

Auckland Council: Preparedness for responding to an emergency

Why we did this work

The Auckland region's large population, location, and geography means it is vulnerable to many natural and biological hazards. Auckland Council plays a critical role in emergency preparedness and management in the region.

Section 104 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 requires the Auditor-General to review Auckland Council's service performance. We agreed with the Council to review how prepared it was to support Auckland's response to, and recovery from, significant emergency events.

What we found

We started our review of the Council's emergency preparedness in 2019 and identified substantial concerns:

- The Council had made limited progress in implementing the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan (the Group Plan), which was published in 2016.
- The Council did not have a coherent programme of emergency management readiness exercises and testing in place.
- The Council's working relationships with other agencies involved in emergency management was variable.
- The framework for implementing the Group Plan was too ambitious and, therefore, unrealistic.
- The Council's systems for monitoring and reporting and measuring effectiveness did not support good governance of its emergency management activities.

We carried out further work in late 2022 and early 2023 to see what progress the Council had made since our initial work.

In our view, the Council is better positioned to carry out its emergency management functions in 2023 than it was in 2019. We saw evidence that the Council made changes in response to our draft findings and implemented lessons from recent emergency events.

However, there is still much for the Council to do, including:

- creating a clear strategy and plan for working with communities to build resilience;
- strengthening working relationships with Māori;
- putting in place a more systematic approach to testing its systems and processes; and
- completing the review and update of the Group Plan.

What next?

We made six recommendations to Auckland Council. We intend to follow up in 12 months on what progress the Council has made against these recommendations as well as the recommendations in the recent independent review into the January 2023 floods.

For more information, including our recommendations, please see our report at oag.parliament.nz.

