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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
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**By Helen Sinclair
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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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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4Rs	Reduction, Readiness, Response, Recovery
AAR	After Action Review
BC	British Columbia
BCERMS	British Columbia Emergency Response Management System
CA	California State, USA
CEG	Coordinating Executive Group
CIMS	Coordinated Incident Management Systems
CO	Colorado State, USA
DHS	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
ECC	Emergency Co-ordination Centre same as EOC
EM	Emergency Management
EMANZ	Emergency Management Academy of New Zealand
EMO	Emergency Management Office
EMTC	Emergency Management Training Centre
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre (same as ECC)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency, USA.
GEOC	Group Emergency Operations Centre
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program
ICS	Incident Command System (see also IMS)
IMS	Incident Management System (see also ICS)
MCDEM	Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management
NA	North America
NDM	Naturalistic Decision Making
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRF	National Response Framework (USA)
NZ	New Zealand
PEP	Provincial Emergency Program (for British Columbia)

PRFO	Principal Rural Fire Officers
RPD	Recognition Primed Decision Making
RPG	Role-playing game
WA	Washington State, USA