

# IGNITE

Te Hiringa o te Tangata | Issue 39 | September 2026

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE  
NATIONAL EXERCISE PUTS DEPLOYMENT  
CAPABILITY TO THE TEST

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND  
CAPABILITY IN OUR PEOPLE TO RUN OUR  
COORDINATION CENTRES

NEW AND RESTORED FIRE STATIONS  
FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS



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.

It is produced by the Fire and Emergency Communications and Engagement Team, National Headquarters, Spark Central, 42–52 Willis Street, Wellington 6011.

Contributions to Ignite

Contributions to be considered for publication are welcome and may be submitted to: strategiccomms@fireandemergency.nz  
Photos need to be at least 1MB.

Read Ignite online

fireandemergency.nz/news-and-media

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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

E mihi nui kia koutou, welcome to the September issue of Ignite.

It has been a period of close scrutiny for the organisation. Across May, June and July, we appeared before the Governance and Administration Committee as part of its inquiry into our fleet management. The scrutiny is appropriate. Our position is not to defend every past decision, but to be factual about what occurred, acknowledge where those processes have not been good enough, and explain what has changed and what still needs to improve.

We accept that the Type 3 Programme has taken too long and it exposed shortcomings in procurement planning, contract management, acceptance sequencing and programme control for those appliances. The decisions of the past cannot be changed and there has been material progress made outside the Type 3 procurement: 318 new appliances have entered operational use since our establishment in 2017, and stronger procurement, governance, contract management, assurance, asset-planning and fault-reporting arrangements are being implemented.

Our focus remains on being open, accountable and clear about the improvements required to provide firefighters and communities with safe, reliable and fit-for-purpose capability.

Speaking of accountability, in July we published our Statement of Intent (SOI) and Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE). These are the first of our statutory documents to be fully aligned with Tā Mātou Ahunga Rautaki Our Strategic Direction 2025–2030. Our Strategic Direction tells us where we are heading and why, our SOI describes the path we will take and what we need to focus on, and our SPE sets out our immediate priorities and how we'll track our performance.



This period has also marked a significant governance transition, and I would like to warmly welcome Raveen Jaduram as the new Chair of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Board. Raveen brings extensive leadership experience and a strong commitment to public service, and I look forward to working alongside him as we continue to strengthen our organisation and deliver for the communities we serve.

While there is a lot happening at a governance level, our people continue to do the mahi that enables us to support our communities. This issue includes our Urban Search and Rescue National Exercise, preparations for El Niño conditions, Whītiki, our new Māori Engagement Framework, and building our capability in our Coordination Centres.

We also have an update on the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey, some tips around breathwork, and our Safety, Health and Wellbeing Roadmap.

Finally, we have welcomed more volunteer and paid firefighters to our whānau since the last issue of Ignite. We share some photos of just a few of these graduations and wish everyone the very best on their journey as part of Fire and Emergency.

I trust you enjoy the read. Noho ora mai.

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

Ngā ihirangi  
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# IT HAS BEEN AN HONOUR TO WITNESS YOUR SERVICE

Hon Brooke van Velden — Minister of Internal Affairs

Serving as Minister of Internal Affairs over the past three years has been an honour. Among the highlights has been meeting the people of Fire and Emergency and hearing your stories, during visits to stations and operational sites, at events such as Fielddays, or through the many opportunities I've had to learn about your work.

Fire and Emergency people are there for their communities when they are needed most. You respond to fires, severe weather, rescues and medical emergencies, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Time and again, I have seen the professionalism, courage and commitment that underpin your service.



Over the past three years, New Zealand has faced significant events, including the Port Hills fire, severe weather across the country, and the Mount Maunganui and Pāpāmoa landslides. In each of these moments, paid and volunteer firefighters, alongside support personnel across Fire and Emergency, stepped forward to protect lives, support communities and help New Zealand recover.

I have also had the privilege of recognising many Fire and Emergency people through the New Zealand Royal Honours system. Seeing your dedication acknowledged in this way has been a reminder of the extraordinary contribution people across the organisation make, often over many decades of service.

As my time as Minister comes to a close, I leave with deep appreciation for the work of Fire and Emergency and the people who respond when New Zealanders need help. Whenever I hear a siren and see a fire appliance heading towards someone in need, I'll be reminded of all the incredible stories of service I have heard and the care that sits behind every response.

To everyone across Fire and Emergency—the paid and volunteer firefighters and operational support staff, the communications centre personnel, and the corporate staff, and the families who stand behind you—thank you. Thank you for your service to your communities, and for the difference you make to New Zealand every day.



## NAU MAI HAERE MAI KI TŌ MATOU TIAMANA HOU WELCOMING OUR NEW BOARD CHAIR

Fire and Emergency is pleased to welcome Raveen Jaduram as Chair of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Board.

Beginning his tenure in June, Raveen brings more than four decades of leadership experience across infrastructure, water, transport and other regulated sectors. His governance experience includes serving as Chair of the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission and the Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai, as well as previously serving on the Board of Auckland Transport.

For Raveen, however, accepting the role is about more than governance.

'I'm delighted and deeply honoured to be joining Fire and Emergency as Board Chair,' he says. 'This is an organisation that makes an extraordinary contribution to New Zealand every day, and I'm looking forward to getting to know the people who make that possible.'

Raveen speaks with a genuine admiration for the work of Fire and Emergency's volunteer and paid personnel, recognising the professionalism, courage and commitment they demonstrate every day. Whether responding to fires, medical emergencies, severe weather events, rescues or other incidents, he says the difference our people make to the lives of New Zealanders cannot be overstated.

That appreciation is also personal.

Raveen's family helped establish the local fire station in his hometown in Fiji, where they served as volunteer firefighters. As a child, he spent time at the station, developing an early understanding of the commitment, service and community spirit that sit at the heart of emergency services. It is a connection that continues to shape his perspective today.

As he begins his time with Fire and Emergency, Raveen says his priority is to build a strong understanding of the organisation, its people, and the opportunities and challenges ahead.

'Strong governance is not just about holding an organisation to account. It is also about creating the conditions for success,' he says. 'I look forward to working alongside the Board, Chief Executive, and leaders across Fire and Emergency to support the important work being done for the people of New Zealand.'

Please join us in welcoming Raveen to Fire and Emergency and wishing him every success as he begins this new chapter with our organisation.

# TE HURINGA Ō TE ARONGA RAUTAKI HEI MAHI TURNING STRATEGIC DIRECTION INTO ACTION



Fire and Emergency introduced **Tā Mātou Ahunga Rautaki Our Strategic Direction 2025–2030** in 2025, refreshing our core purpose – serving communities together – and affirming our two strategic outcomes of fewer unwanted fires, and reduced harm to people, property, and the environment.

In July, we published our Statement of Intent (SOI) for the years 2026-2030 and our Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) for the 2026/2027 financial year.

These are the first of our statutory documents to be fully aligned to Our Strategic Direction, reflecting a deliberate shift in how we plan, prioritise and report on our performance.

Achieving our 2030 goals requires us to change how we work today. Our Strategic Direction identifies the key shifts we need to make and provides a shared focus for how we lead, prioritise and invest across the organisation.

Our SOI takes the direction set by our strategy and translates it into a four-year roadmap, supporting clear public accountability and our commitment to New Zealanders about what we intend

to achieve and how we will use our resources to do this.

The SPE in turn takes the strategic outcomes and medium-term commitments in our SOI and defines the specific outputs, measures and targets for the coming financial year.

In simple terms, Our Strategic Direction tells us where we are heading and why, the SOI helps describe the path we will take and what we need to focus on along the way, and the SPE sets out our immediate priorities and how we'll track our performance.

