Emergency Management Southland

Technical Review

Severe Wind Event October 2025



C3 Consulting

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Report guide: This report is structured to allow readers to move from the overall conclusions to the supporting evidence. The Executive Summary and Key Findings provide the main messages. The Issue Specific Responses section addresses the

questions in the review scope in more depth. The Verified Timeline records the key sequence of events and evidence status. The Conclusions and Recommendations set out the actions needed to strengthen future readiness, response coordination and governance clarity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank all participants who contributed to this review for making themselves available and engaging constructively. The review has identified relationship challenges, including differing priorities and pressures between partner organisations. However, throughout the interview process, I was impressed that, despite those issues, everyone I spoke with was united in wanting to see positive change for the benefit of the wider Southland community.

Executive Summary

Over the past decade, New Zealand has experienced multiple major events requiring emergency responses across local and regional communities. The October 2025 severe wind event, with reported gusts reaching 170–180 km/h in some locations, was one of the most damaging and disruptive weather events experienced in Southland.

Across many emergency responses in New Zealand, recurring system challenges have been identified in situational awareness, governance clarity, logistics coordination, workforce resilience, infrastructure dependencies, information management, and inter-agency integration. The Southland wind event reflected many of these same pressures and was further complicated by the timing of local body elections and relationship challenges between partner councils.

The response to the October wind event was shaped by the combined effects of information gaps, communications disruption, resource constraints, organisational cohesion and coordination complexity. Future resilience will require integrated systems, clearer decision-making, stronger resourcing, greater transparency and better organisational preparedness.

Generator needs were identified early, but allocation was constrained by incomplete outage information, limited supply, technical compatibility, transport, approval and tracking requirements. The formal process for requesting New Zealand Defence Force support was followed, and the two requested flights occurred. A later offer of an additional flight was declined after the Generator Team confirmed that available resources were sufficient. Governance information was not always timely or readily accessible, while the post-election transition created avoidable uncertainty. The evidence points particularly to fragmented information, unclear coordination pathways and limited workforce depth.

This review recognises the importance of understanding what occurred during the response. However, its greater purpose is to support learning, strengthen readiness, and promote practical change before the next major emergency. Southland's next significant event may be larger, faster moving, and more complex. If that event is an Alpine Fault rupture, the challenges experienced in October 2025 are likely to be significantly exceeded. The value of this review therefore lies not only in identifying lessons, but in turning those lessons into action so the next response is faster, more coordinated, and more effective for the communities that depend on it.

Event Background

During 23 October 2025, Southland experienced a severe wind event that caused widespread disruption across the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group area. Conditions deteriorated rapidly during the day as a significant weather system moved across the lower South Island. The extensive impacts to electricity distribution networks resulted in rapidly increasing difficulties for lifeline infrastructure, telecommunications, transport routes, public facilities, private businesses, and property.

The severity and extent of the impacts became evident during 23 October 2025, with recovery and restoration activities commencing immediately as emergency services, local authorities, lifeline utilities, contractors, and community organisations responded to the consequences of the event. Emergency Management Southland subsequently assessed that the impacts on critical infrastructure and essential services required coordinated regional-level management and the use of emergency management powers.

At 0900 hours on 24 October 2025, based on advice from the Region, the Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery declared a state of local emergency for the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group area under section 69 of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002. The declaration was made in response to the actual and anticipated consequences of the severe weather event and the resulting disruption to lifeline utilities and essential services.

Copies of the initial Declaration, Extension and Transition are not included with this report but are available for review if required.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this review was to provide factual clarity, support institutional learning, and contribute to restoring and maintaining confidence in Southland's emergency management arrangements. The review was to consider coordination between councils and the Emergency Coordination Centre, procedural improvements to strengthen future governance clarity, the role of councils' incident management

teams, and the process for liaison with NEMA and NZDF regarding potential airlift support.

The RFP explicitly stated that this review was not intended to:

- Re-run the full operational debrief of the October 2025 event.
- Evaluate individual conduct or performance.
- Duplicate agency-specific internal reviews.
- Examine unrelated aspects of the storm response.
- Re-open broader EMS structural or funding matters.

Throughout this review, I have been mindful not to cross these boundaries. I have however acknowledged previous work undertaken and highlighted the need to continue progressing agreed outcomes to support ongoing improvement.

