

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Ruapehu District Council**



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### **COUNCIL REVIEWS EARTHQUAKE PRONE BUILDING POLICY**

In response to the recent Christchurch and Japanese earthquakes Ruapehu District Council (RDC) has enacted a pressing re-examination of its current Policy on Earthquake Prone, Dangerous and Insanitary buildings along with a programme to ensure that local buildings are earthquake safe in-line with the current standards.

RDC Chief Executive, David Hammond, said that there was not a "sense of panic" about the need to review Ruapehu's Earthquake Prone, Dangerous and Insanitary Buildings Policy (the Policy), however, since the recent events RDC was feeling that a "strong sense of public responsibility" was required in respect to this issue and the measures needed to be undertaken with some urgency.

"Council recognises that identifying buildings earthquake risk and doing works to address any underlying issues needed to tread a careful balance between public health and safety and commercial affordability," he said.

"The Christchurch earthquakes have been a "game changer" New Zealand wide especially with respect to the need to have a better understanding of the potential risks, and the shortening of timeframes to have buildings inspected and brought up to required standards."

Mr Hammond said that as well as being difficult to understand, Ruapehu's current Policy allowed timeframes of up to 25 years for buildings to be brought up to 'earthquake resistant' standard.

"The massive devastation in Christchurch highlights that a timeframe of this duration may no longer be responsible, nor publically tolerable, and as such this Policy is currently under review," he said.

"At its meeting of 29 March, council identified a list of high priority building to address as a first phase."

"These buildings are; council, public, government, essential services, rest homes, and frequented places of worship and public assembly."

Mr Hammond stated that council is calling for structural assessments of these buildings, and timeframes for addressing major issues, with urgency.

"Some building owners have already had a qualified structural engineering report on their earthquake soundness undertaken on their building and council is heartened by this," he said.

"One of council's objectives is to understand how many buildings have already been checked by a qualified structural engineer."

"Council wants to develop a thorough understanding of the 'degree of risk' to the public from building collapse in the event of an earthquake event and what the potential impact on Ruapehu's economy is from bringing all buildings up to standard."

"This is not something council can allow to drag-on, but must be undertaken sensibly."

Mr Hammond added that a meeting of affected building owners in this top priority category will be called for before the end of April where more information about the inspection process will be given.

"All building owners are called on to voluntarily have structural assessments for earthquake risk done," he said.

"Tenants, building users and customers need to be asking building owners what is being done about the buildings that they frequent or work."

DAVID HAMMOND  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

DJH : PRW