**You can read more about both the new SOI and SPE on the Portal, and how these connect as part of our broader strategic planning and accountability framework.**



Find out more



WHAKAOTIA TE HŌTAKA  
'WHAKARITE MŌ TE PŌTI' MŌ  
TĒNEI WĀ I MUA I TE PŌTI

## COMPLETE 'GETTING ELECTION READY' FOR THIS PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

**A large part of why many of us work or volunteer for Fire and Emergency is in service to our communities. This common thread runs deep, and it doesn't matter where we are located around the motu, we are here to serve the public.**

As public servants (a term that applies to us all) we have obligations and expectations in the run-up to an election that we must all abide by to ensure political neutrality. The Public Service Commission (PSC) has issued guidelines that are designed to help us manage risks and stay in a politically neutral place while working or volunteering during the pre-election period.

The PSC has also developed required online learning, Getting Election Ready, to help us understand our unique obligations ahead of the General Election. This includes topics such as public service principles and values, political neutrality, conflicts of interest, fraud and corruption, and includes a self-assessment. If you are yet to complete it, please do so.

**The module is available on Learning Station. Log in to your Learning Station with your usual Fire and Emergency credentials and the required module will show up on your home screen. The module will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.**



Find out more

# KA WHAKAMĀTAURIA A 'URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE' TE ĀHEINGA TUKU OPE E TĒTAHI MAHI WHAKANGUNGU Ā-MOTU URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE NATIONAL EXERCISE PUTS DEPLOYMENT CAPABILITY TO THE TEST

**In May, Ōtautahi Christchurch hosted a three-day Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) National Exercise at the USAR training site on Pound Road.**

During the exercise, the team's deployment and operational capabilities were tested during a realistic earthquake scenario, focused on the collapse of several buildings. They also took the opportunity to engage with our partner agencies including Civil Defence Emergency Management, National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand Response Teams and Hato Hone St John.

**Ken Cooper, National Manager Response Capability, says the exercise is a crucial component to maintaining our operational skills and deployment capability to be part of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group community and ensuring we can provide a professional response to emergencies when required.**

'This simulation mirrors an international deployment, allowing NZL01\* to showcase its full capabilities as a Heavy Classified USAR Team. The exercise spanned 36 hours, encompassing mobilisation, operations and demobilisation.'

As this was the first national exercise since the rollout of the new personnel habitat (the off-shift accommodation component),

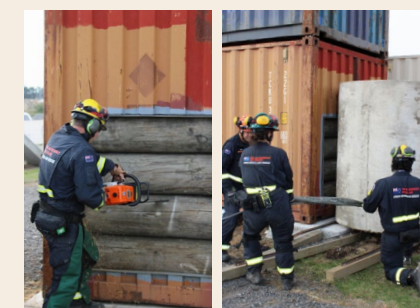


A 'patient' is extracted from the earthquake site, after an Urban Search and Rescue dog detected their scent.

the exercise also saw people establish their habitat to field test it in a live activity.

John Herriott, Project Manager, says the event was successful and well received by all who took part.

'The general feedback for the event has been very positive, and we were successful in testing and training all of our USAR heavy rescue core skill set, as well as building relationships with partner agencies through sharing this training opportunity with them.'



Crews are faced with a realistic scenario that uses live training props and conditions normally faced by USAR personnel during a sudden onset emergency.



The exercise incorporated highly trained canines that locate people trapped in collapsed buildings, landslides, and major structural failures.

'In 2015, a huge milestone was reached when New Zealand Fire Service's USAR passed its International Search and Rescue Advisory Group or 'INSARAG' Classification, making it part of the INSARAG system for international deployment, now known as NZL-01.'

# NAU MAI KI TE WHĀNAU! WELCOME TO THE FAMILY!

Since our June issue of Ignite, Fire and Emergency has celebrated the graduation of volunteer and paid crews, who are now taking these new-found skills back to their brigades and stations. Pictured here are just some of our graduates from across Woolston Training Centre, Mount Wellington and National Training Centre in Rotorua.

For our volunteers, the start of the seven-day recruit course focuses on basic skills such as hose runs, safe entry and ladders. Day three focuses on rural skills such as going over portable pumps, dams and delivery, and the final three days covers Breathing Apparatus (BA), including searching in the apartment section of the Breathing Apparatus Training Building (BATB) and working at heights. Skills are also put to the test inside the BATB where crews wear full BA while navigating a maze with heat and lights off. The final day is the scenario day.

For our paid firefighters, their graduation is the culmination of 12 weeks of training. The graduation includes the chance to demonstrate their new-found skills to their friends and whānau at our National Training Centre.

Fire and Emergency continues to progress the review and redevelopment of its Training and Progression System (TAPS). This is aimed at creating a modern, unified training framework that better reflects our all-hazards operating environment. Recent work has seen the successful review and delivery of the revised Career Recruit Firefighter course, introducing updated learning outcomes and contemporary learning resources. The course is also delivering much stronger assessment practices and places an increased focus on operational safety, risk awareness, and on-station development. Our next career recruit course is scheduled to commence at the end of September, when we will be implementing the learnings from the revised course.

Building on what we have learned, the Volunteer Recruit Programme is due for review and will also adopt a more flexible and modular design, reflecting our all-hazard operating environment. The aim is to provide volunteers with clearer learning processes, improved accessibility, and training that better reflects the realities of volunteer service, while at the same time maintaining consistent national standards.



Our 19 graduates will be serving their communities in the Districts below:

Tairāwhiti | Gisborne: **3**

Te Whanganui-a-Tara | Wellington: **5**

Te Matau-a-Māui | Hawke's Bay: **2**

Manawatū | Whanganui: **1**

Taranaki: **1**

Te Tihi o Maru | Mid-South Canterbury: **1**

Ōtākou | Otago: **5**

Murihiku | Southland: **1**

A cohort of volunteers graduated from our National Training Centre in Rotorua in mid-June. Students: Noah Death, Siobhan Dobbin, Isabelle Neil, Lachlan Glass, Kerin Roberts-Thomson, Max van Doorn, Archer Easton, Aiden Azar, Lincoln Easton, Edward Riini, Joe Reriti, Fred Reriti, Caleb Scragg, Peter Richardson and Craig Crockett.

Volunteers are from Brigades in Ngāruawāhia, Ōpunake, Pāpāmoa, Te Awamutu, Tairua, Tāneatua, Manutūkē, Havelock North and Clyde.



Our 19 newest paid firefighters who graduated at the National Training Centre in Rotorua on 2 July. After 12 weeks of training, our recruits demonstrated their skills to their friends and whānau at the ceremony where they were officially welcomed to Fire and Emergency. The Most Outstanding Recruit Award went to Joshua Bish, for displaying outstanding skills, leadership and mana throughout the course.

Students: Brett Askin, Liberty Barker, Joshua Bish, Chris Bisley, Andy Clark, James Cope, Manny-Patrick Crawford, Ahmad Habash, Leif Jeffries, Izaak McCall, Cody Natta, Jeremy Randerson, Connor Stewart, Chance Tana, Brett Townsend, Daniel Van Coller, Matthew Wallis, Anthony Waru and Regan Wright.



Volunteers from our 13-19 June cohort (RCTV02606b) at Woolston Training Centre in Christchurch with Trainers Rick Coburn, Scott Shadbolt, Gemma Franklin, John Ross (Lead Trainer), Darren Shackleton and Jeff Taylor.

Students: Danyon Ashman, Tasha Buckman, Audrey Hill, Harry Maddox, Varden Marcoux, Anri Marneweck, Jet Nokdajun-Knox, Jackson Ormandy, Rico Palacio, Wade Parkinson, Keygan Philp, Lachie Shepherd, Phill Shields and Mary Williams.

Volunteers are from Brigades in Āpiti, Waikari, Southbridge, Kurow, Wainuiomata, Edendale, Motueka and Te Anau.

# KIA RITE INĀIANEI MŌ TE WĀ ROA AKE, MAROKE AKE HOKI I NGĀ AHI PREPARE NOW FOR A LONGER, DRIER WILDFIRE SEASON

Image credit: Bruce Janes

This wildfire season is shaping up to be different from the last. Current indicators point to a strong El Niño, which is expected to bring hotter, drier and windier conditions to many parts of the motu. That could mean an earlier start, a later finish, and a longer wildfire season overall.