Scope

The scope of the review was specifically limited to the following areas:

Generator Identification and Deployment

- When and how generator needs were identified.
- The criteria used for prioritisation of generator allocation.
- Coordination with MPI, lifelines utilities, Rural Advisory Groups and other stakeholders.
- The interaction between local resource availability and requests for external assistance.

NZDF Liaison and Airlift Protocols

- The formal authority and process for requesting NZDF assistance.
- Communications between EMS, NEMA, MPI and NZDF in relation to generator support and potential airlift.
- Verification of whether any flight was requested, scheduled, available, declined, or not required.
- Lessons regarding clarity of national–regional coordination pathways.

Information Management and Record-Keeping

- Event logging practices relevant to generator deployment and NZDF liaison.
- Completeness and accuracy of records relating to key operational decisions within scope.

Governance Information Flows and Transitional Arrangements

- Information flows to Chief Executives and elected members during the event.
- Operating arrangements during the post-election and pre-swearing-in period.

- Identification of whether clearer protocols are required for governance engagement during transitional periods.

Key Questions & Findings

The review requested answers to the following key questions.

1. Generator Identification and Deployment

What is the verified timeline of events relating to generator need, prioritisation and deployment?

The requirement for generators rapidly emerged as a significant operational challenge. For a significant period, reliable information about the extent of outages was unavailable, which made it difficult to identify where the greatest needs were. As the event progressed and more information became available, deciding how scarce resources should be allocated, matching generators to technical requirements, sourcing equipment, arranging transport, tracking deployment, and recovering equipment after use became a major focus. Financial approval pathways and ownership arrangements added further complexity.

A wider issue also emerged around the boundary between emergency support and normal business resilience. During a major disruption, there will be cases where providing emergency equipment to a business is justified because the loss of that service would create wider community consequences, such as risks to people's welfare, food supply, fuel access, animal welfare, health services, or critical infrastructure. However, emergency management arrangements should not become a substitute for reasonable business continuity planning. Clear criteria are needed to distinguish between support that protects the wider public interest and support that effectively compensates for a lack of preparedness by individual businesses.

This distinction matters because scarce emergency resources must be directed first to life safety, essential services, isolated communities, and critical community needs, while also encouraging businesses that provide important local services to invest in their own resilience before the next emergency.

It is acknowledged that where animal welfare is at risk, there may be a stronger case for the allocation of scarce emergency resources. Both the New Zealand Emergency Management framework and the MPI-led Animal Welfare Emergency Management (AWEM) plan recognise animal welfare as an essential component of emergency management, reflecting the importance of animals to New Zealand's social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing. Protecting animal welfare is not solely an animal issue; it also contributes directly to the safety, resilience, and recovery of people and communities. These principles are acknowledged and supported within the Southland Group Plan.

It is also worth noting that, as the challenges around generators increased, the ECC established a dedicated "Generator Team" to manage the process. By all accounts, this significantly improved the process.

The verified timeline of events is provided in Appendix A.

2. NZDF Liaison and Airlift Protocols

What formal processes govern requests for NZDF support, and were those processes followed?

Coordination with national agencies will remain an important part of future responses, and New Zealand has established protocols for how this occurs. In a declared local emergency, the authorised Controller is the primary local or regional authority for directing and coordinating the response, including decisions on operational priorities and resource allocation. The Controller's authority does not give direct control over other agencies' resources. Those resources must be requested through the appropriate channels. For New Zealand Defence Force assistance, this process is initiated by the Controller and escalated through the National Emergency Management Agency for national coordination with the New Zealand Defence Force.

Direct approaches to the New Zealand Defence Force outside established coordination channels should not be used as a substitute for the formal process. While informal contact may be well intentioned, it can create confusion about authority, priority, and accountability, unless it is expressly authorised by the Controller.

In this event, the approved process was followed. Feedback received during the review suggests there may have been additional informal discussions occurring alongside the formal process; however, this could not be substantiated.

3. Information Management and Communications

Did any misunderstandings arise from informal or parallel communication channels, and what do these indicate about coordination and decision-making pathways?

Information management was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Evidence indicated that some discussions and decisions occurred outside established communication and coordination channels, creating uncertainty and reducing visibility of key activities. Decision logs, attendance records, task assignments, and resource tracking all require consistent standards and processes to maintain an accurate common operating picture.

