Kendall Allum in 2021. They represent the paddles of our waka (Te Kei being the stern). Each is unique, made from a different piece of pounamu sourced from around Te Wai Pounamu. The handles are from Dunedin basalt.



NHQ Winners

The 2025 NHQ Ngā Tohu Raukura Awards recognised excellence across five categories, honouring those whose leadership, dedication, and innovation strengthen both our organisation and the communities we serve.



He raukura, he tohu rangatira — A feather, a symbol of leadership.

This whakataukī reflects the raukura as a symbol of mana and distinction. Just as the feather signified the authority of Māori rangatira (chiefs), these awards acknowledge individuals whose actions uplift and inspire others.

The nominees set an exceptional standard. Each was selected for their meaningful contributions, commitment to quality, and the positive impact they have made across Fire and Emergency. Their nominations alone highlight the respect they have earned.

Lisa MacDonald, Advisor Wellbeing, and Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.



Amanda Roberts, Principal Legal Counsel, and Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander.



Kerry Gregory, Chief Executive and National Commander, presents Award to Simon Haughey, Operational Response Advisor.

We congratulate the 2025 Award recipients:

Kia tika | We do the right thing

Reshmi Prasad, Manager Learning Quality – Recognised for her dedication to the External Evaluation and Review response plan, which played a pivotal role in achieving the strong 2025 rating and reshaping how we assure learning quality.

Manaakitanga | We serve and support

Dawn Champion, Eke Taumata Programme Coordinator – A model of care and adaptability, Dawn's work across the Eke Taumata Programme has delivered wide-reaching benefits and consistent support for colleagues and advisory rōpū members.

Whanaungatanga | We are better together

Lisa MacDonald, Advisor Wellbeing – Honoured for her compassionate, tailored support of firefighters involved in the Loafer's Lodge trial, ensuring they felt prepared, reassured, and cared for throughout.

Auahatanga | We strive to improve

Simon Haughey, Operational Response Advisor – Awarded for championing continuous improvement and fostering collaborative, future-focused ways of working.

Creating a safe, positive and inclusive workplace

Amanda Roberts, Principal Legal Counsel – Recognised for exemplary leadership and integrity in coordinating Fire and Emergency's involvement in the Loafer's Lodge trial, ensuring personnel were well supported and prepared.

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To all NHQ nominees, winners, supporters, and attendees – thank you for making this ceremony a memorable celebration of excellence and leadership.



NGĀ TOHU RAUKURA – CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS CONTINUED

Special Issue Fire and Emergency Awards

NHQ

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander recipients:

Colin Clemens
Peter Gallagher

TE HIKU

Board Citation recipients:

Fire and Emergency Urban Search and Rescue

Certificate of Commendation from Chief Executive – Auckland Floods recipients:

Carol Heke
Mel Johnson

Certificate of Commendation from Chief Executive – North Island Severe Weather Events recipient:

Northern Communications Centre

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander – Wairau Park Hopper Rescue recipients:

Birkenhead Fire Station
Takapuna Fire Station

Certificate of Commendation from Chief Executive – Muriwai Landslide recipients:

Phelan Pirrie
Muriwai Volunteer Fire Brigade

Certificate of Appreciation from National Commander – Muriwai Landslide recipients:

Shaun Pilgrim
Shaun Thornton
Dave Woon
Kumeu Volunteer Fire Brigade

NGA TAI KI TE PUKU

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander – Cyclone Gabrielle recipient:

Sally Cale

TE ŪPOKO

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander – Cyclone Gabrielle recipients:

Nicola Bates
Ben Cozens
Shane Cunningham
Nathan Ferguson
Joel Fraser
Barry Gallagher
John Hays
Lee Kupa
Brad Nicoll
Craig Parsons
Jason Reid
Jon Wakefield

Certificate of Commendation from Chief Executive – North Island Severe Weather Event 2023 recipient:

Central Communications Centre

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander – Loafers Lodge recipient:

Central Communications Centre

Certificate of Commendation from Board – Loafers Lodge recipients:

Josh McAlpine
Kevin Pearman

Board Citation – Loafers Lodge – recipients:

Joshua (Manu) Le Ceve
Mark Powell

TE IHU

Certificate of Commendation from Chief Executive – North Island Severe Weather Events recipient:

Southern Communications Centre

Certificate of Commendation from National Commander – Muriwai Landslide recipient:

Brad Mosby

Certificate of Appreciation from Region Manager – OIC assistance recipients:

Dwayne Burgess
Dean Connolly
Deon Heremaia
Seth Humphries
Tarris May
Simon Scarlett
David Smith-Hardwick

NSW SES Commissioner's Unit Citation recipients:

Kaye Ahsam
Hamish Angus
Kim Boyce
Nicholas Bryant
Dean Carr
Craig Cottrill
Damian Daly
Atila de Oliveira
Alan Doherty
Chris Faithfull
John Goddard
Emma Jane Goldsworthy
Brendon Grylls
Chris Hayles
Jason Hill
Harry Howard
Nicole Horrox
Gareth Hughes
Liam Hyslop
Tarah Jones
Blair Kiely
Chris Lane
Phillip Mackay
Philip MacDonald
Scott Marchant
Rochelle Martin
David McKeown
Jarron McInnes
Gordan Munn
Barbara Olah
Cullum Peni-Wesche
Sonya Porteous
Kerri Pring
Sue Stewart
Corin Stephen
Aaron Summerhays
John Sutton
Mark Tinworth
David Woon



For full details, visit the Portal.



NGĀ WHAKAHAERENGA AROTAKE MŌ TE RATONGA AHI ME NGĀ OHOTATA OPERATIONAL REVIEWS AT FIRE AND EMERGENCY

When a big emergency happens, there's always more to the story than what makes the news. After the trucks leave and the smoke clears, Fire and Emergency takes time to look back at how the response unfolded. These are called operational reviews, and they play a vital role in helping the organisation learn and improve.