The highest risk is expected in eastern parts of both islands, and in central and northern parts of the North Island. Early signs of El Niño are already showing in places such as Canterbury and Otago, where conditions are notably dry. These are the kinds of conditions that can catch people out, especially when the fire danger is not immediately obvious.

This is particularly important for farmers and landowners. Winter and early spring are traditionally a time for larger-scale burning because conditions are usually cooler and safer. But where a strong El Niño is already influencing local conditions, the risk of those fires escaping control is higher than people may expect. Activities that may not have caused problems before - such as leaving a fire to smoulder, not checking more carefully before burning or undertaking any task that produces open flames, heat, or flying sparks - now carry a higher risk.

This wildfire season, our message to the public is clear – always check conditions at **checkitsalright.nz**, follow the advice before lighting, and extinguish the fire completely.



checkitsalright.nz

WHĪTIKI: HE WĀHANGA HOU MŌ TŌ MATOU  
MAHI I NGĀ HAPORI MĀORI

# WHĪTIKI: A NEW CHAPTER IN OUR WORK WITH MĀORI COMMUNITIES

A new year in te ao Māori often invites reflection, renewal and fresh momentum. This year, Matariki provided the perfect moment for Fire and Emergency to take an important step forward.

In July, Fire and Emergency launched Whītiki, our new Māori Engagement Framework, marking a significant milestone in our journey to embed te ao Māori in the way we work. Designed to support all personnel, Whītiki sets out a consistent and culturally appropriate approach to engaging with hapori Māori (Māori communities), while allowing the flexibility needed to build relationships

that are respectful, reciprocal and grounded in trust.

The framework reflects Fire and Emergency's commitment to working with Māori as tangata whenua and strengthens our progress towards the goals of Rautaki Māori, particularly Pou He Toa Takatini – Relationships and Partnerships with Māori. At its heart, Whītiki is about helping our people engage in ways that are meaningful, practical and responsive to the communities we serve.

For Piki Thomas, Fire and Emergency's Pou Arahi, that has been central to the framework's development.

'Whītiki has been developed with the community it is intended to serve: hapori Māori. This process has also involved internal Māori stakeholders, our volunteer and paid firefighters, different leadership levels and representatives from across each of our Regions, including Local Advisory Committees.'

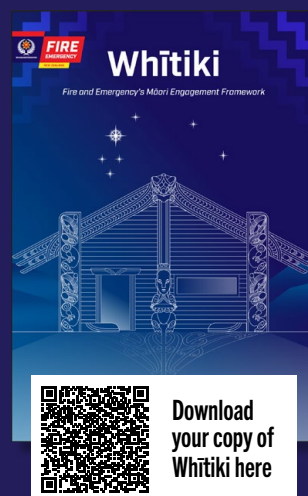
That breadth of input has helped ensure Whītiki is both grounded in community voice and relevant to the realities of our work across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Whītiki also aligns with Te Aho Tapu, our organisation's cultural capability framework, and complements our existing Community Engagement Framework, Kotahitanga, by providing specific guidance for engagement with hapori Māori.

As the framework is introduced across the organisation, Piki says its success will come from how people bring it to life in their day-to-day mahi.

'This is not a one-and-done piece of work. Embedding Whītiki into our mahi will take time, but if we are committed to applying it consistently, we will build stronger relationships and better outcomes with Māori communities.'

If you need support integrating Whītiki into your mahi, reach out to [teahotapu@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:teahotapu@fireandemergency.nz)



## TE WIKI O TE REO MĀORI 14—20 HEPETEMA 2026

Give it a go this Te Wiki o te Reo Māori  
Māori Language Week | 14 – 20 September

We can all contribute to the endurance of the Māori language by speaking a little bit every day.

There's plenty of fun and educational resources, including events and courses, to help you in your te reo Māori journey.



Let's make the Māori language strong!

# NGĀ WHARE TINEI AHI HOU MŌ NGĀ KAITŪAO NEW AND RESTORED FIRE STATIONS FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS

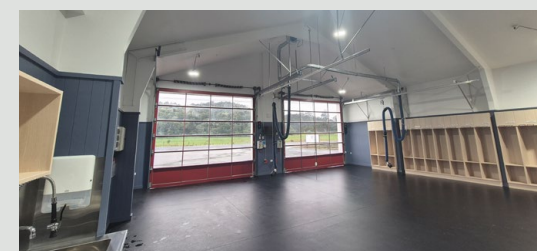
Two new fire stations and one restored station were recently handed over to their brigades.



## Kaukapakapa Volunteer Fire Station

This project involved the restoration and enhancement of the existing station following significant damage sustained during Cyclone Gabrielle.

Since the cyclone, the Brigade had operated from temporary facilities to ensure uninterrupted emergency response services to the local community. The reinstated station provides upgraded operational spaces and improved resilience, enabling the Brigade to return to a permanent base that is better equipped to support its vital role within the community.



Kaukapakapa Station appliance bay.

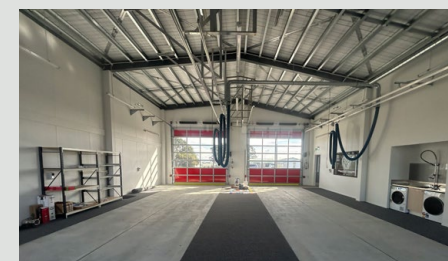
## Karikari and Paparoa Volunteer Fire Stations

The completion of Karikari and Paparoa Stations delivered a modern, fit-for-purpose two-bay facility for each station, replacing the existing stations which had reached the end of their economic life and no longer met contemporary operational requirements.

Designed in accordance with Fire and Emergency's organisational standards, the new stations provide improved operational areas, compliant amenities, and resilient infrastructure to support the Brigades' emergency response capability. It provides a safe, functional, and future-focused environment from which the Brigades can continue delivering essential emergency services to the Paparoa and Karikari communities for many years to come.



Paparoa Station appliance bay.



Karikari Station appliance bay.

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

 National

RATONGA WHATUNGA HAUMARU: KEI TE TORO ATU TE WHAKATINANATANGA O TE OTINGA KI NGĀ ATU TEIHANA

PUBLIC SAFETY NETWORK:  
MOBILITY SOLUTION ROLLOUT  
EXPANDING TO MORE STATIONS

As part of the Public Safety Network (PSN) Programme, Fire and Emergency is expanding the Mobility Solution to an additional 400 frontline appliances.

Installations have already commenced in Canterbury, Mid-South Canterbury and Wellington, and will continue to roll out District by District throughout 2026 and 2027.

The tablets deliver significant operational benefits, helping crews access critical information faster and in more locations, improving situational awareness, decision-making, and coordination at incidents.

Since 2023, Fire and Emergency has used the Mobility Solution on tablets installed in 241 of our busiest appliances. The tablets provide access to operational tools including the Mobile Response Application (MRA) and Operational Site Data (OSD), supporting crews with real-time information when responding to incidents.

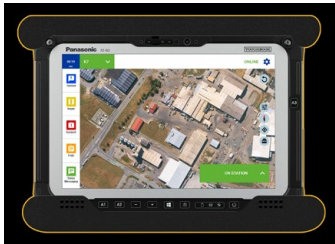
The initial development of the MRA and rollout of the first tablets was completed by the Mobility Programme Team. The PSN Programme is expanding the rollout to more appliances across the motu.

The MRA provides operational capabilities including new status messaging (K-Code) functionality and critical communications acknowledgement features.

All cellular-enabled devices will also have access to PSN's prioritised roaming and cellular services, helping maintain connectivity when networks are congested.

Tablets have been allocated to Type 1-6 appliances and rural medium double cabs in areas with cellular coverage and an annual K1 count of 30 or more per year, that meet installation criteria. Each District has an overall allocation for each device type. Final decisions on how the equipment is distributed will be made by National Manager Response Capability in collaboration with the District Leadership Teams.