Activities conducted outside approved processes, and without the Controller's knowledge or approval, contributed to some challenges observed during this event.

Informal or parallel communication channels can create confusion, weaken situational awareness, and undermine coordinated decision-making.

To address this, established information management and coordination processes must be consistently applied, trusted, and supported by all stakeholders. Robust information management systems should be in place, used as the single source of truth, and provide real-time visibility to both operational and governance decisionmakers. This will strengthen coordination, improve accountability, and support a shared understanding of the response.

Accurate, timely and shared information is the strongest safeguard against misinformation, uncertainty and duplicated effort during a response.

4. Governance Information Flows

Were governance information flows appropriate, and were roles and expectations between governance and operational leadership sufficiently clear given the circumstances, including the transitional post-election period?

Governance arrangements require clarity regarding roles, declaration authority, elected member engagement and shared service accountability. Governance stakeholders benefit from timely, accurate and consistent information aligned with operational realities, but it is also critical that leaders across partner organisations remain visibly aligned and fully supportive of the agreed response arrangements.

In a partnership model, differences of view should be resolved through established governance and coordination pathways, rather than through competing messages or separate lines of direction. This alignment is essential so staff working under pressure have confidence that decisions are being supported by their organisations, that the response has a clear mandate, and that everyone is working toward the same outcome for affected communities.

In this event, information flows could have been improved, and there did not appear to be a consistently clear understanding of the respective roles of governance and operational leadership. When a state of emergency is declared, statutory responsibility for directing and coordinating the regional response rests with the Controller. Governance continues to provide important community leadership, oversight, local intelligence and advice; however, operational direction must remain coordinated through the Controller. Where views differ, the Controller retains final authority for response decisions within the powers and limits of the emergency management framework. This is particularly important when any partner council establishes a council specific leadership team under the title of an IMT.

Introduction of an effective information management system, consistently used by all key stakeholders, may have reduced or avoided several of the governance information-flow issues identified by interviewees.

5. Practical Improvements

What practical improvements can be implemented to strengthen clarity and coordination in future events?

The conclusions and recommendations section identifies practical improvements needed to strengthen clarity, coordination, information management, and governance access in future events.

6. Post-Election Transitional Confusion

Did the post-election and pre-swearing-in transitional period create any ambiguity in governance roles, authority, or access to information, and how was this managed?

There were clear difficulties in effective interaction between operations and governance during this event, largely due to the transition between the election and the formal swearing-in of elected officials.

This is detailed further in the issue-specific responses that follow. I note here, however, that the NZ Emergency Management Act 2026 is now in force and allows a mayor-elect to be sworn in temporarily through a written and oral declaration similar to that required under the Local Government Act 2002. This should reduce the risk of similar confusion if a future event occurs during a transition period.

7. Cross-Cutting Themes

The RFP stated that **"if in the course of the review, the reviewer identifies issues that suggest broader systemic, structural or governance matters beyond the defined scope, the reviewer may highlight these and provide advice on whether further review or work may be warranted."**

In that spirit, I note that common themes were raised across the review: lack of shared situational awareness; governance and accountability challenges; resource and logistics difficulties; workforce resilience and continuity; community intelligence and rural coordination; inter-agency coordination difficulties; critical infrastructure dependencies; financial governance; culture; and continuous improvement challenges.

These themes influenced multiple aspects of the response. If they are not addressed in a coordinated and sustained way, they are likely to continue limiting Southland's future emergency response capability, with consequences for partner agencies, responders, and affected communities.

These issues are already well understood by councils following the workshop held in February 2026. The actions developed from that workshop, if implemented alongside the recommendations made in the Toa Report, would go a long way toward lifting

Southland's future capability, regardless of the final structure of any potential local government amalgamation.

I do not believe a further review is warranted, as EMS now has an experienced and capable Group Manager in place. If he is clearly tasked and well supported, EMS will achieve the changes necessary.

Issue Specific Responses

The following section addresses the more specific questions with supporting data taken from the approved SitReps and information provided during the interview process.

