



WEST COAST EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

GROUP

MEDIA RELEASE

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West Coast CDEM boosting emergency communications

West Coast Emergency Management are working with telecommunications specialists J-Tech to increase alternate communication capability on the West Coast to better assist with large-scale disasters.

All too often many parts of the West Coast experience communication black outs and with the threat of an alpine fault earthquake ever-present, an alternate communication option has been found with Starlink Satellite equipment.

West Coast Emergency Management Group Manager Claire Brown says in the event of a large-scale event such as the alpine fault earthquake many West Coast communities will be cut off from communications.

“We’ve been working closely with Jason Somerville from J-Tech in Christchurch to build resilience by way of satellite communications and created an ‘In Case’ solution which is a portable Starlink connection in a waterproof case.”

The kit is designed to use an alternative power source such as a 12 volt in a vehicle if mains power or a generator is not available. This new technology gives emergency management the ability to establish and maintain communication during disasters. The kit has been tested across the West Coast using a vehicle as the only power source.

Mr Somerville says if there’s a clear view of the sky and a power source the kit will work.

“It automatically establishes communication with a satellite link and starts projecting a wifi signal. It means you can support an Emergency Operation Centre in any disaster, at any location.”

Currently there are three of these kits on the West Coast in Buller, Grey and Westland districts. In a disaster such as an Alpine Fault earthquake, Emergency Management Officers can set up communications in Emergency Operations Centres and respond more quickly.

“We are grateful recipients of Resilience Funding through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and along with the expertise of J-Tech, this new satellite technology has exceeded our own expectations,” says Ms Brown.

West Coast Emergency Management is currently working alongside councils to seek further funding to increase this capability for West Coast communities.

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