Training and support will be provided as part of the rollout. Stations receiving a tablet for the first time will participate in face-to-face training, while stations receiving an additional tablet will have access to a refresher eLearning module.



A Panasonic Toughbook which is provided to eligible frontline appliances as part of the PSN Cellular rollout.



 National

Gas explosion

WHAKANGUNGU MŌ TE URUPARE KI NGĀ AITUA O NGĀ RAUEMI MOREAREA

TRAINING FOR  
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL  
INCIDENT RESPONSE

Fire and Emergency's Specialist Response Capability Team recently launched a new online training module for our operational personnel for hazardous material (hazmat) incident response.

Hazmat incidents include fuel and chemical spillages, gas leaks, explosives, poisonous substances, and radioactive sources or waste.

Aaron Waterreus, Manager Specialist Response Capability in the Response Capability Directorate, said over recent years a number of operational reviews and Safe@Work investigations have highlighted the need to improve awareness of how to conduct safe operations at hazardous material incidents.

'The size, scale, and nature of hazardous substance incidents is highly variable, and new risks continue to emerge. We respond to roughly 1,800 of these emergencies each year across the motu, and we recognise that hazardous substances present a hazard to our people at a variety of incidents from chemical self-harm to shed fires on farms.'

Aaron said the new module provides foundational knowledge of hazardous materials awareness, including hazard identification, risk management, and the application of the **RICIMD** (**R**isk to life/rescue/**I**solate the scene/**C**ontain the spill/**I**dentify the substance/**M**ake the scene safe/**D**econtaminate) framework.

'It outlines the responsibilities of the hazmat responder in supporting safe and effective incident management. The new module is part of a larger piece of work going on to improve and strengthen our hazmat capability. All operational personnel are to complete the module and record completion in SMS.'



Complete the module

 National



The Draeger FPS7000 is converted to negative pressure mode, using an adaptor, sampling tube, and filter, to enable fit testing.

HE TAPUTAPU TIAKI MANAWA MĀ TE KATOA, ME TE WHAKAMĀTAUTAU KIA TIKA TE PAI O TE URUTAU KI TE KANOHI

RESPIRATORY  
PROTECTION FOR  
ALL WITH FACE FIT  
TESTING

Fire and Emergency continues to make good progress towards establishing a nationally coordinated and sustainable Face Fit Testing Programme to ensure our people are wearing respiratory protection that is a suitable size and fit for them.

Jonny Anderson, Senior Advisor Core Response Capability, says a significant amount of work has been completed since a programme update in June.

'We have launched a dedicated Face Fit Testing Programme page on the Portal, providing a central location for programme updates, resources and information, while work has also begun on integrating fit testing records with existing organisational systems to improve national reporting and compliance monitoring.

'We're focused on building the foundations that will support the programme for years to come. That means developing consistent training, processes, systems and governance before we begin wider implementation.'

In May, 13 personnel commenced an externally delivered Commit2Fit qualification programme to build internal face fit testing capability. They have now successfully completed the training and are progressing through their practical competency assessments to achieve this nationally recognised qualification. Once qualified, these personnel will significantly strengthen Fire and Emergency's internal capability to deliver face fit testing and support future delivery.

Development of an internal national Face Fit Tester Training Programme is nearing completion, with the package being co-designed alongside qualified subject matter experts and our Learning Design Team. This will enable us to train and qualify additional testers in the future.

Jonny says planning is also progressing for District pilot programmes, which will test the delivery model across different operational environments before a national rollout. Supporting policies, procedures, and operational guidance continue to be developed to ensure fit testing is delivered consistently across Fire and Emergency.

'This programme is a collaborative effort involving teams from across the organisation. The work we're doing now will help ensure we have a practical, sustainable approach that supports the health, safety and operational readiness of our people well into the future.'



Find out more



The AccuFit 9000 Pro, displaying the exercises for the candidate during a fit test.



## HE KAUPAPA MAHI ĀPIHA WHAKAHAERE E WHANAKE ANA MŌ NGĀ KAIĀRAHI MŌ ĀPŌPŌ CAREER EXECUTIVE OFFICER PROGRAMME EVOLVES FOR FUTURE LEADERS

The Career Executive Officer Programme is entering a new phase, with work underway to redesign the experience for career officers preparing to step up into broader organisational leadership responsibilities.

The current two-year programme combines internal management modules with the Postgraduate Certificate in Executive Management through the University of Otago. It has been well attended, with strong interest from career officers keen to continue their development.

Over the next two years, there is a proposal to re-design the programme to create an integrated pathway that reflects the demands of senior operational leadership. The refreshed programme will bring together three capability areas: command, management and leadership.

Command development will be strengthened through the new Paearu Mahi programme, incorporating scenario-based learning and assessment of incident-level decision-making and leadership. Management learning will be refreshed through redesigned internal modules covering regional management, fire risk management, and the safety and wellbeing of people. Leadership development will continue through the



To find out more, contact  
Learning Operations

Postgraduate Certificate in Executive Management, aligned with the Fire and Emergency Leadership Capability Development Framework.

‘The work we’re doing is about making the programme feel more connected and practical,’ says Joe Stanley, Manager Officer Development. ‘Senior operational leaders need to bring command, management and leadership skills together every day, so the programme needs to reflect that.’

Joe says the refresh is also about making sure the programme continues to support leaders across the different environments they work in.

‘Our leaders operate in complex and changing situations, and this programme is one way we can help prepare them for that,’ Joe says. ‘It’s about continuing to strengthen leadership capability across the organisation in a way that feels relevant to the work our people are doing.’

## HE ANGA HOU HEI WHAKAPAKARI I TE TUKANGA WHAKATAU NEW FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN DECISION-MAKING

A new Authorising and Decision-Making Framework is being introduced to strengthen how non-operational decisions are made across Fire and Emergency.

While operational incident decision-making is already well established, this framework focuses on the strategic and day-to-day business decisions leaders make. It fills a gap by providing practical guidance, especially in situations where roles, responsibilities or escalation pathways aren’t always clear.

The framework doesn’t replace existing authorising delegations or policies. Those still apply and take priority. Instead, this sits alongside them, supporting sound judgement and more consistent decision-making.

As Megan Stiffler, Deputy Chief Executive Operational Response, explains ‘The framework gives us a shared, structured approach to decision-making across the organisation.’

‘It also introduces the DECIDE model, helping leaders assess impact and risk early and follow clear steps so decisions are well considered, communicated, recorded, and reviewed for all to learn from.’

Janine Hearn, Deputy Chief Executive People, says the benefits will build over time. ‘It will support more informed, transparent decisions made closer to where the work happens, building confidence and capability at all levels, and enabling more timely decision-making.’

‘Overall, the framework aims to improve consistency, clarity and accountability, while helping leaders make confident, well-informed decisions every day.’

- D** Define the problem or opportunity
- E** Establish the criteria
- C** Consider the options
- I** Identify the best option
- D** Deliver the decision
- E** Evaluate and learn

## TE MAHI WHAKAHIRAHIRA O TE KAIWHAKAHAERE TONO MŌHIOHIO THE VITAL ROLE OF A PUBLIC INFORMATION MANAGER

When an emergency strikes, Kim Boyce swaps her day job as an Advisor Community Readiness and Recovery in Te Tai Tokerau Whangārei for another critical role: Public Information Manager (PIM).

As Fire and Emergency’s only qualified PIM in Northland District, Kim acts as the link between the Incident Controller and the community, making sure people receive clear, accurate and timely information to help keep themselves safe.

Ignite spoke with Kim about her experience and what it takes to be an effective PIM.

### How did you get into the PIM role?

I already had experience working in the Planning and Intelligence function within the Incident Management Team (IMT) when I attended a presentation by Fire and Emergency’s PIM Lead, Michele Poole, in Whangārei in 2021. It really piqued my interest and made me want to learn more about the role.