Generator Identification and Deployment

- When and how generator needs were identified.
  The requirement for generators was identified almost immediately after the response was underway. SitRep 1, dated 23 October at 14:36 hours, recorded that the ECC was fully activated, that generators were required, and that SDC was identifying its most vulnerable locations and actively working to address them.
  Generators were being sourced from all available avenues, with local suppliers and FENZ assisting. SitRep 3, dated 24 October at 08:00 hours, also identified that a request for generators had been sent to NEMA and that sourcing fuel for generators was high on the priority list.
  As the response developed, a dedicated "Generator Team" was established to manage the ongoing process.

- The criteria used for prioritisation of generator allocation.
  This was compounded over time by difficulties obtaining clear outage information and reliable power restoration timeframes from PowerNet. These challenges were understandable in the early phase of the event, given the need to ensure staff safety, and were later affected by issues with PowerNet's own monitoring systems.

  Initial priorities identified in the SitReps and through interviews were life safety first, critical infrastructure, including health services, rest homes, communications and three waters, second, with support for animal welfare third.
  It is also noted that initially PowerNet advised that power could be off for "a very long time", and this influenced resource priority decisions across the region.
  During the interviews, the team identified challenges related to needs assessment, prioritisation, compatibility, sourcing, approval, transport, tracking, security, cost recovery, and recovery of equipment.

- Coordination with MPI, lifelines utilities, Rural Coordination Groups and other stakeholders.
  SitRep 2, dated 23 October at 18:15 hours, confirms that coordination had occurred with multiple partner agencies from a very early stage. SitReps 4 and 5 confirm that MPI, FENZ, NEMA, Police, St John and Fonterra were engaged, with some remote interaction with Federated Farmers through MPI. Efforts were also being made to create a Rural Sector Team to be accommodated in the EMS ECC.

  In events such as these, all agencies operate in an advisory capacity to the Controller and in my specific discussion with MPI, it was clear that this relationship was positive and constructive.

- The interaction between local resource availability and requests for external assistance.
  As noted above, local suppliers and partner agencies were engaged from an early stage to source and allocate available resources where they were most required. Local resource options were exhausted early, but resource sharing was being considered. SitRep 4 recorded that a generator from the Invercargill substation was being planned for relocation to Winton.

  SitRep 5 also recorded that the full extent of the power and telecommunications outages was not yet well understood, but efforts were being made to create GIS layered information to assist with generator prioritisation. MPI was engaged in supporting this process.
  NEMA was fully supporting the response by being forward-leaning in anticipation of further assistance requests and was actively sourcing generators, initially one 60 kVA generator from Cromwell and two 125 kVA generators from Christchurch.
  Additional generators were being sourced and transported by road.

  From interviews and the SitRep data, by Monday 27 October the Generator Team had sufficient resources available and was actively managing requirements.

NZDF Liaison and Airlift Protocols

- The formal authority and process for requesting NZDF assistance.
  The process for requesting assistance from the NZDF is laid out in the New Zealand National Emergency Management Plan.
  A request is raised by the Controller through established emergency management coordination arrangements to NEMA. In these situations, it is

normal for an initial discussion to occur between the Controller and the NEMA Regional Advisor, or directly with the National Coordination Centre (NCC) in Wellington if no advisor is on site, before a formal request is made.

NEMA forwards the request to NZDF, which then evaluates whether the requested resources are available and can be provided without compromising defence commitments. I note for clarity that NZDF remains under military command while operating in support of a civil response, and the allocation of resources and duration of assistance provided are at NZDF discretion.

- Communications between EMS, NEMA, MPI and NZDF in relation to generator support and potential airlift.
  Communications between EMS, NEMA, and MPI were occurring from the early stages of the response, as noted above. NEMA was assisting with sourcing generators, as recorded in SitRep 5 on 25 October, and arrangements had been progressed for further support to be provided.

- Verification of whether any flight was requested, scheduled, available, declined, or not required.
  There are varying recollections regarding the process and progression of support from NZDF via C-130 flights delivering assistance. Clarification was sought from NEMA, and it is confirmed that only two flights were formally requested and occurred.

  The first C-130 Hercules arrived in Invercargill on Saturday 25 October. This carried only Emergency Management Assistance Team personnel, who were provided to assist in the ECC. The second flight arrived on Sunday 26 October and brought the Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery, Mark Mitchell, and a consignment of generators to support telecommunications infrastructure. That consignment was organised and managed by the telecommunications sector as part of its response.

