



Media Release

Friday, 13 July, 2012

Heavy rain provides opportunity to shift Rakaia mouth

Severe rain warnings are prompting Selwyn District Council and Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) to prepare a new opening for the Rakaia River to help prevent flooding and damage to homes and infrastructure in the area.

The Metservice has cautioned that in the 24 hours from 9am Friday to 9am Saturday, 150 to 200mm of rain is expected near the Divide and 100 to 120mm of rain within 15km east of the Divide. Further heavy rain is possible later Saturday and early Sunday.

People are advised to take caution around the Rakaia River and Waimakariri Rivers as water levels are likely to rise quickly.

ECan staff are at the Rakaia River mouth today with earthmoving machinery carrying out preparation work.

"The expected high volumes of water in the Rakaia following the rainfall will assist in opening a new and safer ocean outflow for the river. The current opening has left Rakaia Huts residents vulnerable to flood and storm surges, as we saw recently," Selwyn District Council Corporate Services Manager Douglas Marshall says.

The emergency works are carried out under the Resource Management Act. At this stage there is no civil defence emergency but local authorities will continue to monitor the severity of the weather and its effects.

"Taking this action with the river mouth will hopefully prevent any substantial issues for Rakaia Huts residents, but we will of course be keeping in regular contact with people in the village to ensure their safety at all times."

Because flooding issues happen from time to time, ECan is working on resource consenting to allow for easier shifting of the river mouth when environmental conditions dictate it would be prudent to do so.

People should continue to monitor the weather situation on the Metservice website: <http://metservice.com>

“In terms of preparing yourself and your family for this sort of storm, make sure you’ve secured your home, pets and livestock, listen to the radio for updated information, inform neighbours if you need to leave, and contact the Selwyn District Council on 347 2800 to let us know if there are serious issues with flooding in your area,” Mr Marshall says.

Coincidentally, Selwyn District Community Response Teams are gathering this weekend for a Civil Defence training exercise.

Ends

For more information, please contact Selwyn District Council Civil Defence Controller, Douglas Marshall, 347 2701 or 027 458 4157.