An operational review is a careful look at a significant incident, whether it's a large wildfire, a major weather event, or another complex emergency. The focus is simple: what happened, what worked well, and what could be done better next time. It's not about blaming people. Instead, it's about sharing lessons, strengthening systems, and making sure firefighters and support teams are as prepared as possible for the next challenge.

These reviews matter because emergencies are becoming more demanding and unpredictable. Every major event brings new

pressures, from changing weather patterns to stretched resources and multi-agency coordination. By taking the time to reflect and document key insights, Fire and Emergency helps ensure that experience turns into practical improvements. That might mean refining training, improving communication, or adjusting operational planning. The goal is always the same: safer communities and safer crews.

Operational reviews are also an important part of being open and accountable. They give our people, partner agencies and the public a

Operational reviews in the pipeline:

- Mount Maunganui/Papamoa landslides
- Tongariro wildfire
- Fernhill, Hastings, wildfire
- Taupo Nui A Tia College structure fire
- Cambridge garage fire

clearer understanding of how incidents were managed and what was learned, offering valuable behind-the-scenes insight.

We encourage our people to take the time to read the operational reviews published on the Portal.



Read our operational reviews on the Portal.

TE TIRITI O ADA, NGĀ TOA O TE KAUPAPA AHUMAHU TUKU TOHU ADA STREET PROJECT TAKES OUT TOP INDUSTRY AWARD

Congratulations to Anna Gordon, Senior Advisor Community Readiness and Recovery, and Justin Storey, Advisor Risk Reduction, who have won the Emergency Media and Public Affairs (EMPA) Community Engagement Award for their Ada Street initiative.

For years, Palmerston North's Ada Street had been known for its high number of deliberately lit fires, putting residents and responders at risk. Anna and Justin led a collaborative, community-focused initiative aimed at changing this pattern. Working closely with local agencies and the people who lived there, they built trust, raised awareness, and helped residents take ownership of fire safety. The result has been remarkable: fire-related callouts have dropped to near zero, with a dramatic reduction in Police incidents as well.

Justin says he couldn't be prouder. 'Working with our partners, we made a massive difference to what's been a problem for many years.' He credits the Fire and Emergency NHQ whānau for their support. 'The work behind the scenes helped us get here. This Award is for all of us.'



Justin and Anna at the 2025 EMPA Awards.

Anna agrees the project has lasting impact. 'We've built amazing relationships and we're still going. We're not resting on our laurels.'

Justin's takeaway is simple: 'I was just doing my job. Everyone can do this – apply yourself and you can make a difference.'



Read about the Ada Street initiative.



MANAAKI NGĀ TAONGA O TONGARIRO

PROTECTING A TAONGA AT TONGARIRO

In November and December 2025 Fire and Emergency and partner agencies responded to two major wildfires in Tongariro National Park - a remote and internationally treasured wilderness that tested both our operational readiness and our commitment to partnership, cultural respect, and environmental stewardship. The scale and complexity of these incidents brought together brigades from across the motu, aviation support, our agency partners, iwi and hapū, and local government organisations working together around the clock.

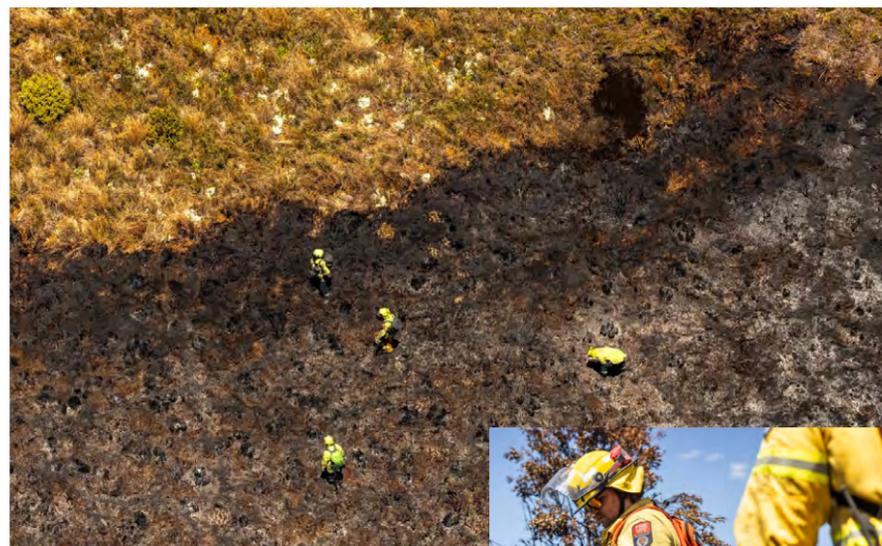
Tongariro is not just New Zealand's oldest national park; it carries dual UNESCO World Heritage recognition for its cultural and natural values. The maunga, wāhi tapu, rare flora and fauna, internationally renowned hiking trails like the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, and vital transport links such as State Highways 47 and 48 are all part of the landscape.

On Saturday 8 November just after 3pm, a rapidly spreading vegetation fire was reported near State Highway 47 in the central plateau of Tongariro National Park. Over the following

hours the blaze swiftly spread through rugged terrain, at its peak covering nearly 2,935 hectares of mixed alpine scrub, wetlands and regenerating forest.

The fire's proximity to Whakapapa Village and key transport links triggered evacuations and precautionary closures of both State Highway 47 and State Highway 48, as well as popular walking tracks. Within a short time, 43 trampers plus wardens were airlifted from at-risk huts, while other track users, Department of Conservation (DOC) staff and local residents were moved to safety.

A full Incident Management Team (IMT) was stood up, supported by the Region's Coordination Centre and the National Coordination Centre. Brigades from at least 27 locations across the North Island helped in our response - including both volunteer and career firefighters. Aerial operations alone involved 15 helicopters and five fixed-wing aircraft conducting hundreds of water drops in extraordinarily challenging conditions: steep terrain, unpredictable wind changes, sparse access routes, and a high intensity wildfire.