  On Monday 27 October, NEMA contacted the EMS Controller on duty and advised that it had received information indicating a further need for generators. NEMA offered to source and send an additional flight. The Controller consulted the Generator Team which advised that providing additional generators was not required because resources currently available were sufficient. Given that advice, combined with the expected 24-hour delay before any flight could occur, and the estimated cost to the Southland CDEM Group of between $100,000 and $300,000, the offer was declined.

- Lessons regarding clarity of national–regional coordination pathways.
  This issue is addressed more fully in the conclusions and recommendations. In summary, national–regional coordination pathways are clearly set out in planning and legislation, but they remain difficult to apply consistently under pressure unless roles, authority, escalation points, and communication expectations are well understood and embedded in process before an event occurs.

Information Management and Record-Keeping

- Event logging practices relevant to generator deployment and NZDF liaison.
  Prior to this event, there was no specific predefined plan for the large-scale management of generators within Southland's emergency management planning. This is not surprising, as the event was exceptional in Southland's experience.
  New Zealand CDEM Group Plans are required to address the resources and arrangements needed for emergency response, but they generally do not contain detailed large-scale generator deployment programmes. CDEM planning places significant emphasis on maintaining services at critical facilities, welfare centres, lifeline utilities, and emergency coordination centres, with backup power typically treated as part of critical infrastructure resilience rather than as a standalone regional generator management system.

  During the response, EMS appropriately established a dedicated team to manage the most pressing generator issues. The regular SitReps, together with the Operations Log and generator tracking spreadsheet, show that significant effort was made to make good decisions based on available information and maintain clear records.

- Completeness and accuracy of records relating to key operational decisions within scope.
  Between 23 October and 7 November, 19 SitReps were prepared and signed off. In addition, records on staff levels were provided for review. Having reviewed each SitRep, I am satisfied that they covered the key functions of the ECC and provided enough information for a reader to understand the activity, priorities, and challenges at the time of each reporting cycle.
  One area of concern is the apparent "sea of changing faces" and the gaps in ECC resourcing shown in the records. Of particular concern is that the staffing roster did not identify dedicated support for the Controller. This increased the risk that key decisions could be missed if they were not self-reported during the preparation of SitReps.

Governance Information Flows and Transitional Arrangements

- **Information flows to Chief Executives and elected members during the event.**
  Across all interviews with Governance personnel, there is a consistent theme: governance was not receiving the right information, at the right time, in the right format, to effectively fulfil its role. The concerns raised were less about isolated communication failures and more about systemic weaknesses in information flow, transparency, and governance integration.
  Examples of the concerns raised included:

  - Mayors being outside the core communication circle.
  - Governance needing to phone individuals to obtain updates.
  - Lack of direct access to SitReps, dashboards, or incident management products.
  - Local intelligence being gathered by elected members but not consistently incorporated into operational decision making.

  From the information I obtained through the interviews, the major issues arose from two areas.

  1. The post-election period before councils were sworn in created significant confusion about how a mayor-elect should be engaged in the response. While a newly elected candidate technically takes office the day after the official election results are publicly declared, under the Local Government Act 2002 they are legally barred from decision making until they take their oath of office. This caused regrettable confusion about their role in the response.

     During an emergency event, although a mayor-elect has no statutory powers or operational command role, they do play a critical public leadership and community advocacy role. This is well understood nationally and has now been given greater flexibility and clarity in the new NZ Emergency Management Act 2026.

  2. EMS does not currently have an appropriate system in place to record, incorporate, manage and share real-time activity with a wider group of approved people.

     A number of CDEM Groups already use systems such as D4H to support this need, and NEMA is currently investigating options for a national system to address these issues. Had a system been in place and in full operation, any approved person would have been able to access up-to-date information at any given time.

- Operating arrangements during the post-election/pre-swearing-in period.
- Identification of whether clearer protocols are required for governance engagement during transitional periods.
  These two points are addressed above in point 6 of the Key Findings, and in recommendation 5.

Conclusions

Although the October 2025 wind storm was extraordinary in Southland's recent experience, it was not the most challenging event the region may need to respond to in the future. The challenges faced by the Southland CDEM Group were significant, but they were also consistent with issues seen in many other major emergency responses.