### What are some of the major incidents you’ve been involved in?

One of the biggest was the Waiharara wildfire, which burned from late December 2021 through to early February 2022. I was called in as soon as it started and drove to the incident ground at 11pm. For the first 24 hours, I worked alongside Murray Soljack, a PIM from Whangārei District Council, until two members of the National Headquarters Media Team arrived to provide support.

A real success story from that incident was the community’s preparedness. The Far North Civil Defence Emergency Management Team



Kim (left) with fellow PIM Bex Baddeley.

Public Information Management (PIM) is one of the core functions in New Zealand’s Coordinating Incident Management System. Fire and Emergency’s PIMs ensure that people caught up in emergencies have the information they need to understand what is happening and what they should do to keep themselves safe. Core responsibilities include issuing warnings, working with the news media, engaging with evacuees and affected communities, liaising with stakeholders and partner agencies, ensuring we have a trusted presence online and keeping our own people informed. Fire and Emergency has trained PIMs in every District.



Kim with Graeme Quensell, Incident Controller, at last year’s SIMEX in Northland.

had worked with the Kaimaumau community to develop a response plan, so residents knew exactly what to do and could evacuate safely when required.

In 2022, I was also deployed to Australia to support flood response operations in Parkes, New South Wales. I worked in the Planning Team, which was a fantastic learning opportunity.

### What makes a good PIM?

The most important thing is remembering that people in the community are relying on us for accurate information, delivered quickly. That means providing clear, consistent messaging

through the channels that will reach people best. It’s about sharing the facts, maintaining a strong awareness of what’s happening, identifying information gaps and building good relationships across the IMT.

It’s also important to stay in your lane, particularly when Fire and Emergency isn’t the lead agency, and to find the right balance between gathering information and sharing it in a timely way.

### What training is involved?

In 2023, I completed a CIMS4 course, which covered all functions of the IMT, and attended Fire and Emergency’s two-day PIM course.

Keeping skills current is essential. Around twice a year, I take part in Te Hiku simulation exercises (SIMEXs), typically lasting two to three days, which help test and strengthen emergency response capability.

Being assessed as a PIM Manager during a SIMEX or significant incident is the final step toward becoming a fully qualified Fire and Emergency PIM. I achieved that milestone last year, and it was a proud moment in my emergency management journey.

HANGA WHAKAHĪHĪ ME TE  
ĀHEITANGA MŌ Ō MATOU  
TĀNGATA HEI WHAKATŪ I NGĀ  
POKAPŪ WHAKARITE

# BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND CAPABILITY IN OUR PEOPLE TO RUN OUR COORDINATION CENTRES

Fire and Emergency continues to respond to increasingly complex emergencies across Aotearoa New Zealand. Recent operational reviews, exercises, and lessons from incidents have highlighted the importance of strong, practical capability within our Coordination Centres. To help address this, an initial proof of concept Coordination Centre training was delivered during May and June this year.

The training focused on five of the core Coordination Centre functions under the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS):

- Logistics
- Operations
- Planning
- Safety
- Intelligence.

The training was organised by Glenn Thompson, Principal Advisor Emergency Management, in the Response Capability Directorate. Glenn said each training course – which ran for two days except for the Safety course which was one day – was based on unit standards and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) sponsored training

‘The facilitation was excellent, and, especially, having a diverse group from across the country brought valuable perspectives, with a wide range of practical experiences shared that really enhanced the learning.’ **Thomas Harre, Assistant District Commander, Counties Manukau Fire District.**

packages that reflect the realities of working in a Coordination Centre environment.

‘With this training, we set out to build confidence and capability in these roles by providing participants with the knowledge required to perform their function and apply it within the CIMS framework. The training also aims to improve understanding of how Coordination Centres support operational response, promote consistent application of CIMS functions across Fire and Emergency, and provide opportunities for participants to demonstrate and apply their knowledge in coordination roles.’

And it worked, based on feedback from participants:



‘The Intel course was both practical and insightful. I appreciated the structured tools and templates, as well as the emphasis on asking the right questions, challenging assumptions and recognising personal biases.’ **Adeline Teo, Senior Fire Engineer.**

‘I found the insight into the Safety Function role within a Coordination Centre hugely beneficial, particularly when aligned with my understanding of the Safety function at a Fire and Emergency Incident Management Team level.’ **Michael Tovine, Senior Advisor Volunteer Resilience and Chief Fire Officer Maungaturoto Volunteer Fire Brigade.**

‘I found the Level 5 Logistics CIMS training highly valuable and the course gave me more confidence about working in a Coordination Centre environment. What stood out most was the supportive environment – everyone was there to learn and grow their capability within the logistics function.’ **Shree Helliwell, Project Administrator Leadership Development.**

‘Attending the CIMS Planning course in Te Hiku was an excellent opportunity to deepen my understanding of the Planning function and apply its outputs within an operational response context.’ **Becs Gray, Programme Manager, Eke Taumata.**



Hamilton Island Fire Department.

## MAI I AOTEAROA KI TE MOTU Ō HAMILTON: TE WHAKANUINGA Ō NGĀ KAITINEI AHI E RUA FROM AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND TO HAMILTON ISLAND: TWO KIWI FIREFIGHTERS RECOGNISED

Michael first worked on Hamilton Island in 2007 in a sports club and maintained strong connections. Those relationships led to the opportunity to be the first New Zealander to take up the role of local Station Officer in 2024. Darren joined him the following year.

On arrival, Michael assumed sole charge after his predecessor was removed due to a leg injury. This required him to quickly familiarise himself with the island’s layout, local operational procedures and terminology, and even different hose couplings. Drawing on his experience with Fire and Emergency, he implemented a clear rank structure to better identify roles and responsibilities on the incident ground.

One of Darren’s first impressions was the heat. On arrival in summer, it was 40 degrees with 100 percent humidity. Attending incidents in a polo shirt and shorts rather than level 2 firefighting gear was also a big change.

Together, Michael and Darren focused on building a positive and engaging team culture. They revitalised Wednesday night training sessions, making them interesting and motivating. Using the island’s unique hilly terrain, they developed structured physical and mental drills to strengthen the team’s capability and comradery.

Strong community connections developed through open days, school outreach,



Darren Hill and Michael O’Connor (middle) receiving their CEO Team of the Year Award from John Borghetti, Chairman of the Hamilton Island Enterprises Board (first on left) and ex-CEO of Hamilton Island, Nick Dowling.



Darren Hill (left) and Michael O’Connor.

Auckland-based Senior Firefighter Michael O’Connor and Darren Hill, Advisor Risk Reduction, have returned to Aotearoa New Zealand with their families this year after successfully leading a private volunteer fire department on Hamilton Island off the coast of Queensland. During their time there, they were honoured with the prestigious ‘CEO Team of the Year’ award by Hamilton Island Enterprises.

and kindergarten visits, enhanced the department’s reputation and visibility on the island.

The team responded effectively to a wide range of incidents, including several major events, highlighting the strength of their comprehensive training programme.

The Hamilton Island Fire Department now consists of two paid Station Officers working an eight-days-on, six-days-off roster, alongside 20 volunteers who live and work on the island.

Michael said, ‘Looking back at where the Brigade was at the beginning of 2024, to where I left it at the beginning of 2026, I am extremely proud of what we achieved over there, both operationally and for the volunteer Brigade.’

Following their return home, two more New Zealand firefighters – Nick Fowler and Matt Rosen – have now taken over and are continuing their legacy.

# MANAAKI I NGĀ KAITINEI AHI, KIA MAHIA TE MAHI SUPPORTING OUR FIREFIGHTERS TO GET ON WITH THE JOB

Our Equipment and Logistics (E&L) Team's primary role is to support our operational response. By providing, managing, and assuring our equipment to Fire and Emergency standards and best practice, having specialist personnel maintaining, testing, and certifying our equipment, and reducing the risk of equipment failure, our firefighters can get on with what they are trained to do. There is a large and diverse portfolio of operational equipment with more than 150,000 items to look after.