One month after the first event, another wildfire ignited on 8 December, initially as multiple smaller fires that merged into a complex incident close to where the first fire started on State Highway 47. Again, crews mounted a swift response, supported by helicopters, and contained the fire to 300 hectares.

The scale and complexity of both fires necessitated collaboration across emergency services, government agencies, local authorities, and community partners, including Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro, Police, DOC, aviation operators, Ruapehu District Council and Manawatu-Whanganui Emergency Management Group. All had an important role to play in protecting the surrounding communities and the fragile environment of the national park.

Brendan Nally, Director Service Delivery Operations, said the response showed the strength of the country's emergency network.

'This was a true team effort. Our people, along with DOC, Police, iwi and local authorities, worked tirelessly to keep communities safe and protect this treasured landscape.

'This response once again demonstrates the power of partnership and the dedication of people who step up when communities need them most.'

Protecting culturally significant taonga

Tongariro is a place of deep cultural and spiritual importance to Māori. It holds dual UNESCO World Heritage status, is managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC), and crosses the boundary of the Horizons Regional and Waikato District Councils.

Strong coordination during the incident was needed between Fire and Emergency, iwi, councils, Police, DOC, and local landowners, to ensure the taonga was respected.

Reihana Turner, our Pou Takawaenga Māori from Ngā Tai ki te Puku, and Aidan Crawford from Te Ūpoko, arrived on day three to support Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust Deputy Chair, iwi representative, and emergency management expert, Tyronne "Bubs" Smith. Bubs played a key role from day one assisting with evacuations, road closures and, importantly, sharing information with the community.

Reihana said that together, they acted as the main line of communication between the Incident Management Team and Otūkou Marae, the hub for community support.

'Otūkou Marae became an integral space for regular incident updates and kai offerings. Sharing kai is an important way for hapū (sub-tribe) to care for those protecting and living in their whenua (land).'



Aidan said one kaumatua (elder) present at the blaze told him that 50 years ago iwi input was not valued when a fire broke out.

'They were seen as protestors, but now they're looked after with kai and a cup of tea.'

Renee Potae, Incident Controller and Group Manager, adds that Fire and Emergency leadership also worked closely with iwi to protect culturally significant sites.

Targeted aerial water attacks helped protect a pou whenua (carved wooden post) and other structures at the entrance of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (Te Ririō), an effort that was deeply appreciated by iwi. 'I know the entire whenua is precious to them,' she says.

The successful response reflects the decades-long relationship between all involved stakeholders to ensure Tongariro is cared for. The partnership influenced our response and emphasised the importance of early engagement with Māori in large-scale incidents to ensure he taonga te ahi, he taonga te taiao, he taonga te tāngata (fire is a treasure, the environment is a treasure, people are a treasure).



E AHA ANA TE... WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH...

RERENGA PŪRERE AERIAL APPLIANCES

R. A. Bell in Brisbane, Australia are building our new Type 5 Heavy and Type 6 appliances. In these recent photos, the Type 5 Heavy has its painted lockers installed and the Type 6 is having lockers test fitted.



TE MARIKO WHAIHANGA VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATOR

Ben Hutchinson, Senior Firefighter, Hamilton Red Watch.



A Bronto Skylift virtual reality (VR) simulator used to train crews for our new aerial appliances has been around the motu and has been a big hit.

Two Aerial Appliance Acquisition Project members, Alban Osborne, Senior Station Officer from Hamilton, and Steve Gallagher, Senior Firefighter from Christchurch, attended the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) conference in Brisbane in 2023 where the simulator was being demonstrated. From there a business case was developed and the Bronto Skylift VR simulator was approved for purchase.

Alban said the VR simulator, which uses a real fully functional Bronto screen and controls, allows operators to gain hours of training before they are set free on the actual trucks.

'This is a new concept for aerial training in New Zealand and we will be the first in the southern hemisphere to have one of these operational.'

The idea behind the simulator is to offer realism in training in the operation of the Bronto system while reducing fuel, maintenance costs, wear and tear, and exhaust emissions. It's also better for the health and safety of our personnel as it will reduce their exposure to carcinogens.'

With five new aerial appliances under construction, taking the simulator around the motu prior to stations receiving the new trucks has meant a faster and consistent training process.

'For existing Bronto operators, the simulator also offers assessment-style training where it can measure the speed, level of control, and the number of simultaneous lever operations. It will then provide a score, allowing operators to fine tune their skills to become better operators,' Alban adds.

'This simulator is a pilot, the results of which will support evidence-informed decisions around the future use of simulators.'

Here is some feedback from some of our people who trained on the VR simulator:

'As a total training package, and with continued support and resourcing, I see this as an excellent training tool, not only for new aerial appliance operators, but also in the continual refinement of current operators' skillsets. This will not only improve operators' abilities, efficiency and confidence, but also be safer whilst improving our operational readiness.'

'I was really impressed with the aerial training simulator and the back-end technology that supports it. Fire and Emergency has come a long way with the purchase of this training package which will ensure our new trainees have a safe space to learn and practice the underpinning skills needed to operate our heavy aerials.'

'Members loved the realism and having the ability to have an instructor beside them in a controlled environment helped make them more comfortable when operating in closer proximity to buildings, etc; the VR aspect added a new twist to it all but everyone loved it.'



MŌ TE KATOA : NGĀ KĀKAHU MANAAKI MŌ NGĀ KAITINEI AHI KATOA

FIT FOR ALL: DELIVERING BETTER-FITTING LEVEL 2 PPC FOR EVERY FIREFIGHTER

Fire and Emergency's built environment crews rely on their Level 2 Personal Protective Clothing (L2PPC) every day – and getting the right fit is not entirely a matter of comfort, but, crucially, safety.



In July last year, we launched the Fit for All Level 2 Personal Protective Clothing Project, to ensure every built environment firefighter, regardless of body type, size, or gender, is equipped with L2PPC that fits correctly when issued, continues to fit throughout their service, and performs as designed under operational conditions.

