



Media release

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Selwyn Communities ready to help each other

Communities around Selwyn are taking the initiative to prepare themselves for emergencies.

Neighbourhood Support Groups in Selwyn are rapidly growing with over 900 across the District, made up of more than 4,000 households.

Selwyn's Community Response Co-ordinator Sue Jenkins says being part of a group is all about strengthening communities and being prepared to look after yourselves and each other in an emergency.

"Belonging to a Neighbourhood Support Group is also a great way to get to know your neighbours and enhance the feeling of safety in your neighbourhood," says Mrs Jenkins.

Neighbourhood Support Groups can be found throughout New Zealand. In Selwyn, each group has Street or Road Co-ordinator's who are responsible for organising their group and reporting back to a locally based Community Response Team.

Lincoln Resident Paul Wright is part of the Lincoln Community Response Team. He says the team's role is to co-ordinate the local response in an emergency, and communicate key messages from the Selwyn District Council's Emergency Operations Centre to the community.

"To get our communities ready, each Community Response Team organises a letter and questionnaire to be delivered to every household where residents are invited to provide their contact details, and also any special skills, needs and resources they have which may be useful in an emergency," says Mr Wright.

"Once this information is gathered it is securely stored in the online Selwyn Gets Ready database where it can be easily updated. The database does other clever things like map where resources can be found, print neighbourhood contact lists so people can contact each other and send emails and text messages."

Together, Neighbourhood Support Groups and Community Response Teams help people in their area in times of need, such as prolonged power outages or civil defence emergencies including fire, flood, storm and earthquake.

"Communities are best placed to provide an immediate response to emergencies as they can assess and respond to local issues quickly and they know their community, including who may need assistance," says Mr Wright. "Once they have made this assessment they can then advise the Council if they need additional support or resources."

Mrs Jenkins says the system is very helpful to the Council as in times of emergencies, there are many additional demands on staff to ensure essential services like roads and water keep operating.

“During the wind storms last year the system proved successful with neighbours checking on each other and messages getting through, despite no power, telephones or cell phones at times,” she says.

To learn more about how you can join your local Neighbourhood Support Group, or Community Response Team, head to our website www.selwyn.getsready.net.

“It’s free and easy to be part of your local group. Not only do you get to meet new people, you learn about emergency preparedness and how to create safer neighbourhoods,” adds Mrs Jenkins.

Ends

Photos attached:

- (1) From left: Selwyn’s Community Response Co-ordinator Sue Jenkins, Graham Henshaw and Paul Wright of the Lincoln Community Response Team update the Selwyn Gets Ready database to add new households.*
- (2) From left: Graham Henshaw and Paul Wright of the Lincoln Community Response Team.*

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