Nationally, E&L supports Fire and Emergency from six Equipment and Logistics Service Centres, four stores, and two National Equipment and Distribution Centres (NEDC) – the NEDC supporting the South Island is located at Rolleston and the NEDC supporting the North Island is located at Tauranga.

Now, meet the team behind this mahi.



**Rob McMahon**  
Manager Equipment and Logistics  
Capability/Acting National Manager  
Equipment and Logistics

'I have been with the organisation for 24 years. In my current role I look outside the business and manage our supply chain, in particular our strategic relationships with Draeger, Fire Rescue Safety New Zealand and Motorola.

'During my time in E&L I have been involved in the introduction of Breathing Apparatus (BA) telemetry, national service contracts such as the BA and rescue gear servicing and, more recently, managing the procurement of our Hosemaster automatic hose testing machines.'



**Don McErlach**  
Manager Equipment and Logistics  
Operations

'I have been serving the New Zealand Fire Service and Fire and Emergency since 1983. I lead the national Equipment and Logistics Operations function, overseeing the lifecycle management, maintenance, readiness, and distribution of operational equipment across the country. My team works closely with suppliers, contractors, and operational personnel to ensure frontline firefighters have safe, reliable and operationally ready equipment whenever and wherever it is needed.'



**Tiffany (Tiff) McQueen**  
Coordinator, Equipment and Logistics  
Business and Commercial Support

'I joined Fire and Emergency as a volunteer firefighter in 2019 before moving into a national Equipment & Logistics Business Coordinator role in 2022. My role is to support the teams responsible for getting the right equipment to the right people at the right time. Every day is different and can involve everything from supporting and coordinating national equipment rollouts and managing budgets to working with suppliers and helping solve problems when processes or equipment issues arise.'



**Nikki Vibert**  
Manager Asset Strategy and Data  
Assurance, Equipment and Logistics

'I have been with Fire and Emergency for four years, all of that time in the E&L Team. I have a varied role that sees me working with procurement on contracts, dealing with suppliers in a relationship management capacity and working with the wider E&L Team on operational equipment asset management. A huge part of my role is to ensure quality data and asset information is collected and maintained, to enable sound business decisions using quality reporting and analytics.'

There are five Managers Regional Equipment and Logistics. They manage our regional teams and are E&L's "boots on the ground", managing our Service Centres in Silverdale, Kaikohe, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Rolleston, Rangiora, Dunedin and Clyde. They lead their teams and oversee the provision, maintenance, testing and distribution of equipment and logistics support across their Regions.



**Josh Dobson**  
Manager Regional Equipment and Logistics,  
Te Ūpoko

'What I enjoy most about my role is improving the way we work behind the scenes. I like finding opportunities to streamline processes, improve consistency, and solve problems that make life easier for our people. Whether it's overseeing projects like the Hosemaster automatic hose testing machines rollout, cleaning up our regional asset data, or improving the accuracy of our equipment records, it's rewarding to know that the work contributes to ensuring our Region has reliable operational equipment available when and where it's needed.'



**Nigel Capon**  
Manager Regional Equipment and Logistics,  
Te Hiku

'I have proudly served the New Zealand Fire Service and Fire and Emergency since 1978. What I enjoy most is working with like-minded people who are willing to go the extra mile to make things happen in support of our frontline firefighters. There is a strong sense of teamwork, commitment, and pride in what we do. Everyone understands the importance of providing reliable equipment and support services, and there's a genuine willingness to collaborate, solve problems, and find practical solutions when challenges arise.'



**Brook Retallick**  
Manager Regional Equipment and Logistics,  
Te Ihu

'I enjoy the diverse aspects of my role, from asset management within the warehouse to overseeing assets at a station level across the Te Ihu Region. I value the support provided by the E&L Team, particularly when rolling out new equipment to stations, providing repairs or standard testing to ensure capability, which is always an exciting process. I also enjoy engaging with station representatives and working alongside District leadership to support operational needs and achieve positive outcomes for our people and communities.'



**Bruce Nilson**  
Manager Regional Equipment and Logistics,  
Ngā Tai ki te Puku

'I joined the New Zealand Fire Service as a volunteer firefighter in Tauranga in 1981. What I enjoy most in my role is being part of a dedicated national E&L Team that is focused on supporting firefighters behind the scenes. Although we are a relatively new function within the organisation, we have built a strong reputation for delivering outcomes, whether that involves national equipment rollouts, managing recalls, or helping volunteer brigades and career stations resolve equipment-related issues.'



**Carolyn West**  
Manager Regional Equipment and Logistics,  
Te Kei

'I value the opportunity to engage with people both nationally and regionally. Asset management is a genuine passion of mine, and I'm particularly focused on ensuring the E&L data we rely on is accurate for Te Kei and nationally. I also enjoy the pace of the role - no two days are the same, and there's always something new to respond to.'

TE KŌKIRI TAHI I NGĀ PANONITANGA PAI – TE HAUMARU, TE HAUORA ME TE ORANGA I WHAKARATONGA AHI ME NGĀ OHOTATA I AOTEAROA

# DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE TOGETHER: SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT FIRE AND EMERGENCY



Fire and Emergency's Safety, Health and Wellbeing Roadmap provides a clear, shared direction for how we continue to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of our people, while also giving us a chance to reflect, reset, and support one another. The Roadmap is not about adding more work or introducing another layer of process - it's created to encourage conversations about what's working, what needs attention, and how small, deliberate actions can strengthen our collective safety, health and wellbeing.

## What you can do

Here are some examples what you can do to bring the Roadmap to life through everyday conversations, work activities, decisions, and planning:

- Participation in working groups or field trials for new or updated PPE.
- Undertaking two critical risk deep dive learning sessions annually.
- Help enhance psychological wellbeing by building and supporting initiatives that strengthen the wellbeing of our people. Contact your Wellbeing Advisor to identify local needs and create a tailored plan for further education.
- Incorporating monthly Safety, Health and Wellbeing conversations into scheduled activities, group meetings or trainings sessions.

When each of us makes small, deliberate changes, the collective impact is significant. Together, we can build a culture where safety, health, and wellbeing are fully embedded into everything we do.



Download the Safety, Health and Wellbeing Strategic Roadmap



Check out the video of Megan Stiffler, Deputy Chief Executive Operational Response and Deputy National Commander, speaking about the Safety, Health and Wellbeing Strategic Roadmap, why it matters and the role each of us plays in bringing it to life in our day-to-day work



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK  
12 – 18 OCTOBER 2026

There are heaps of ways to look after your and your team's hauora.



Check out resources



Access Wellbeing Support

TE WHAKAPAKARI I TE MANAWAROA MĀ NGĀ HONONGA KI WHAREKAURI/RĒKOHU

# BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS ON THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

An eight-day visit to Wharekauri/Rēkohu, Chatham Islands, has highlighted the power of combining Community Risk Management with kaupapa Māori leadership to strengthen community resilience, organisational capability and trusted relationships in one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most remote communities.

Fire and Emergency personnel delivered a coordinated programme of Community Risk Reduction, Community Readiness and Recovery, stakeholder engagement and relationship-building. The team completed 64 Home Fire Safety Visits, engaged approximately 150-170 people through a Fire Station Open Day, delivered Get Firewise education in local schools, conducted risk reduction visits to critical infrastructure sites, and supported preparedness initiatives on Pitt Island.

A key achievement was the successful transition of Māori relationship stewardship from Te Ihu Region to Te Ūpoko Region, led by Paki Johnson, Pou Takawaenga Māori Matua Te Ihu, and Aidan Crawford, Pou Takawaenga Māori Matua Te Ūpoko. Through whakawhanaungatanga (process of nurturing relationships), the team ensured continuity of trust with Ngāti Mutunga o Wharekauri Trust, Hokotehi Moriori Trust, marae trustees, kaumātua and community leaders, protecting years of established relationships while creating opportunities for future collaboration.