The project has made good progress across training, research, product development, and the introduction of new fitting processes. The goal is simple but critical: well-fitting L2PPC that keeps firefighters safe and confident in the protection it provides.

Building consistency: Training and fit protocols

One of the project's first priorities was establishing consistency across the motu in how L2PPC is fitted and checked. New online learning modules have been developed for both wearers and fitters, supported by updated manuals, posters, and step-by-step videos. These resources teach personnel how to

measure correctly, how to don and check their gear, and how to recognise when garments no longer fit as they should.

Fitters can now complete online training, with annual refreshers prompted via Operational Skills Maintenance tasks. In late 2025, national trainers and Volunteer Support Officers from Ngā Tai ki te Puku took part in hands-on sessions to prepare for rollout this year.

Understanding our people: Measurement and research

To ensure the right sizes are stocked, the project has carried out body measurement research across volunteer and career firefighters. This work has already improved Fire and Emergency's ordering methodology, helping identify gaps in the available size range and reducing reliance on special orders and tailoring.

This data also underpinned the September - October 2025 field trial of the updated KIWI L2PPC design. Firefighters across a variety of shapes and sizes took part, providing feedback that is now being used to refine future iterations of the garments.

Supporting female firefighters: A dedicated female fit sub-group

Recognising long-standing challenges for fit faced by many female firefighters, the project's female fit sub-group has driven targeted research and development. Using



measurement data and insights from female firefighters across the country, the L2PPC manufacturer has designed a more fitted KIWI prototype to trial. A cohort of 50 female firefighters will trial this design in station environments this year, delivering vital insights before it's made more widely available.

What firefighters need to know

Two styles of L2PPC are currently in circulation – the legacy NZE and the newer KIWI. Both meet safety requirements, but they must be worn as matched sets. As older NZE garments reach end-of-life, KIWI will progressively replace them, although supply timeframes (10-12 months from order to delivery) mean transition will take several years.

Firefighters are encouraged to check their L2PPC fit quarterly and complete required learning annually. If gear feels too tight, too loose, restrictive, or short, or if recent body changes affect fit, personnel should speak with their Station Officer, Volunteer Support Officer, or contact the PPC Team directly at Uniform.PPC@fireandemergency.nz.

The message from the project team is clear: firefighters should feel confident in their gear and the protection it provides. The Fit for All L2PPC Project is delivering practical solutions – training, research, improved sizing range, and new designs – to support that goal.

Level 2 Personal Protective Clothing

Does your kit still fit?

You rely on your kit to help keep you safe. Let's go over our PPC and how to check the fit.

You'll always need someone to help with a fit check. This could be a buddy, your OIC, VSO, or a Brigade Uniform Representative/PPC Coordinator.

Our Level 2 PPC

We have two types of Level 2 PPC: the NZE and the KIWI. Each has its own cut, fit, and slightly different features, but both are designed to keep you safe.



Gloves

Ensure there is enough overlap between the glove and the sleeve's outer cuff. Test the fit by opening and closing your hands and bending your wrists up and down to make sure the gloves move freely.



Trousers

If the trousers are too tight, heat may pass through the fabric and cause steam burns. Test the fit by:

- checking the trouser cuffs sit outside your boots, between the top of your foot and just above your ankle
- adjusting the braces so the trousers sit properly
- checking you can fit two clenched fists inside the waist
- kneeling to ensure the knee pads align with your knees.



Boots

Your boots should fit comfortably. Test the fit by checking that the tread depth is sufficient and that they are free from contaminants, holes, cracks in the soles, heavy abrasions, or loose soles.



Helmet

Helmets are one-size-fits-all but can be adjusted to ensure a secure fit. Make sure the protective hood is in place before putting on your helmet. Test the fit by bending down; the helmet should stay in place, not move forward, and not restrict your vision.



Protective hood

The protective hood is one-size-fits-all. Ensure the hood is completely dry before use and tuck it in fully. Test the hood by checking that the stitching and seams are intact and that there are no holes or other damage.



Coat

The coat should be slightly loose to allow a layer of air between the layers of fabric. Test the fit by:

- pulling the storm flap at the front of the coat to check the looseness
- crossing your arms in a self-hugging position; the coat should not feel tight across the back or shoulders. Have your helper check the back
- checking the sleeves in three positions: arms straight down at your sides, straight out in front, and stretched straight overhead. The sleeves should cover your wrist bones and always allow sufficient overlap with your gloves.



If you're in the Level 2 KIWI coat, pay attention to:

- Thumb loops: make sure your thumb goes through the thumb loops
- Vapour barrier: always seal it properly, ensuring the domes (buttons) are facing you. It sits naturally on the trouser waistband when correctly positioned.



Overlap

Think of your kit like roof tiles, with each layer protecting the one below. To check:

- lift your arms and check the overlap between the coat and trousers.
- bend forward at the waist and have your helper check that there is a 15 cm overlap between the trousers and the coat.



What next? If your gear doesn't fit or shows signs of wear and tear, talk to your OIC, VSO or Brigade Uniform Representative/PPC Coordinator.



KAUPAPA HERE HAUMARU KŌTUITUI PUBLIC SAFETY NETWORK: LAND MOBILE RADIO INSTALLATIONS FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY WELL UNDERWAY IN CANTERBURY

As part of the Public Safety Network (PSN) programme, work is well underway on the installation of more than 7,000 radios into emergency vehicles, 1,300 radios into buildings and delivery of 30,000 new portable radios to emergency services so they are ready for when a new Land Mobile Radio (LMR) network goes live.

Simon Quirke, Tawa Volunteer Fire Brigade's Chief Fire Officer, trials the PSN Portable LMR.



A PSN Portable LMR and in-vehicle charger, mounted in a proof-of-concept vehicle.

Fire and Emergency will replace all analogue LMR devices with equipment compatible with the PSN digital network.

Every appliance nationwide will receive new PSN LMR radios, smartphones and tablets running the enhanced Mobility Response App (MRA), including new status messaging (K-codes) and critical communication acknowledgement functions. All cellular equipment will access PSN priority cellular roaming services for improved connectivity.

