



Te Kāhui Tika Tangata
Human Rights Commission

Inclusion is preparedness

A call to action

**Partner with tangata whenua and
disabled people for an Emergency
Management system we can all rely on**

**No matter
who we are or
where we live,
when disasters
happen all of us
should know that
we have an
Emergency
Management
system that is
built to be
fair, just,
and reliable.**

That means:



A system that recognises the mana of iwi, hapū and whānau in their local areas and benefits from the knowledge and skills that disabled people gain over a lifetime.



A system that is strong and flexible because it takes into account the different barriers people face.



A system that works for everyone who lives in our communities – with clearer communication, more accessible planning and better outcomes for us all.

This resource is a guide for initiating conversations that build shared understanding about why including Māori and disabled people in emergency management planning is crucial. It sets out the key elements of an effective system.

You are invited to talk together and create change – nationally.



See tikatangata.org.nz/our-work/inclusive-emergency-management for a more detailed guide to the information in this document and other resources.

Why act now?

Aotearoa New Zealand is currently making changes to our Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) system. This is a critical opportunity to embed respect for human dignity, fairness, and justice for everyone into the heart of how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. We can learn from the expertise that is born of kaitiakitanga and the lived experience of being disabled to build a stronger system by insisting that tangata whenua and disabled people are always valued and active partners in planning and decision making.



Why is this important? In an emergency, experience matters and every life counts

Until now, our Emergency Management system has not specifically been required to take account of the diversity of experience and need that is present in communities. That omission means that people are left behind when it really counts.



The many barriers that disabled people face every day can quickly become life-threatening in emergencies.

Particularly when expert voices are excluded from key planning and operations decisions. We need to take account of the specific rights, needs and expertise of our communities when we act to prevent, plan for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Experience matters

Disabled people have skills built over a lifetime of navigating a world not built for us. Mana whenua and Māori organisations habitually take a leading role in disaster response. Many of us also bring professional expertise in emergency management. We are carers, leaders, and responders within our whānau and communities, but our expertise is often overlooked.

Excluding tangata whenua and disabled people from decision-making and planning removes vital expertise and weakens the reliability of our Emergency Management system.



People are missing out

During recent emergencies, severe weather events, and COVID-19, disabled people were worse off because of:



Inaccessible communication – preparatory instructions, alerts and updates were not available in ways that worked for people including in formats like NZSL, Easy Read, or audio.



Evacuation procedures that did not account for people's mobility, sensory, or cognitive needs.



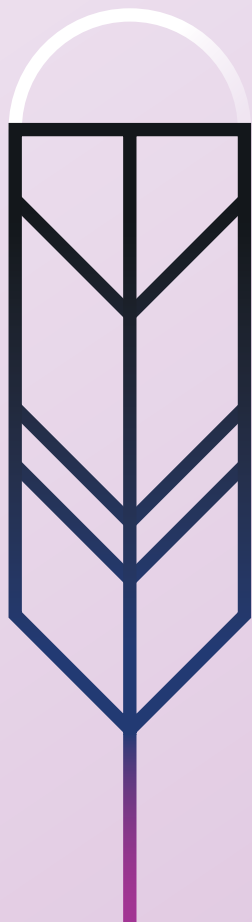
Civil defence centres that were physically inaccessible to disabled people or lacked appropriate support for community members' needs.



Material hardship – including loss of income, disrupted support services, increased costs without targeted assistance, and unaffordability of additional emergency supplies that came on top of existing hardship among disabled people.

A reliable Emergency Management system is grounded in our commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi affirms the rights of hapū and their whānau to:



Article 1

Partnership

Co-design and shared decision-making with the Crown

Article 2

Tino rangatiratanga

Self-determination

Article 3

Ōritetanga

Equitable outcomes and access to services

These rights apply equally to emergency planning and response as to other areas of life.

However, under our current system, tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled people) can feel excluded from both ‘mainstream’ and Māori-led responses due to inaccessible systems, lack of recognition or awareness of their skills and needs, stigma, or lack of resources. What is more, our CDEM system fails to learn from the rich experience that tangata whenua bring of their local communities and the whenua they care for.

We need to:

- ✓ **ensure tāngata whaikaha Māori are actively involved and able to lead CDEM planning and response**
- ✓ **include formal roles for iwi and hapū in emergency governance structures**
- ✓ **recognise kaupapa Māori approaches to resilience and care in the ways our systems are designed.**



Disabled people's right to participation and inclusion in our Emergency Management system is a human rights issue

New Zealand is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which requires:

Article 4.3

Active participation in decision-making

Article 9

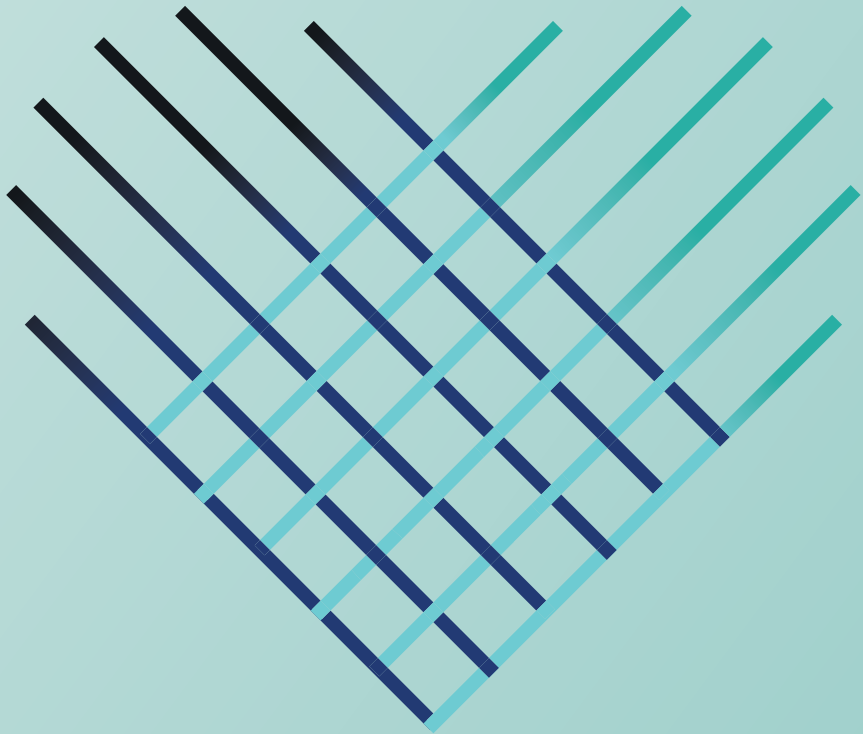
Accessibility of information, infrastructure, and services

Article 11

Protection and safety of disabled people in situations of risk

However, experience tells us that without explicit provisions in relevant CDEM legislation and planning and operations processes, disabled people remain invisible in the system and at greater risk during emergencies. To meet our obligations under the CRPD, regulations, guidelines, and common practices for the Emergency Management system must include explicit measures that recognise and help reduce the barriers to participation that disabled people face.

What can we do?



Follow best practice

Preparing for an Emergency [PDF 2.4MB], a New Zealand resource adapted from Australia's Disability Inclusive Emergency Management Toolkit, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction [PDF 1MB] offer models for embedding inclusion across all phases of emergency management, personal preparedness and system design.



Key principles include:

- ✓ **co-design with disabled people and their organisations**
- ✓ **person-centred, strengths-based planning**
- ✓ **strategic partnerships between emergency services and disability communities**
- ✓ **accessible communication and infrastructure**
- ✓ **targeted financial and social support during recovery.**

These principles are not just ethical – they are effective. Inclusive systems are more resilient, more trusted, and better able to respond to complex emergencies.



See references on [page 18](#). Find ‘Preparing for an Emergency’ at wremo.nz/alternative-formatsresources-for-disabled-people

**Take active steps to ensure a
reliable Civil Defence Emergency
Management system for us all**



To be fair, just and effective our Emergency Management system must:

- ✓ **partner with tangata whenua in the design and delivery of the Emergency Management system**
- ✓ **explicitly name disabled people as priority groups in legislation regulating emergency planning, response, and recovery**
- ✓ **mandate and resource co-design with disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations at all levels of emergency governance**
- ✓ **require accessibility standards for communications, infrastructure, evacuation procedures, and recovery centres**
- ✓ **fund and support disability-led preparedness initiatives, including marae-based and community-led responses**
- ✓ **ensure accountability through monitoring, reporting, enforcement and review mechanisms**
- ✓ **provide targeted financial support to address material hardship among disabled people before, during and after emergencies.**

**Inclusion is
preparedness.**

**When we plan
with tangata
whenua and
disabled people
– honouring
diversity,
experiences, and
needs – we build
systems that
work better
for everyone.**

Building a reliable Emergency Management system needs input from us all

With the knowledge that our systems are inclusive, we can feel secure. We know that if a disaster happens, we'll have planned for it together and can have confidence that we, and our neighbours and whānau, will have access to the kinds of resources we need.



A reliable Emergency Management system is grounded in the commitments to mutual care and respect made under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and mindful of the inherent dignity and rights each of us has as a human being, no matter who we are.

It is a system that supports us to work together toward the common good, because at every stage it is based on the diversity of people's real experiences and needs.

References

Disability Inclusive Emergency Management Toolkit (Australia): nema.gov.au/our-work/resilience/diem

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: undrr.org/media/16176/download [PDF 1MB]

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities

Further resources

Inclusive Emergency Management System Design

tikatangata.org.nz/our-work/inclusive-emergency-management

Person Centred Emergency Preparedness

Personal preparedness Emergency preparation and support: whaikaha.govt.nz/resources/support-and-services/emergency-preparation-and-support

Preparing for an emergency: wremo.nz/alternative-formatsresources-for-disabled-people

For local contacts

For information about local disabled people's organisations and accessible communication information contact Whaikaha: outreach@whaikaha.govt.nz

How to contact the Human Rights Commission if you have a complaint of unlawful discrimination.



Information about contacting the Human Rights Commission is available in NZSL, Easy Read, Braille, Large Print and Audio on our website: tikatangata.org.nz/resources-and-support/contact-us

Contact our Human Rights Information and Support line and leave a message for our case advisors. We offer a call-back service and will be in touch as soon as possible. We check voicemails regularly and prioritise urgent matters.

Phone 0800 496 877

Email info@hrc.co.nz

PO Box PO Box 6751, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142

Accessible ways to contact us



People with hearing or speech impairments can contact the Commission using the NZ Relay service: nzrelay.co.nz. We can access interpreters in over 180 languages.

Email info@hrc.co.nz

Text 021 0236 4253



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