The deployment also revealed important insights into local safety challenges, including inconsistent property rapid numbering, emergency mapping issues, unsafe chimney maintenance practices, and a reluctance among some residents to contact emergency services during significant fire events.

For Aidan, the deployment demonstrated the value of kaupapa Māori practice in building organisational capability.

'This wasn't about creating new relationships; it was about honouring and strengthening existing connections. By embedding kaupapa Māori principles and whakawhanaungatanga into our work, we've strengthened our cultural capability and created a foundation for long-term partnership.'

Phil Soal, Community Risk Manager, said the visit showed the importance of sustained engagement. 'Community fire safety is most effective when it is built on trust. By working alongside local people, listening to their experiences and understanding their unique risks, we can deliver prevention and preparedness initiatives that have a lasting impact.'

The deployment reinforced that investing in relationships is fundamental to achieving stronger resilience outcomes for remote communities.



Jack Daymond (L), Kaumātua Chatham Islands and Aidan Crawford, Pou Takawaenga Māori Matua Te Ūpoko.



Hugh O'Donnell (L), Advisor Community Readiness and Recovery, and Phil Soal, Community Risk Manager, setting up for Fire Station Open Day.



(L-R): Phil Soal, Community Risk Manager, Steve Joyce, Chief Fire Officer Chatham Islands and Gareth Hughes, Wellington District Commander.



## HE KŌRERO KI A AHORANGI EDWINA PIO, TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU TOHUTOHU A ROHE, TE TIAMANA O TE KŌMITI KŌRERO WITH PROFESSOR EDWINA PIO, AUCKLAND LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR

Professor Edwina Pio is New Zealand's first Professor of Diversity and an internationally recognised researcher, academic, governance leader and speaker. Invested as an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to ethnic communities, she has also received the Te Rangi Hiroa Royal Society Medal, a Duke of Edinburgh Fellowship and is a Fulbright alumna. Edwina is a Fellow of the University of Oxford and currently chairs Fire and Emergency's Auckland Local Advisory Committee (LAC).

### What inspired you to join the Auckland LAC?

The ancient scriptures with fire myths have held a deep fascination for me since childhood. I learnt about the warmth of fire, fireside chats and renewal, but also the flip side of fire as dangerous and destructive. Those early lessons helped shape my interest in community wellbeing and safety. Joining the Auckland LAC felt like a natural extension of that interest, providing an opportunity to support Auckland's diverse communities, promote fire safety and help people better understand prevention and preparedness.

### What are your committee's current priorities?

We are focused on three key priorities. The first is understanding changing community needs and the impact those changes have

on brigades. Secondly, we are focused on volunteer sustainability. Many volunteers balance their service with work, study and family commitments. We want to support, grow and retain volunteers, particularly from Auckland's diverse communities. Our third priority is creating meaningful pathways for young people. By engaging youth early and providing flexible opportunities to contribute, we can help develop future community leaders.

### What keeps you busy outside of the LAC?

I chair several other committees: Ethics Committees for the University of Auckland and Health and Disability Ethics Committee for the Ministry of Health. I am also a panellist for funding at the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and continue my work as a published author. I am currently writing a book exploring ageing, migration and faith.

### How do you balance this role with your other mahi?

Daily gratitude, prayer, meditation and reflection help me stay grounded. I also enjoy walking, gardening, art, bell ringing and Morris dancing.

### Any advice for those considering joining an LAC?

Give it a go. It's a rewarding way to connect with your community, share knowledge and contribute to keeping people safe. The role offers great camaraderie, continuous learning and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to our communities.

## TE ANGA WHAKAMUA I RUNGA I TE HĪKOI KOTAHI SHOWING UP, ONE STEP AT A TIME

For Napier volunteer firefighter and mum of four, Kaitlyn Merritt, completing the Firefighter Sky Tower Challenge was never about perfection - it was about showing up and taking one step at a time.



Balancing training with family life was no easy feat. Some days were well organised; others were chaotic. Kaitlyn adapted as needed, fitting in stair climbs when she could and staying active through everyday parenting.

**'Balancing training with the demands of raising a young whānau meant adapting constantly,' she says. 'Through it all, I learned that progress doesn't need to be perfect to be effective.'**

Her experience challenges the belief that people need to be fitter, stronger or have more free time before taking on something new.

'We often think we need the right circumstances before we begin,' she says. 'But everyone starts somewhere.'

For Kaitlyn, the Firefighter Sky Tower Challenge was as much a mental challenge as a physical one, proving that capability often exceeds self-doubt.

A member of her brigade for five years, Kaitlyn has welcomed two babies during that time. Her commitment to volunteering is rooted in a lifelong connection to service. Before joining Fire and Emergency, she spent 11 years as a volunteer surf lifeguard, where she developed a strong appreciation for teamwork and supporting people during difficult moments.

'Firefighting felt like a natural continuation of those values,' she says.

Kaitlyn believes the skills gained through motherhood - resilience, adaptability, communication and staying calm under pressure - strengthen both individuals and brigades. She also acknowledges that returning after having children can affect confidence.

'Sometimes all it takes is someone to say, "You've still got this, and we're glad you're here."

Taking on the Firefighter Sky Tower Challenge was also deeply personal.

**'I wanted to push myself outside my comfort zone and prove that limitations are often self-imposed.'**

She hopes to show other women that having children does not mean giving up on goals, it simply means approaching them differently.

**Looking ahead, Kaitlyn is focused on building her skills, improving her fitness and encouraging more wāhine to join emergency services. Her message to other women is simple: 'Don't wait for confidence before taking the first step. Confidence often comes after doing the hard thing, not before it.'**

### 2026 Sky Tower Challenge stats:



1,103



25kg



328m



51

Total money raised for charity:

**\$2,558,187.66**

The Women's Development Team, alongside the Uniform Team, are proud to announce that the maternity gear pack has been refreshed and can be ordered at: [uniform.ppc@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:uniform.ppc@fireandemergency.nz)

Alongside the maternity gear pack, there are guidelines for managing pregnancy and parental leave. Just search for these on the Portal or use the QR Code.



If you have questions or require support navigating these processes, please reach out to [woman@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:woman@fireandemergency.nz)

**FIREANDEMERGENCY.NZ/VOLUNTEER**

Volunteers make up more than 80 percent of Fire and Emergency's workforce and play a vital role in supporting around 600 brigades that protect communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

While four in five Kiwis are aware of Fire and Emergency volunteers, many don't realise the wide range of roles available, or the variety of skills and experiences volunteers bring. Highlighting this more effectively and attracting a broader range of people is therefore essential.

That's the thinking behind *It Takes All Sorts*, a new volunteer attraction platform that reflects both the diversity of our volunteers and the people we want to attract.

Built around the idea that there are all sorts of people who volunteer, all sorts of ways to contribute and all sorts of skills people can

**Fire and Emergency's new volunteer attraction approach, It Takes All Sorts, celebrates the diversity of the people who power our brigades while giving them new resources to attract volunteers in ways that work for their communities.**

bring to – and gain from – the experience, the new visual identity provides a fresh, welcoming and inclusive platform for volunteer attraction.

While the platform includes an advertising campaign featuring our own volunteers to build awareness, a key focus is providing brigades with a fresh suite of practical resources to support local attraction activity. This includes new materials designed to address some of the challenges brigades face when recruiting volunteers, such as attracting people with daytime availability.

The *It Takes All Sorts* toolkit includes posters, flyers, social media templates, an image bank, and various other promotional resources. Items can be tailored to promote local recruitment needs, events and volunteer roles, helping brigades connect with the people they need.

Amanda Morgan, Team Leader Attraction, says the platform was designed to strike the balance between creating a consistent, recognisable approach that raises the profile of volunteering with Fire and Emergency, while giving brigades flexible resources they can tailor for their local communities.