LMR installations began for Fire and Emergency in Canterbury on 10 November 2025 and will continue through to May 2026 (including Otago border stations). The first Region group (Canterbury and Mid-South Canterbury) is expected to transition in late 2026. The rest of the country will follow over the next three years.



The tablet, smartphone and PSN Vehicle-mounted LMR mounted to the (MSU) button box.

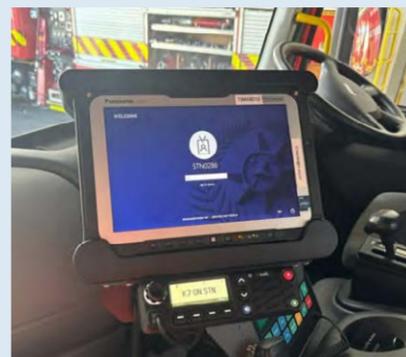
The Public Safety Network (PSN) is a new, modern, secure communications network being built for Police, Fire and Emergency, Hato Hone St John, and Wellington Free Ambulance.

At the heart of the Network is a new, modern, secure, and resilient national digital Land Mobile Radio (LMR) network.

A large national construction programme is underway to build around 500 transmission tower sites required for the LMR network. Over half (271 sites) have already been acquired, 93 sites are fully built and ready for testing, and 72 are currently under construction.

The construction of sites in the Wellington region is complete, Canterbury has only two sites left, and construction in Auckland is anticipated to be completed in the first quarter of 2026. These regions represent 60 percent of Aotearoa New Zealand's population.

After site construction and testing, regions will be handed over to emergency services through 2026-2027 for final testing and transition.



The tablet and PSN Vehicle-mounted LMR, from the Timaru proof-of-concept vehicle.



WAITAHA ME WAITAHA KI TE TONGA E WĀNANGA ANA I TE KAUPAPA MATUA, TE MATAURANGA I TENEI WA AHI AHI CANTERBURY AND MID-SOUTH CANTERBURY PRIORITISE EDUCATION THIS WILDFIRE SEASON

With hot, dry conditions expected to affect much of the motu, the risk of vegetation fires starting and spreading remains high. And with 97 percent of wildfires in Aotearoa New Zealand caused by people, public awareness and safe decision-making are as important as ever.

Canterbury and Mid-South Canterbury – Districts that regularly face elevated risk of vegetation fire – are taking an education-first approach this wildfire season to help reduce preventable incidents.

Craig Chambers, Mid-South Canterbury Community Risk Manager, says this approach helps crews identify unsafe behaviour early and engage directly with property owners. His team reviews SMS reporting every week and follows up on any concerning patterns. 'We can nip bad behaviour in the bud before it becomes a problem that our crews need to respond to,' he says.

'The concerning trend is the lack of understanding around how to manage burn piles and burn pits. The data we are gathering adds weight to the educational engagement activities we are doing. It also helps develop a clearer understanding of the time our crews are spending on these unnecessary fires.'

Dean Harker, Canterbury Community Risk Manager, adds 'we capture who the crew spoke to, and the key safety messages shared – such as checking the weather before lighting a fire or ensuring there's enough water on hand to extinguish it.'

'We know our volunteers are busy. With a small amount of information entered into SMS, they give us what we need to take the next steps.'

These records also support future enforcement if unsafe practices continue. 'Prosecution is always a last resort,' Dean says. 'Our priority is to provide clear information so people can make safer choices.'

To support safer burns, the Canterbury Community Risk Management Team also provides a 'controlled burn' canvas sign for property owners planning a burn. Displaying the sign can prevent unnecessary 111 calls from neighbours and offers another opportunity for crews to discuss safe burning practices with property owners.

Adrian Nacey, National Manager Community Readiness and Recovery, says early education benefits both crews and communities. 'Wildfires can cause significant property loss and carry a significant cost, especially for our volunteers and their employers. If we can reduce preventable callouts through education, it helps everyone.'



KA ĀWHINA TE UMANGA
TŪAO Ō TAUHINU I TE
POIPOI I TE ORANGA O
TE HAPORI

GREENHITHE VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE HELPS FOSTER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Nestled on a small peninsula between Hobsonville and Albany, Greenhithe is a tight-knit Auckland community with only one road in and out. That vulnerability was laid bare during the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods, when both access routes were blocked, parts of the suburb lost power, and homes and streets were inundated. In the midst of the chaos, the Greenhithe Community Hall became an impromptu refuge – a place to get warm, charge devices, share information, and support one another.

From that experience grew a determination to be better prepared. In the months that followed, members of the Greenhithe Volunteer Fire Brigade took the lead in enabling the emergency mobilisation response of the Greenhithe Emergency Resilience Group (GERG). Their mission was clear: strengthen community emergency readiness so residents can look after themselves and each other during major events.



Rolling in the Emergency Hub supplies.



The exercise focussed on community connectedness.

Volunteers being briefed on the emergency scenario.



A central goal for GERG was to have the Greenhithe Community Hall formally recognised by Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) as a Community Emergency Hub. Achieving this required a coordinated effort, including ensuring the hall met AEM standards, securing grants to install essential equipment, and recruiting and training a committed team of emergency hub volunteers.

This work was not done in isolation. GERG, led by brigade members, brought together the Greenhithe Community Trust, Neighbourhood Support, the Residents Association, AEM, and local schools. Together, they focused on empowering residents through education, expos, and practical training in how to respond to fires, floods, medical incidents, and other hazards.

Preparation culminated in a full emergency scenario exercise, coordinated by Fire and Emergency and AEM. Volunteers opened the hall and responded to evolving challenges: missing persons, blocked roads, residents needing first aid, and welfare support.

The exercise was invaluable. It highlighted strengths, revealed opportunities for improvement, and gave volunteers the chance to put their new skills into practice under pressure. Most importantly, it demonstrated the power of community-led readiness - people stepping up for one another long before emergency services can arrive.

