

# Resilient Religious Communities

**Hapori Whakapono Manawaroa**  
*A Guide to Disaster Resilience*



Religious Diversity Centre  
Aotearoa New Zealand



Auckland  
Emergency  
Management  
Tokanga Māori Ohorata o Tamaki Makaurau



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# Foreword

The information in this guide has been developed in response to questions and concerns generated at community engagements held across Auckland in 2021, which importantly included you, as religious leaders, sharing your experiences of supporting your communities in dealing with crises.

This included your response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Aotearoa New Zealand where you took on leadership roles. You acted as essential channels of communication, distributed food, marshalled your communities, and helped establish and support testing and vaccination centres. More recently, you mobilised your communities in response to the Auckland Anniversary Flood and Cyclone Gabrielle providing shelter, comfort, solace, and support to those in need.

The impacts of climate change will demand increased community resilience. There has been a growing realisation in the civil defence emergency management (CDEM) sector that community resilience saves lives and safeguards communities. Your input is vital as no one knows your community better than you.

There has been an acknowledgement of the central role religious communities, places of worship and religious centres play, during, and after emergencies or disasters. This guide is designed to build on these developments and help your community plan for, respond to, and thrive after an emergency. This will be strengthened by taking steps to establish relationships with official agencies before an emergency.



## Councillor Sharon Stewart

Chair Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Committee

## Acknowledgements

During the community engagement process for this guide, we held a series of six regional hui across Auckland. We acknowledge the support of the religious communities who so kindly offered their premises and facilities and hosted us and their neighbouring religious communities. We thank the Ministry of Pacific Peoples (MPP) for hosting the talanoa of Pacific religious leaders.

We also offer our sincere thanks to members of the interreligious reference group who shared their experiences and wisdom throughout.

We commend the findings of the report published by the MPP: Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Pacific Churches: Impact, Response and Recovery (2021). We want to draw attention to the crucial role of the Pacific churches in the 'spiritual support' of their communities during emergency response and recovery, the role Pacific religious leaders play in channelling emergency information to your members, and 'in connecting families to social service providers and to government support agencies'.

### PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES:

- Beth Shalom, Epsom (Progressive Jewish).
- Auckland Hebrew Congregation (Orthodox Jewish).
- New Zealand Jewish Council.
- Maria Assumpta, Beach Haven Parish (Roman Catholic).
- St. George's Presbyterian Church, Takapuna.
- Shri Shirdi Saibaba Mandir, Onehunga (Hindu).
- St John The Baptist Church, Mairangi Bay (Roman Catholic).
- Lifewise, Auckland (Methodist community social development organisation).
- Zion Hill Methodist Church, Birkenhead.
- Bhartiya Samaj (Hindu).
- All Saints, Ponsonby (Anglican).
- Sacred Heart, Ponsonby (Catholic).
- Pitt Street Methodist.
- New Zealand Buddhist Council.
- Titirangi Baptist Church.
- Te Atatu Union (Methodist/Presbyterian).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day, Saints Royal Oak.
- Tzu Chi Foundation (Buddhist).
- Avondale Islamic Centre (Muslim).
- Gurdwara Sri Kalgidhar Sahib, Takanini (Sikh).
- St Matthew's in the City (Anglican).
- Seventh Day Adventist Church, Cook Islands community.
- Knox Presbyterian Church, Parnell.
- St Andrews First Presbyterian Church, Parnell.
- EFKS Mangere Sasae (Congregationalist).
- Reformed Church of Tuvalu, Kiribati.
- Glen Eden Methodist Church.
- Onehunga Cooperating Church (Methodist/Presbyterian).
- Point Chevalier Homestead Community Church (Presbyterian).
- Sikh Aware.
- Supreme Sikh Society.
- Arya Samaj (Hindu).
- The New Zealand Muslim Association (NZMA).
- Auckland Interfaith Council.
- Islamic Council of New Zealand.
- Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat.
- Bahá'í Community.
- Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA)



**Auckland  
Emergency  
Management**  
Te Whānau Aotearoa





Food distribution during the COVID-19 Response, Takanini Sikh Gurdwara

**APPENDIX 1:  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

This Plan is to be completed before an emergency or disaster event. When disaster hits, your community may need to rely on limited Emergency Services resources to respond to a wide range of emergency situations.