Looking at responses to natural hazard events over the last fifty years, the following issues recur regularly:

1. Fragmented communication and coordination
2. Unclear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority
3. Insufficient local involvement in strategic decisions
4. Insufficient resources, capability, training, and surge capacity
5. Difficulties with inter-agency and inter-organisational relationships before and during the event

This event occurred at a time of organisational challenge, both within Emergency Management Southland and between Southland's partner councils. It also occurred during the local body election transition, which added further complexity to an already serious event for large parts of the region.

The Southland emergency management group is aware of these issues and held a governance workshop in February 2026 to consider many of the matters addressed in this report. This review considered the workshop record, the recommendations made by Toa Consulting in November 2024, and the information obtained through the current process. The recommendations below are intended to support and strengthen the improvement work already identified.

Recommendations

1. Review and resolve any outstanding recommendations made in the Toa Report and the outcomes of the Governance workshop before considering any further reforms.

2. Direct the Group Manager to prepare a prioritised recommendations plan and action programme based on the workshop outcomes and implement a structured improvement programme to address the issues identified. The programme should also address the respective roles, responsibilities and coordination arrangements for maintaining business-as-usual services while undertaking council-specific emergency management activities during a declared emergency.

3. Review, refine, and reinforce the shared service model for EMS and ensure all parties to the agreement are aligned and support the improvement programme.

4. Strengthen ECC workforce depth by increasing the number of staff who are trained, competent, and genuinely available for activation across all ECC functions.

5. Review and incorporate the changes made in the NZ Emergency Management Act 2026 and ensure EMS plans and policies align with and support the new legislation.

6. Obtain and implement an emergency management operational system that supports real-time information management, coordination, and record keeping, and provides access for all necessary and approved organisations and agencies.

Appendices

Appendix A – Verified Timeline of Events

This timeline is based on the records made available for this review, including situation reports, operational logs, and interview material. Where information could not be independently verified, this has been identified as a gap or point requiring further confirmation.

Prepared from SitReps 1–19 for after-action review purposes. Includes event chronology, phase classification and operational significance.

Date	Phase	Key Event	SitRep	Operational Significance
23 Oct	Initial Response	ECC activated for severe weather response	1	Formal commencement of regional coordination
23 Oct	Lifeline Stabilisation	Widespread power outages across Southland – need for generators immediately evident	1	Major disruption to essential services
23 Oct	Infrastructure Impact	Roads blocked by trees and powerlines	1	Restricted access and restoration activities
23 Oct	Communications Failure	Cell tower battery depletion risk identified	2	Threat to operational communications
23 Oct	Welfare	Te Anau isolated with power and communications disruption	2	Priority welfare area established
24 Oct	Response Escalation	State of Emergency declared	3	Emergency powers activated
24 Oct	Resource Coordination	Lack of power causing potential health risk concerns	3	Critical operational constraint
24 Oct	Welfare	Community hubs activated	3	Structured welfare support began
24 Oct	Communications Failure	86 cell towers offline	4	Major communications disruption
25 Oct	Restoration	Operational focus shifted to rural communities	5	Changed priority of response effort
25 Oct	Community Recovery	40 farms unable to milk	5	Economic and animal welfare impacts

25 Oct	Waste Management	Curio Bay wastewater spill	6	Environmental management issue
26 Oct	Restoration	Outages reduced to 8,000 households	7	Restoration progress evident
26 Oct	Recovery Transition	Recovery impacts formally identified	7	Recovery planning starts
27 Oct	Recovery Transition	Formal transition planning commenced	8	Governance focus shifts
28 Oct	Community Recovery	Psychosocial support planning initiated	9	Long-term wellbeing recognised
29 Oct	Restoration	Outages reduced to 3,400 properties	10	Steady network recovery
29 Oct	Recovery Transition	Risk register and transition planning underway	10	Structured recovery preparation
29 Oct	Community Recovery	180 farms remain without power	10	Ongoing rural impacts
30 Oct	Restoration	Outages reduced to 2,900 properties	11	Network recovery continues
30 Oct	Waste Management	Draft regional waste plan initiated	11	Debris management begins
30 Oct	Community Welfare	18 community hubs operational	11	Prolonged community support
30 Oct	Community Welfare	Psychosocial support function established	11	Recovery-focused welfare support
31 Oct	Transition to Recovery preparation underway	SOLE extended seven days	12	Transition to recovery planning
31 Oct	Environmental Management	Flood protection inspections completed	12	Limited flood asset damage found
31 Oct	Community Recovery	Community BBQ programme expanded	12	Community connection and wellbeing
1 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 1,820 properties	13	Late-stage restoration
1 Nov	Community Recovery	Mayoral Relief Fund opened	13	Financial recovery support begins
1 Nov	Waste Management	Green waste and metal amnesty planning	13	Recovery clean-up scaling up