With the Greenhithe Community Hall now officially recognised as a Community Emergency Hub, GERG's focus will shift to continuing to build capability, growing its volunteer base, and strengthening partnerships across the suburb.

For the Greenhithe Volunteer Fire Brigade, this work is about more than preparedness. It reduces pressure on emergency services, fosters connectedness, and builds a community that is resilient from within.

Volunteers being briefed on the emergency scenario.



ME WHAKARITE MŌ NGĀ MEA KATOA

PREPARING FOR THE UNPRECEDENTED

A mass evacuation of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland following a volcanic eruption would be unprecedented in Aotearoa New Zealand. Unlike other volcanic systems, the Auckland Volcanic Field (AVF) provides little warning – sometimes only 18 hours to a few days – and scientists cannot predict where or when an eruption might breach the surface.

This uncertainty means that, in the event of AVF activity, the default response may be to evacuate the entire city, potentially moving up to 1.5 million people within hours or days.

In 2025, the Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group adopted the AVF Response Plan, recognising that such an event would overwhelm existing resources and require extraordinary coordination. The blast zone could extend 10 kilometres from the point of eruption, meaning anyone could be impacted anywhere in the entire metropolitan area from Silverdale to Pukekohe.

The scale of precautionary evacuation would be immense, raising challenges such as transport capacity, care for vulnerable populations, and inter-agency dependencies.

And the national impact of such a scenario would also be significant.

To address these complexities, the Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MACG) has been established, with Fire and Emergency in Te Hiku a key partner. Its mission is to strengthen preparedness by developing complementary, agency-owned plans for such a scenario and others that necessitate mass evacuation.

Membership also includes National Emergency Management Agency, Auckland Council and neighbouring regional councils, New Zealand Police, NZ Transport Agency, New Zealand Defence Force, Auckland Transport, and Department of Corrections, among others.

Fiona Natusch, Auckland Strategic Advisor, and Phil Larcombe, Auckland City Group Manager are working closely with MACG to ensure that the operational response plan being developed by Fire and Emergency is

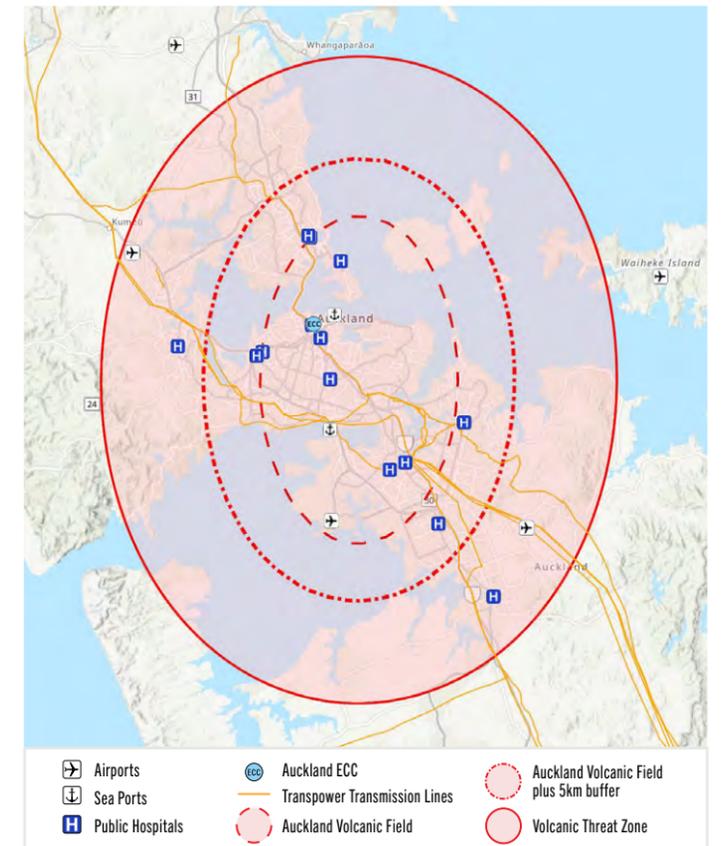
well understood by the other agencies, and our role is defined.

The work is not about creating a single plan but ensuring that each agency's response aligns within a connected framework. Over time, engagement will expand to schools, health, and community sectors. A public awareness campaign is planned for this year to help Aucklanders understand the risks and the importance of readiness.

Preparedness today will be critical to managing tomorrow's uncertainty.

There is a 10 percent likelihood of volcanic eruption before 2050 in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland – twice the probability of a Wellington earthquake.

Auckland Volcanic Threat Zone.





TE UMANGA TŪAO O WAITAHA, KIA KAWE I TE MATAURANGA O NGĀ HUA O TE WHENUA KIA WHAKAOHOHO I NGĀ HAPORI

CANTERBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE SHOWCASES LOW-FLAMMABILITY PLANTS TO INSPIRE COMMUNITY ACTION



**Fire Smart
Low-flammability
Planting Project**



The aim is to encourage the public to think about how they manage vegetation around their homes. 'Low-flammability landscaping is one of the most effective ways people can reduce the impact of a wildfire on their property,' Don says.

The team is now working with Timaru District Council to ensure the signage meets roadside requirements. If the trial continues to be successful, Don hopes to see the concept extended to other stations. 'It's a great opportunity to support education and show communities what they can do to reduce risk. And as an added bonus – we're protecting our station, too.'

Landscaping for wildfire safety

Landscaping with low-flammability plants can help to reduce the impact of wildfire around your home, other buildings, and other valuable assets like crops. Choosing plants with low flammability can help starve a wildfire of fuel, reducing the fire intensity, and help protect your home, buildings, and valuable assets from intense heat.

Many of Aotearoa New Zealand's native and exotic species have low- or low-moderate flammability and are therefore ideal for planting around property or other valuable assets.

Find out more:



The Low-flammability Planting Project at Peel Forest Volunteer Fire Station began four years ago as Fire and Emergency's first initiative of its kind. The goal was simple: show the public what a safer, low-flammability garden looks like and encourage people to use similar plants around their own homes.