The Purpose of this Plan  
 - To plan and coordinate the response to an emergency.  
 - To ensure that all necessary resources are available for your community.  
 - To ensure that all necessary resources are available for your community.  
 - To ensure that all necessary resources are available for your community.

Our Community

Community Name	Address
Community Contact	Phone Number
Community Email	Website
Community Fax	Other Contact

Emergency Plans

Emergency Plan Name	Emergency Plan Description
Emergency Plan Contact	Emergency Plan Status

Emergency Services

Service Name	Service Description
Service Contact	Service Status

Emergency Resources

Resource Name	Resource Description
Resource Contact	Resource Status

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE:**

**Appendix 1:  
Emergency Preparedness plan**

We've provided you with a helpful form at the back of this book. We advise making copies of this and distributing as needed.

You can also download and print new copies from [https://bit.ly/rrc\\_appendix1](https://bit.ly/rrc_appendix1)

# Introduction

**Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) partnered with the Religious Diversity Centre (RDC) for this initiative to strengthen links between official agencies responsible for emergency management and religious communities.**

**The aim was to foster greater disaster resilience. Globally, religious communities and other faith-based organisations play increasingly vital roles in disaster and emergency response through developing spaces for training, information sharing and providing support and shelter to those in their communities and beyond. They do so in partnership with government and other agencies.**

## Purpose

This guide has been developed for religious leaders and their volunteers to enhance your response to emergencies – from planning through to recovery. This includes those already actively involved or those interested in becoming more involved.

AEM wants to ensure that religious communities continue to offer their distinctive support while having a good understanding of local emergency organisational structures. This will ensure that you link with official agencies to access resources, training and programmes needed to strengthen your community’s capacity before emergencies or disasters.

## Context

The religious beliefs and practices (‘faith’) of communities are considerable and indispensable resources for disaster resilience for your own community, other communities, and the wider city of Auckland. Community leadership, structures and networks, and a charitable and caring ethos play a necessary part in the development of effective, coordinated approaches to responses to emergencies or disasters.

Religious leaders and their communities have an essential and distinctive role to play in the 4 Rs:

**Reduction: Identify and reduce risk**

**Readiness: Emergency planning and training**

**Response: Actions taken during an emergency event**

**Recovery: Restoring well-being and quality of life**

This can be advanced by drawing on your existing experience in running your own organisation, and in mobilising volunteers.

## Involving communities

The guide is based on extensive community engagement.

We focused on listening to communities and reflected on what we heard from you to help shape the contents and priorities of this guide. We then tested this guide with a range of your communities.

This process was critical in enabling us to structure this guide to address the issues and concerns raised by you as religious leaders, about your communities and their readiness to enhance and develop their disaster resilience.



*AEM Response team vehicles.*

We began in May 2021 by bringing together a core group of leaders from religious communities at the RDC offices in central Auckland. Those present shared their and their community’s poignant and sometimes harrowing experiences of past emergencies such as terrorism, fire, tsunami, cyclone, flooding, earthquake, and pandemic. At this meeting, you clearly expressed the desire to be given information and support to guide your own future preparedness, planning, risk assessment, decision-making and action.

**“...designed to enable you, as leaders, and your communities to share experiences, anxieties, resources, concerns, issues.”**

AEM and RDC took this as a clear mandate from you to proceed with the project. We then held a series of six regional inter-religious hui, and a Pasifika talanoa, at various locations across Auckland during May to August 2021. The engagements were designed to enable you, as leaders, and your communities to share experiences, anxieties, resources, concerns, and issues.

The engagements also aimed to foster relationships that encourage you all, as religious leaders, to work together before, during and after an emergency or disaster to develop response readiness.

## What we heard

We listened to some 130 of you from more than 30 religious communities across Auckland. As community leaders, you participated in exercises designed to promote and elicit information, stimulate discussion of existing emergency plans, past experiences, and the communal structures needed to ensure effective action.

