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LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRES, TRAINING AND DECISION MAKING

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF A MASTERS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

At Massey University
Wellington, New Zealand

By Helen Sinclair
February 2011
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Thank you to the 48 local government emergency management offices and organisations who took part in this research.
ABSTRACT

Local government organisations play a critical role in achieving community resilience to disasters. As part of their response capabilities most local governments operate an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). EOCs function as the command and communication headquarters for planning and decision-making during a disaster or an emergency. This thesis has two research objectives. The first is to conduct preliminary exploratory research about how local government EOCs are used during preparedness activities. The second is to contribute information and recommendations that could better equip emergency managers to prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters.

The broad concepts and common terminology of contemporary emergency management are introduced. Information about the jurisdictional terminology, frameworks, and the major emergency management organisations for New Zealand, Canada, and USA are discussed. Research was carried out using recent literature and the results of a questionnaire that 48 local government departments with EOCs participated in. This investigation was guided by seven research questions from three inter-related areas of investigation. They are EOC operation and activation, emergency management training, and emergency management decision making.

Literature shows there is a growing realisation that many disaster preparedness practices are based largely upon anecdote and are lacking systematic study or objective validation. Results and conclusions presented in this thesis reveal local government organisations need and desire more information and support in operating their EOC, and in emergency management training and decision making. What each individual organisation does by way of training and related assessment is unique to each organisation. Local government organisations are operating in blind faith that their preparedness activities are actually enhancing their response and recovery capabilities.

Recommendations for future research and of where emergency managers should direct their attention during preparedness concludes this study. The research community needs to focus attention on local government emergency management and the greater emergency management community needs to support and guide local government emergency management offices.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4Rs</td>
<td>Reduction, Readiness, Response, Recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>After Action Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCERMS</td>
<td>British Columbia Emergency Response Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>California State, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEG</td>
<td>Coordinating Executive Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIMS</td>
<td>Coordinated Incident Management Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colorado State, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security (DHS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECC</td>
<td>Emergency Co-ordination Centre same as EOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>Emergency Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMANZ</td>
<td>Emergency Management Academy of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO</td>
<td>Emergency Management Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMTC</td>
<td>Emergency Management Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Emergency Operations Centre (same as ECC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEMA</td>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency, USA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOC</td>
<td>Group Emergency Operations Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSEEP</td>
<td>Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Incident Command System (see also IMS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMS</td>
<td>Incident Management System (see also ICS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCDEM</td>
<td>Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDM</td>
<td>Naturalistic Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIMS</td>
<td>National Incident Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>National Response Framework (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>Provincial Emergency Program (for British Columbia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRFO</td>
<td>Principal Rural Fire Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPD</td>
<td>Recognition Primed Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Role-playing game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Washington State, USA</td>
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</table>