Led by Don Geddes (MNZM), Mid-South Canterbury Senior Advisor Risk Reduction, the project focused on planting low-flammability native species along the station's perimeter. The team worked with a consultant from a local Geraldine plant nursery to select a range of species such as broadleaf, harakeke (flax), lancewood and fuchsia (kōtukutuku). 'Our Community Risk Management Team and local brigade members all helped with the planting,' Don says.

Since then, Don has returned regularly to maintain the garden, along with local brigade and community members, and some of the plants have now grown to nearly three metres tall. The next step is to help the wider community connect with the project more easily. 'We're developing roadside signage to invite people to stop and take a look,' Don says. 'We also want to install signs that explain what the project is about and provide details on each low-flammable plant species.'



The finished whare.

KA WHAKAKOTAHI NGA KAITINEI AHI KI TE AWAHINA I TE HANGA WHARE ME TE AROHA

FIREFIGHTERS UNITE TO HELP BUILD A WHARE FOR CHARITY

When Peter Walker, Avalon Station Senior Firefighter, returned from helping build a home in Tonga in 2023, he didn't expect his next project to follow so quickly. A chance conversation with Barnardos Aotearoa Chief Executive Matt Reid, who mentioned the need for a new whare – a space for healing, learning, and connection – was all it took. Peter committed immediately, and last November that promise became reality.

Peter joined nine other firefighters from across the motu – altogether seven career and three volunteer – supported by 10 family members and friends who took annual or unpaid leave to help. Over two weeks, the group donated their time and skills: builders, handymen, a roofer, painter and an electrician all worked to construct a whare a decade in the making. The vision was to create a place that brings whānau into the heart of the healing journey, where rangatahi (young people) can reconnect with identity, culture, and support.

The build relied entirely on volunteer goodwill, yet Peter says, 'I received more than I gave. It comes back in loads of ways: the friendships, the sense of achievement. It's hard to beat.'

He also acknowledges the commitment of everyone involved: 'Some people took a financial hit or gave up leave with whānau. It's a choice, but they get so much out of it.'

For Peter, the project has only strengthened his commitment to give back. 'I have a renewed passion for helping people, definitely want to do this again.'

A highlight was seeing firefighters unite outside of their day roles, working side by side toward a shared purpose. 'The really cool thing was how it brought everyone together,' he adds.

Looking back, Peter reflects on the whare with pride. 'We weren't just building a building: it's a miracle building, a beacon of hope.'



Coops Harmer, Seaview Station Volunteer Firefighter.



Week one crew.



Hami Love, Remutaka Station Officer, and Matt Haigh, Thorndon Station Officer.



Caro Cave, Kumeu Senior Firefighter.



The Neurodiversity Network is proud to share the story of Alec Asquith, National Senior Operational Guidelines Specialist and a former firefighter whose experience with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has led him to become a qualified ADHD coach. His journey highlights both the challenges and strengths neurodivergent people bring and shows how understanding and support can transform lives. Research shows that many first responders live with undiagnosed ADHD, excelling in high-pressure moments while struggling silently. Open conversations about neurodiversity help break down stigma and create workplaces where everyone can thrive.

Lighting the way: My ADHD journey from firefighting to coaching

I have always chased intensity. Before joining Fire and Emergency, I was skydiving, river guiding, and working as an arborist – drawn to danger, movement, and purpose. I didn't know it then, but ADHD was shaping my choices.

As a firefighter, I gravitated toward first responder work which made sense to me. The urgency, teamwork, and clear mission focused my mind. Chaos felt calm. Yet ADHD also showed up in less visible ways: strong emotions, a sharp sense of injustice, and an all-or-nothing approach to everything I cared about. Impulsivity, exhaustion, and constant self-pressure followed. To fit in, I masked by over-preparing, pushing through fatigue, and hiding how overwhelmed I often felt. I frequently believed I had to work harder than others just to keep up

When the adrenaline faded, things became harder. Shift work and disrupted sleep made emotional regulation more difficult. I slipped into self-medicating to quiet the mental noise. Anxiety and depression grew, and at times I felt genuinely broken – like everyone else had a manual for life that I never received.

Everything changed when my son was diagnosed with ADHD two years ago. As I learned how to support him, I finally understood myself. My own diagnosis confirmed it: I wasn't broken – I was just wired differently.

Since then, I've focused on learning how to work with my brain. This year, I completed formal ADHD coaching training.

My hope now is to help others feel seen, understood, and supported. If sharing my story encourages someone to seek clarity sooner than I did, it's worth it.



Alec as a recruit in 2007.



If you think you would benefit from ADHD coaching, contact Vitae, our external provider.



Help us celebrate
Neurodiversity Celebration Week,
17–23 March 2026



Learn more about the Neurodiversity Network.



KA HANGAIA E NGĀ KAITŪAO I NGA UMANGA, KOTAHI TE KŌRERO I TE WĀ KŌTAHI VOLUNTEERS BUILD STRONGER BRIGADES, ONE DISCUSSION AT A TIME

When Tina Singer, Chief Fire Officer at Runanga Volunteer Fire Brigade, first heard about the Brigade Culture Training Pack, she knew it would be valuable for her brigade.

'We need to know about the Code of Conduct and how it applies to us,' she says. 'These workshops are great for bringing everyone together to help us learn what the Code is all about and how our values help us work better together.'

The Brigade Culture Training Pack was released as a way for volunteer brigades to facilitate workshops around shared values, expected behaviours, and how the Code of Conduct applies to volunteer brigade members. Volunteers who are interested, but don't have experience leading group discussions, can sign up to attend a virtual training session.

As a teacher, Tina has advice for any volunteers interested in facilitating the pack with their brigades. 'I think it's important to observe how the discussions go and make sure everyone feels comfortable sharing their point of view,' she says.



If you're interested in learning more about the Brigade Culture Training Pack or you're keen to lead a discussion with your brigade, scan the QR code or email Ekefaumata@fireandemergency.nz for more information.