Each session included asking those present to consider your own community's emergency readiness. All reported community readiness ratings that could be improved; some even giving negative readiness ratings. The ensuing conversation discussed the different understandings and levels of readiness, the differences between health and safety compliance and emergency planning, and communities' understandings of their responsibilities and capabilities before, during and after emergencies or disasters.

You highlighted the absence of, and the need for, self-care and support for leaders and volunteers and the need for specialist capacity building in this area.

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There was extensive discussion of the importance of religious, spiritual, and psychological services, including worship, and the material support that communities offer your members.

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Many of you raised communications as an issue: how best to convey your community's situation to emergency authorities, your own community and to other communities.

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There were questions about medical and personal resources, including first aid and other services, and the need for trained people and appropriate training.

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There was an acknowledgement from you of the need for resources to support community readiness covering emergency response, developing emergency plans, and exercises.

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*Participants at the West Auckland regional hui, Avondale Islamic Centre*



# Understanding emergency planning

## What is an emergency?

**Emergencies or disasters include:**

- **public health concerns such as the outbreak of infectious diseases**
- **weather and natural events**
- **exposure to biological or chemical threats**
- **terrorism**
- **the breakdown of our infrastructure such as power and water**

It is difficult to predict the likelihood of these events. They can happen anywhere, at any time, with little or no warning, or they may unfold more slowly, giving people time to act.

Thinking about Auckland, our emergencies or disasters are usually associated with natural hazards events such as severe weather. Aside from the expected winter weather, summer and autumn can deliver subtropical storms to Auckland. These can include a combination of severe winds, heavy rain, flooding, land instability, power outages, storm surges and coastal erosion.

In the context of religious communities, an emergency or a disaster is a situation or event threatening loss of life, disruption to community and religious services or activities, or damage to community property and resources requiring immediate response.

This is why your community needs to plan for an emergency.

## What are Emergency Plans?

These are plans you develop before an emergency or disaster: Who should be doing what, where, and when and how best to coordinate with others and link with emergency authorities to better respond.

It is developed ideally with input from key community members. It includes:

- maps
- written procedures such as details of responsibilities and relationships with other organisations
- contact lists
- checklists

There is no set model for emergency plans but working steadily through the steps in this guide will help identify what is specific and relevant for your community and place of worship or religious centre.

## Legal information

Your place of worship or religious centre is required to meet a range of legislative requirements, including provisions of the:

- Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

As you work through your emergency planning, you will find that you have already developed many processes and procedures to meet these requirements. We recommend you get advice about safety requirements from agencies like Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

While there are no statutory requirements under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 for community groups to have emergency plans, it will be in your interest to develop one and to let your community know about it.

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE:**  
**Appendix 2:**  
**Emergency Response Checklist**

We've provided you with a helpful checklist at the back of this book. We advise making copies of this and distributing as needed.

You can also download and print new copies from [https://bit.ly/rrc\\_appendix2](https://bit.ly/rrc_appendix2)



## Risk Assessment and Impact

**Deciding on the best action to take is based on three steps.**

- 1. Assess the risks to buildings and people.**
- 2. Prioritise your actions based on how badly you think your place of worship or religious centre will be affected – consider structural damage, and disruption to water, power, communications, and other services.**
- 3. Identify the different risks to employees, volunteers, community members, family, and visitors.**

How do you determine the overall risk of a particular hazard or threat in your community?

Consider:

- The hazard and its likely scale, duration, and extent.
- The likelihood it will happen.
- The consequences of it happening in terms of the four main areas of impact – built, economic, environmental, and social (including religious/cultural).



*Waterspout, Waitemata Harbour*

When a community knows about the hazards around them, they can take steps to reduce the impacts of these hazards by planning. This can significantly reduce the impact of an emergency. Everyone is better prepared to cope both physically and spiritually and thus recover more quickly.

### Risk Assessment

It is important to consider the impact of specific hazards in terms of their severity (from insignificant, minor, moderate, major, to extreme) and the built, economic, environmental, and social impacts on a community.