'Our brigades know their communities best so it was important to create something they could adapt to genuinely reflect their own brigade and the people they serve. We hope it's something they feel proud to use, because it's also a reflection of the incredible contribution they make to their communities.'

'I'd encourage every volunteer brigade to explore the new materials and think about how they could support their attraction efforts. If you'd like advice on how to roll them out or make them work for your brigade, please get in touch with us – we'd love to help.'

E WHAKAATU ANA TE RANGAHAU ORANGA I NGĀ  
WĀHI E WHAKANUIA – ENGARI E TUKU ANA HOKI  
TE TŪMANAKO PAI

## WELLBEING SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS AREAS NEEDING FURTHER WORK – BUT GIVES CAUSE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

**The annual Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey was conducted in April and May this year. A cornerstone of our Whanaungatanga Programme, the survey had a 59 percent response rate, demonstrating continued strong engagement with the programme four years in.**

The Whanaungatanga Programme focuses on improving organisational factors such as connection, trust, support, communication and leadership, with the goal of preventing mental ill-health and creating a healthier organisation.

Many people in a variety of roles across Fire and Emergency are exposed to, or face, challenging and demanding situations through the nature of their work. The programme seeks to identify and address workplace factors that may influence how people experience and respond to these challenges.

Feedback gathered through the survey, as well as workshops and interviews, has informed a range of targeted interventions focused on areas such as leadership,

training, support, work environments, recognition, communication and inclusion.

Initial high-level results from the 2026 survey are providing further valuable insights into how we can continue to build connection and trust, and support mental wellbeing across our organisation.

The findings will help us better understand the impact of the interventions we have introduced so far and provide important direction for the future of the programme.

The full details and analysis of the survey are expected to be delivered by the independent assessors, the University of Canterbury, towards the end of the year and will be available on Portal.

**Manuel Gallo, Te Atatu Senior Firefighter, is a breathwork advocate and practitioner, who is passionate about the benefits and support that mindful breathwork can provide to us all, particularly during times of stress.**

Breathwork is the practice of using your breath as a tool to improve your physical, emotional and mental health.

Manuel says research shows that by changing the way you breathe, you can influence your nervous system, helping you shift from a stressed, reactive state, into one that is calmer, more focused and in control.

He says most of us never think about how we breathe, it just happens. But our breath has a direct connection with our nervous system, influencing how we feel, think and perform.

'For firefighters, this is important because we regularly deal with shift work, poor sleep, high-pressure incidents, traumatic events and long periods of stress,' says Manuel.

'At incidents our nervous system goes into fight-or-flight and when it stays activated without enough recovery, it can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, poor

sleep, burnout and poor decision-making.'

Manuel says whether you're on the way to an incident, recovering afterwards, or simply trying to get some sleep after a night shift, breathwork provides practical tools you can use in real time: just a few minutes of slow, controlled breathing can help tell your body it's safe to switch off.

'We used to think breathing exercises were for yogis, not firefighters. But breathwork isn't about sitting cross-legged or chanting. It's about knowing how to use one tool you already have - your breath - to help you perform, recover and stay well, anywhere, anytime.'

Kris Kennett, Te Kei Wellbeing Advisor, runs Micro Wellbeing sessions to guide you in mindfulness exercises. If you wish to join these helpful sessions, please email [kris.kennett@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:kris.kennett@fireandemergency.nz)

## TE HANGA TAHI I TE KŌRURE SHAPING CHANGE TOGETHER

One of the most effective ways to create meaningful change is to involve the people who will be affected by it. That's why Eke Taumata has created multiple ways for people within Fire and Emergency to have a voice in the work shaping our organisation's future.



March 2026 Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū.

Since its first meeting in February 2024, the Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū has become an important sounding board for the Programme. Made up of representatives from across Fire and Emergency, members meet every few months to provide feedback, share experiences and help test emerging ideas. Their ongoing involvement allows them to influence projects and key outputs at multiple stages, rather than providing feedback only once.

'The people who live the reality of our organisation every day are best placed to tell us what will work and what won't,' says Becs Gray, Eke Taumata Programme Manager. 'By involving our people throughout the development and

implementation lifecycle, we can create programmes and initiatives, along with supporting policies and systems, that are practical, relevant and more likely to impact positively on the organisation, and our people. Their perspectives are genuinely influencing outcomes.'

Alongside the Rōpū, dedicated working groups help shape specific projects, including the Authorising and Decision-Making Framework, Talent Management and Succession Planning Framework, and Impairment Policy.

Vaughan Mackereth, District Commander Tāmaki Makaurau, has contributed through both the Rōpū and the Authorising and Decision-Making working group.

'Being involved in both forums gives me different opportunities to contribute,' he says. 'The Rōpū allows us to look across the wider programme and test ideas from different perspectives, while the working group lets us get into the detail. Together, they help ensure the work is practical and reflects the realities people face across the organisation.'

For Graeme Perry, Senior Firefighter at Greytown Station, becoming involved in the Talent Management and Succession Planning working group has been welcome opportunity to participate in the development of the organisation.

'As a volunteer, being included in groups like this, and others, has afforded opportunities to provide input and perspective from Volunteer-land. This programme is a positive step forward for the future of the whole organisation, career, volunteer and support staff.'

**New Zealand Firefighters Welfare Society**

Firefighters helping firefighters and their families  
Awahi atu awahi mai o ratou whanau

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Read more about Eke Taumata

This story is an example of how Fire and Emergency is shifting the dial to achieve our culture goal: to be a place where people feel they belong, and be supported and empowered to thrive, so we can better serve our communities and each other. It supports the culture outcome "Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence".

# Neurodiversity and differing views

When a mismatch happens, like miscommunications or misunderstandings, it can grow into a bigger issue if you don't sort it.

A free Kāpehu coaching session with Speak Safe @ Fair Way can help you unpick the problem. Often the answer is perspective. We talk to a Kāpehu coach to find out why.

Need a fresh perspective?

Kāpehu coaching is free, confidential, and independent.

Get in touch:

Freephone:  
0800 677 697



## Q&A with Kāpehu Coach Emma Barker

**Hi Emma. What's your background and training?**

I'm an accredited mediator through the Arbitrators' and Mediators' Institute of New Zealand (AMINZ). I mediate in several areas, including workplace. I'm also a certified ADHD-informed coach through Gold Mind Academy as well as an Associate Certified Coach with International Coaching Federation.

**What drew you to this work?**

I like working one-on-one with people, supporting them in untangling their thoughts so they can decide what's going to work best. It's the satisfaction of asking the right question; the impact can be so powerful, seeing them move from feeling stuck to realising what could be possible.

**You mentioned ADHD. Can you tell us about neurodiversity and conflict?**

A major source of conflict in workplaces is misunderstanding and difference. Neurodivergent people often think, process, and respond differently because their brains are wired differently. This can mean they are trying to function within systems, expectations, and environments that were not designed with them in mind, often leading to stress or shame.

What a situation looks like from the outside is not always the same as how it feels on the inside. A neurotypical person and a neurodivergent person may experience the exact same interaction very differently.

Communication styles, processing speed, sensory experiences, emotional responses, and interpretations can all vary significantly. It is easy to see how misunderstandings, tension, and conflict can arise when these differences are not recognised or understood.



**How can Kāpehu coaching help?**

It's a safe confidential conversation where people can work through what is going on for them and what they might want to do about it. For neurodivergent people, that can mean bringing attention to where their differences might be at play in the situation. How might their actions be perceived but also how are they perceiving the other person? The coach is like a thinking partner, not to make decisions for them but to empower them to consider what could be possible.

**fair way**

**kia tau**  
YOUR EXPERTS  
IN DISPUTE  
RESOLUTION

Fire and Emergency  
Neurodiversity Network





**Calling all  
team players,  
thrill-seekers,  
skill-seekers**

## It takes all sorts to make a volunteer brigade



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