Tina Singer, Chief Fire Officer of Runanga Volunteer Fire Brigade.



Members of the Runanga Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Privacy matters

How the Privacy Act 2020 applies to Fire and Emergency New Zealand

Brigade member

Fire and Emergency response



That call out was full on wasn't it? Let's do the debrief at the pub, eh – I'm starving!

I'm hungry too, but we'll do our debrief here at the station now, eh? There's just always the risk of being overheard at the pub.

➔ **Personal information must be handled properly** as there is a risk of information being used or disclosed when it shouldn't be.

Brigade member

Fire and Emergency response



Bob has been on leave for a while now – is everything okay? I heard from someone in town that he was in hospital recently.

I know everyone is concerned about Bob, but I am not able to share any more details about his health as this is personal information.

➔ **Personal information must be handled properly** as there is a risk of information being used or disclosed when it shouldn't be. This may result in harm to affected individuals or to Fire and Emergency's reputation.

Find out more:



HE KŌRERO KI A TRACEY WRIGHT-TAWHA, TE TAI TONGA TOHUTOHU A ROHE, TE TIAMANA O TE KOMITI

KŌRERO WITH TRACEY WRIGHT-TAWHA, SOUTHLAND LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR



Tracey Wright-Tawha, Southland Local Advisory Committee Chair.

Tracey Wright-Tawha (Kai Tahu, Kāti Māmoē, Te Āti Awa, Kāti Kuri) is Chair of the Southland Local Advisory Committee (LAC) and a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to health and Māori. She is also the founder and CEO of Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust, which delivers health and social services across Southland and Otago, employing more than 100 staff and providing around 120,000 interventions each year to support thriving whānau.

When did you join the Southland LAC?

The Southland LAC is just over a year old. Its eight members come from varied backgrounds - former mayors, business leaders and community advocates - each holding a portfolio to support a whole-of-community approach.

What inspired you to join?

My grandfather was Chief of the Te Anau Volunteer Fire Brigade. As a child staying with my grandparents, I'd help prepare tea and peanuts for brigade members and their whānau. That sense of community never left me. I joined because I wanted to be part of solutions, to strengthen the connectivity of who we are in the deep south. I love the work - it never feels like a chore. Down here, innovation and creativity are part of our DNA. We're 'number-8-wire' thinkers who make things happen with what we have.

We're incredibly fortunate in Southland. Our Fire and Emergency teams are well-led, well-trained and committed to listening, responding and doing the best they can for our communities. As Chair, I'm proud and deeply appreciative of their mahi.

What are your LAC's priorities?

One focus is sustainable volunteerism. Employers face increasing pressure, making it harder to release staff for volunteer roles, so we want to highlight the benefits - for workplaces and communities.

We're also looking at community risks and opportunities. Southland is now a migrant destination, and some new arrivals live in higher-risk housing, so education around fire safety is crucial. Rural readiness for wildfires and reducing false alarms through awareness are also priorities.

Another aim is building understanding of Fire and Emergency's wider work - beyond putting out fires, they respond to a broad range of emergencies, offering many avenues for community involvement.

How do you balance this with your mahi?

This isn't just work - it's who I am. I was raised to believe change is possible at the flax roots and that service ripples outward.

Any advice for those considering joining an LAC?

Come and meet us. You'll likely find something meaningful to contribute. We all want safe, supported communities, and Aotearoa New Zealand has a proud history of local people stepping up.



E HAERE TONU TE AROTAKE KAUPAPA HERE VETTING POLICY CONTINUES TO ROLL OUT

The Vetting Policy sets out our commitment to undertake regular, consistent criminal and police vetting for all personnel. It is now in effect for those who meet event-based requirements, along with an amnesty period for self-disclosures of criminal convictions or charges for personnel in the first 10-year re-vetting group.

'We're launching the policy in phases to ensure everyone understands the processes, and what's expected of them,' says Janine Hearn, Deputy Chief Executive People.

'Event-based vetting happens when someone is appointed or seconded, for a period of three months or more, into a new people leader role, or a role that has a broad span of influence or access to sensitive or confidential information, if they haven't been vetted in the last three years.

'The amnesty encourages people in the first 10-year vetting group – that's personnel in Tier 1-4 roles, Group Managers, Volunteer Brigade Leaders, and Ahikura Practitioners to

do the right thing and self-disclose any previous convictions and/or charges. From mid-2026 these people will undergo 10-year re-vetting when eligible,' adds Janine.

The new Vetting Policy is an important part of our work to make sure Fire and Emergency is a safe, positive and inclusive place for everyone.

Roll out dates for other groups of employees and volunteers will be announced in due course.



For more information and to keep updated:

Speak Safe @ Fair Way

Got a concern or feel like something is off?

External

Independent

Confidential

I HAVE AN ISSUE WITH ONE OF MY TEAMMATES BUT IT'S NOT A MAJOR AND I DON'T WANT TO MAKE IT WORSE...

I WANT TO SPEAK UP ABOUT BAD BEHAVIOUR, WHERE DO I START?

I FEEL LIKE I AM BEING SINGLED OUT, IS THIS BULLYING?

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO APPROACH THIS SITUATION...

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY TEAM TO WORK THROUGH THEIR DIFFERENCES?

WE'VE MOVED!

Our new address is 3 Barnes Street, Seaview

All phone numbers and email addresses remain unchanged.

- Join us online through the membership link
- Explore the full range of benefits we provide



For more information and to join online visit www.firefighters.org.nz



kia tau
YOUR EXPERTS
IN DISPUTE
RESOLUTION

Get in touch today:

Freephone 0800 677 697 or email: speaksafe@fairwayresolution.com

Use your phone to access the service with the QR code



CHECKITSALRIGHT.NZ



**FIRE'S ONLY
CONTROLLED
ONCE THE
MIDDLE
IS COLD.**

**COMPLETELY SATURATE
YOUR BURN PILE WITH WATER.**

**SPOT THE SIGNS,
STOP WILDFIRE.**

