

Preparing for when the shaking stops

What do you need to do to survive an earthquake and its aftermath? **Paul Taylor** reports

If the big one hit Queenstown today, the majority of us would be horribly unprepared for the aftermath.

Central Otago's emergency management boss Trevor Andrews says most people and businesses haven't even made basic preparations for what to do when the shaking stops.

When the Alpine Fault eventually ruptures, it could move the ground by eight metres horizontally and four metres vertically.

That would see buildings fall, highways and bridges potentially become impassable, and Lake Wakatipu flood the town.

And those who emerge blinking from the rubble face a whole new set of problems — they could be effectively marooned on an island with 30,000 other people.

Andrews says: "Could you survive a week without help, without electricity?"

"Would you know where to find your family or flatmates?"

"I don't want to get into the area of scaremongering — we live in a beautiful, magnificent part of the country, of the world.

"But those same forces that created this landscape are the forces we may be dealing with.

"It's a matter of managing the risk. It's low probability but high consequence."

Andrews says being prepared can be as simple as one trip to the supermarket and a conversation around the dinner table.

"Hopefully everybody knows about drop, cover, hold — shelter under furniture or if you're outside drop to the ground or against a wall."

He says to stay away from windows as you can be hit by shards of glass.

"Then, if you remember nothing else, please have a pre-arranged meeting place with your family or flatmates.

"If you're at work, playing sport, up Ben Lomond, where are you going to meet?"

"Your home may not be there, or inaccessible due to damaged roads, or cordoned off for whatever reason."

Queenstown Events Centre is the main Civil Defence centre. It has a new 200-kilowatt, \$50,000 generator, capable of running the centre for 12 hours on one fill of diesel.

There are smaller centres in every suburb and the town centre.

Andrews says the mobile phone companies run backup generators but the network is often overloaded by people trying to make calls.

"The message there is to please text rather than call."

For the home, simple earthquake preparations include



Be prepared: Trevor Andrews with the new generator at Queenstown Events Centre — the resort's Civil Defence centre

having nine litres of water per person — enough for three days, tinned food for people, pets and babies, a torch, radio, first-aid kit and medicine, cash, toilet paper and large buckets for emergency toilets, hand cleaner, dust masks, work gloves, paper copies of important documents, walking shoes, warm clothes, raincoats and hats.

"I'm not going to say don't put a pack together — it's recommended practice.

"But be mindful of what you have in your house.

"Simply making sure your hot water cylinder is strapped is important — it can topple, spill water and create damage.

"But if they're strapped, there's quite a bit of water in there."

Andrews says to think laterally — there's a radio in the car, a torch on your mobile phone.

Queenstown is unique as it has a large number of tourists and foreign nationals, many from countries where natural disasters are uncommon.

Kaikoura, in contrast, had 2000 residents and about 1000 tourists when the 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit six weeks ago.

Life there is only about 80 per cent back to normal, while Christchurch is still rebuilding from the deadly 2011 quake.

Andrews says the situation would be 10-fold in Queenstown than it was in Kaikoura.



The 600km Alpine Fault ruptures on average once every 300 years — the last time was 1717 and there's a 30 per cent chance it will go in the next half-century, creating a 8-plus magnitude quake.

Andrews wants local businesses to up their game.

"It's about continuity planning.

"I would say the numbers prepared for that are minimal. The larger enterprises — Skyline, AJ Hackett, Queenstown Airport, have excellent business continuity plans in place."

But the smaller businesses are less prepared.

"They're busy making a living and we understand that. But this is useful not just for an earthquake, or an Alpine Fault event, but for any disruption to their business."

Checking insurance covers the risks faced, along with

Earthquake pack

- Nine litres of water per person
- Tinned food
- Food for babies and pets
- Camp stove
- Buckets and toilet paper
- Dust mask and gloves
- Radio
- Torches
- Spare batteries
- Cash
- Hand cleaner
- Paper copies of documents
- Walking shoes, warm clothes, raincoat and hat
- First-aid kit, prescription medicine
- Petrol — and keep your car tank at least half-full

communicating with staff about their personal preparedness, and also having first-aid kits, VHF and UHF radios, and other necessities in premises and vehicles is a good start.

"It is about getting safely through that initial period.

"Then it becomes a recovery issue, hand-in-hand with local government, central government and other organisations."

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Blocked: State Highway 1 north of Kaikoura after last month's 7.8 magnitude Kaikoura quake PICTURE: NZ HERALD