For detailed and up-to-date information about relevant hazards, refer to the **Auckland Hazards Viewer** <https://aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz/hazard-viewer>

### Consequence

An emergency or disaster is likely to impact your ability to continue to offer your full range of services and activities. You might consider which services could continue and in what ways, such as online prayers and religious classes, and other arrangements such as alternative venues.



For information about putting together a plan to keep your essential functions up and running during a time of disruption, refer to a **business continuity plan** <https://www.aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz/work-ready>

## Risk Assessment Table

Hazard and consequences	Likelihood	Significant		All practicable steps to minimise		Controls required to minimise	Person responsible	Due date	Completed
		YES	NO	YES	NO				
<b>Pandemic:</b> Pandemic causing significant disruption to transport, available workers, supply lines, and restrictions to gatherings will have consequences.	Possible	✓			✓	Emergency plans and resources in place. Staying home when infectious. Social distancing. Protective equipment. Vaccinations. Ventilation.  Online religious and spiritual services.			
<b>Flooding:</b> Flooding causing damage to property disrupting religious gatherings and causing impacts to road network e.g. cordons disrupting transport						Check hazard viewer to determine level of flood risk in area, check storm water runoff system, relocate items from property if possible, evacuation plan, online religious and spiritual services			
<b>Severe storms:</b>									
<b>Coastal inundation:</b>									

\*Likelihood  
 Likely - The event is expected to occur e.g., 60%+ chance of occurring in the next year.  
 Possible - The event may occur at some time e.g., 20-59% of occurring in the next year.  
 Unlikely - The event is unlikely to occur e.g., less than 20% of occurring in the next year.

# Leading in emergencies

**As religious leaders, you are the key people in the community whose experience, vision, moral leadership and powers of reassurance are often called upon during times of crisis. You play a vital role in how your community responds from providing shelter during flooding to offering pastoral care during a pandemic.**

## Who is a religious leader?

Religious leaders are essential to their community. You may have an official position as a priest or pastor of a church, a chairperson or president of a religious organisation, a community leader, or be one of the “doers” in your community with the ability to lead.

### Roles and responsibilities

Depending on the emergency or disaster, official authorities are likely to be under huge pressure in the first 72 hours and may not be able to respond to everyone immediately. Your community will most likely look to you for immediate support.

This is why it is so important to have emergency plans in place before an actual emergency or disaster. As a leader you:

- might consider your resources and capabilities. For example, do you have enough volunteers who could help?
- can decide who will be the planning coordinator and the make-up of your emergency team. The size and structure of the community will determine how many roles are needed and their responsibilities.
- might create key roles and functions and assign responsibilities to your volunteers and discuss the duties involved. These key roles could include welfare, logistics (supplies), communications, facilities, and someone who can coordinate volunteers and offers of help from others.

- should become familiar with local emergency organisation arrangements and assign one person to contact and liaise with those organisations.

### Communicating in emergencies

## How we communicate during emergencies is critical

Communication is the critical component of emergency. People within the community need to be alerted to an impending emergency or be contacted after an emergency incident has occurred.

First responder agencies such as Police, St John Ambulance, and Fire and Emergency New Zealand, and emergency management authorities such as AEM, uses several platforms for emergency alerts and public updates.

As religious leaders, you have a key responsibility to relate official information to your community. Your invaluable knowledge about how best to talk with your community includes:

- Supporting immediate responses to any official warnings prior to or during an emergency such as evacuation
- Conveying information for your community that is most relevant to their safety and welfare
- Deciding what information should be communicated in which ways – landlines, WhatsApp, social media, website, phone tree – and in what languages
- Working with regional and national teams in your organisation.



Goods donated by the community following the Auckland Anniversary floods, Ranui Baptist Church

### **Communicating is a two- way process**

There might be circumstances when an event is unexpected where there is no official pre warning, and the first information comes from members of the community.

- It is essential that you listen to those affected and use this information to effectively support your response and recovery efforts.
- If your community is affected it is critical that you share information with authorities to help improve their situational awareness about community needs.

### **Media contact and conveying information via social media or website**

- The media may also be interested in reporting how your community is managing during an emergency.
- Ideally your communications planning will include a media spokesperson for your community.
- If an emergency significantly impacts your community,

you might seek outside help in working with the media or partner with another organisation to manage media requests.

