



WEST COAST EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

GROUP

MEDIA RELEASE – 11 May 2022

Emergency communications funding approved for West Coast

West Coast emergency communications are set to significantly improve following government approval to fund \$190,000 of upgrades to the existing network last week.

The project, which extends from the 2021/22 West Coast Resilience Action Plan project that identified opportunities for improvements to alternate communications capability and resilience for the Coast, will ensure Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) personnel can continue to connect with partner agencies and communities as required in a major event.

The West Coast cell phone network is poor to non-existent in some parts of the region with the vast and challenging terrain potentially isolating communities for long periods of time in an emergency event. VHF networks and communications relying on fibre are vulnerable due to their location near or on high hazard risk areas such as the Alpine Fault.

In 2021, the West Coast had several events resulting in the loss of communication channels including the Westport floods in July and lightning damage to the fibre network near Kumara in September.

The project will include several new and improved network components including strengthening the radio network, undertaking radio provisioning and programming assessments, re-programming of radios across additional networks, enabling satellite communications with voice or voice/data capability and the design of an HF network to complement LandSAR HF Network capability to provide coverage across New Zealand, enabling LandSAR, CDEM and partner agencies to communicate on and off the West Coast.

West Coast Civil Defence Emergency Management Director Claire Brown says the funding will go a long way to assist building a contingency plan for alternate communications capability in the region.

“This project will enable us to build our regional resilience in emergency events and outages and continue to provide more resilient emergency resources for the West Coast. It also means we can ‘talk’ to our remote and vulnerable communities to provide support where required.”

ENDS –

Media contact

Claire Brown | West Coast Civil Defence Emergency Management Director | Phone: 027 836 3975