- Remember to regularly update your social media or website with brief factual messages about the situation.

Different ways to be informed during an emergency:

- Facebook @aklcdem
- Twitter @aucklandcdem
- AEM website [aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz](http://aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz)
- Radio
- Television
- Emergency Mobile Alert

Alerts usually contain an instruction such as ‘seek shelter’ or ‘follow MetService for updates’. No one channel suits every situation or every person, so official agencies often use several.

## Welfare

There will be many in your community who can draw on their own resources to cope with adversity. However, there will also be those who are especially vulnerable. These could be older people, those with disabilities and chronic health conditions, and those taking care of children. Accordingly, they may be at greater risk and in greater need.

Responding to those with specific needs should be part of your planning. The welfare support you plan to offer may include food, water, clothing, bedding, hygiene products. It might also include somewhere to stay for people who have been displaced.

How you respond will also depend on the levels of distress (anxiety, fear, concern) of community members. People turn to their religious leaders for spiritual and emotional comfort and care as well as physical support. This is critical, especially within religious communities where there may be cultural and language barriers in accessing mainstream health and other services.

Reported experiences by religious communities of emergencies highlight the positive impact of religious and spiritual understandings of the causes of an emergency or disaster. While the understanding of the causes of an emergency or disaster may differ across communities, the need for solace and comfort is found in all communities.

### Family responsibilities in emergencies

Many of you will have close or extended family, so you will want to discuss your role in an emergency and develop a household emergency plan with them.

Your family may need to be more independent and capable of coping without you being present. If you and your volunteers are worrying about what is going on at home, there is a risk you will be distracted from your community role in an emergency. This is a question to ask of yourself and team members when putting together your plan: Do you have family responsibilities that might make it difficult for you to take on this role in an emergency? Getting answers to questions like this will help your planning.



For information on putting together a **household plan**, refer to <https://www.aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz/home-ready>

### Self-care in an emergency

Self-care and support for those involved in an emergency response is an essential part of wellbeing. We all know how tiredness or fatigue can lead to bad decisions and poor judgement.

These are some of the reasons you need alternatives or back-ups – people who can step in and take over, during or after an emergency. This will help your team with self-care.

It is also critical to have health and safety briefing and debriefing processes in place

### Safeguarding your community and others

Your main priority will be the safety of your own community members. This could involve directing people who are displaced to the nearest Civil Defence Centre or offering your place of worship or religious centre as an overnight shelter. Once safety is secured it is important to identify the most appropriate and available social and health support services that your community can access or offer. For example, for urgent food needs you can look for providers at [familyservices.govt.nz/directory](https://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory).

### You might be in a position to help the wider community

It is important you and other community organisations are in contact before an emergency arises.

This is an opportunity to explore what resources can be offered, shared, and accessed in the event of a

community-wide disaster. You might want to consider joint plans to make these resources easily accessible.

You might also decide to send people and resources to other regions that are badly affected. This means you will need to co-ordinate with local, regional (including other CDEM groups who are like AEM) or national organisations.

Remember to consider pressures on local resources if you are deploying volunteers i.e accommodation for displaced peoples.



To recognise and respond to terrorist attacks or similar incidents go to [www.police.govt.nz/crowdedplaces](http://www.police.govt.nz/crowdedplaces)

### **Connecting with local emergency agencies**

The first responders in an emergency are highly trained Fire, Police and St John Ambulance staff. It is important to contact them first if there is risk to life or property. First responders and AEM have standard operating procedures and agreements on how they will work together during an emergency.

A core focus of an effective emergency response is to ensure coordinated welfare service arrangements are in place to meet the needs of affected individuals, families/whānau, and communities. AEM is responsible for the coordination of these arrangements in the Auckland region which includes: emergency accommodation, financial assistance, psychosocial support, animal welfare, household goods and services.

If you expect to be reimbursed for any support offered to community during a response, please discuss with AEM before an emergency event as reimbursement arrangements are managed by the National Emergency Management Agency.

*Religious leaders attending an Auckland Emergency Management forum following the Christchurch Mosque attacks*



# Religious Places in emergencies

Places of worship or religious centres are often the very heart of a community. They are one of the first places people might go for shelter, safety, or comfort during an emergency.

They also play an important role for information sharing and some offer cultural and language support.

This may make them ideal as a Community-Led Centre, especially if they have the space and facilities to deal with considerable numbers of people.

## What is a Community-Led Centre?

A Community-Led Centre is a shared space run by members of a community to offer support and assistance to people during an emergency. It enables a community to take charge and make their own decisions about helping each other during and after an emergency.

It does not fall under the direction of any official emergency agency but might operate alongside other community groups and agencies in support of local emergency response efforts.

AEM might open formal Civil Defence Centres (CDC) if they believe this is the best way to support an affected community. CDCs are well equipped and provide people with access to essential support services. If your place of worship or religious centre would like to offer support to a local CDC then you might want to establish a link with AEM first.

### Running a Community-Led Centre

Your place of worship or religious centre can play several different roles during an emergency, and it is important to consider these beforehand. They might provide some of the following:

- an operational base for your community's response
- a site for volunteers
- act as your communications and information centre
- be a secure place for displaced members of the community to gain rest, shelter, food, water, and other services.
- be a site to coordinate the distribution of donated goods.
- be a location for community meals if you have the capacity and cooking facilities.
- act as a central point for welfare packs.
- provide sanitary services.

While such services might be based around the immediate emergency response, they might be extended to accommodate longer service offerings, and even transition to support recovery.

If appropriate, you might operate your facility in the above capacity. Alternatively, you can continue to operate as a place of worship or religious centre, offering religious services, education, spiritual care and support, and special services, including funerals. This is part of the essential role you can play in your community's return to normal.

It is important you accurately assess your own resources to gauge your emergency capabilities. This must include the safety and recovery of your people.



\*If you have sufficient resources to support the wider community, you might consider setting your site up

as a **Community Emergency Hub**.

For information on this go to <https://www.aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz/community-emergency-hubs>



Community in Action at Mangere Hub: Delivering 2677 Halal Meals for Flood-Affected Families and Support Providers

## Future preparedness

Many religious communities believe that building resilience is a core activity.

This is about steps to develop a culture of disaster resilience by planning, training, and developing the resources and capacity to respond to emergencies or disasters.

Being prepared ensures your community is better placed for future emergencies or disasters. Preparedness includes creating and practicing emergency plans, taking steps to reduce risks (building modifications, insurance), and increasing response capacity (e.g. storing food and water supplies).

Increased awareness and knowledge of risks and hazards, and having secured the resources, planning, and training to promote your community's resilience will enhance your capacity to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters.

Relationships – past, repeated, and ongoing – with key emergency authorities and other religious and community groups are the basis for building community resilience. Religious communities that have established strong and robust relationships are more likely to function well during and after an emergency.

Relationships based on trust and shared understanding can be fostered by information sharing and both formal and informal interactions such as training, workshops, and joint planning and exercises.

Future preparedness allows communities to plan for emergencies or disasters and allocate resources for possible problems ahead of time.

Making your religious community more disaster resilient will help save lives and reduce the damage and disruption to your vital spiritual and physical communal services and maximise recovery for your whole community.



# Useful contacts

- **Ministry of Social Development**  
0800 559 009

- **NZ Police**

Dial 111 if:

- someone is badly injured or in danger
- there is serious risk to life and property or
- you've come across a major public disruption, like trees blocking a road

- **Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)**

Dial 111 immediately if there is a fire.

For information about fire safety checklist and evacuation visit [www.fireandemergency.nz](http://www.fireandemergency.nz)

- **Auckland Council**

For building control, animal control, council information and assistance including reporting flooding  
09 301 0101

- **Auckland Emergency Management**

For enquiries before, during and after an emergency email [aeminfo@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:aeminfo@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

For individual or household welfare concerns and assistance in an emergency 0800 222 200.

[www.aem.org.nz](http://www.aem.org.nz)

- **Waka Kotahi NZTA**

For road conditions and closures go to [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz)

- **Metservice**

For weather watches and warnings go to [www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz)