2 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 1,290 properties	14	Nearing completion
2 Nov	Recovery Transition	Draft Transition to Recovery Plan established	14	Formal transition framework
2 Nov	Community Recovery	46 MRF applications received	14	Recovery demand measurable
3 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 300 properties	15	Final restoration phase
3 Nov	Waste Management	Waste identified as emerging issue	15	Potential long-term clean-up challenge
3 Nov	Community Recovery	15,000 trees require assessment	15	Major recovery workload
3 Nov	Recovery Transition	Recovery planning team established	15	Recovery structure formalised
4 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 260 properties	16	Continued progress
4 Nov	Waste Management	Council waste amnesties implemented	16	Support for debris disposal
4 Nov	Community Recovery	Economic impacts recognised	16	Broader recovery implications
5 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 115 properties	17	Almost complete restoration
5 Nov	Resource Coordination	All emergency generators returned	17	Emergency logistics winding down
5 Nov	Community Recovery	11,000 trees still require management	17	Ongoing public safety risk
5 Nov	Community Recovery	MRF applications reached 54	17	Growing recovery assistance needs
6 Nov	Restoration	Outages reduced to 48 properties	18	Service restoration nearly complete
6 Nov	Recovery Transition	Rex Capil appointed Recovery Manager	18	Recovery leadership established
6 Nov	Recovery Transition	ECC stand-down planned	18	Response phase ending
7 Nov	Recovery Transition	SOE expired and Transition Notice enacted	19	Formal move to recovery
7 Nov	Restoration	Only 22 connections without power	19	Utility restoration essentially complete

7 Nov	Community Recovery	Great Walks reopening delayed	19	Tourism recovery implications
7 Nov	Community Recovery	57 MRF applications received	19	Continuing recovery support demand
7 Nov	Recovery Transition	ECC moved to skeleton staffing	19	Recovery management assumes lead role

Appendix B – Interviews Conducted

Emergency Management Southland

Combined EMS Team

Environment Southland

Lucy Hicks – EMS Controller
Marcus Roy – EMS Controller
Phil Morrison – Joint Committee Chair

Invercargill City Council

Tom Campbell – Mayor ICC
Michael Day – ICC Chief Executive & CEG Chair
Johnathan Shaw – Controller & Operational Sub-Committee Member

Gore District Council

Jason Domigan – Controller & Operational Sub-Committee Member

Southland District Council

Rob Scott – Mayor SDC
Cameron McIntosh – SDC Chief Executive
Vibhuti Chopra – EMS Controller

National Emergency Management Agency

Katy McRae – Senior Regional Emergency Management Advisor

Fonterra

Rob Stevens
Mat Cullen

Ministry of Primary Industries

Heather Newbury

Appendix C – Documents Reviewed

- State of Emergency & Transition Declarations
- SitReps 23 October – 7 November
- Operational records – Generator Management
- Resource Collations
- Status Reports
- Handover Notes
- Operational Logs – Staffing and Generator Tracking
- Debriefs Undertaken
- Southland Joint Civil Defence Agreement
- Southland Group CDEM Plan
- National Emergency Management Plan
- National Animal Welfare Emergency Management Strategic Plan 2020–2030
- Event Review Comparisons
- EMS Governance Workshop – February 2026
- Toa Consulting Review – November 2024

Appendix D – Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used in this report.

Acronym / abbreviation	Meaning
BAU	Business as Usual
CDEM	Civil Defence Emergency Management
CE	Chief Executive
D4H	Emergency management information system
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre
EMAT	Emergency Management Assistance Team
EMS	Emergency Management Southland
FENZ	Fire and Emergency New Zealand
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICC	Invercargill City Council
kVA	Kilovolt-ampere
MRF	Mayoral Relief Fund
MPI	Ministry for Primary Industries
NCC	National Coordination Centre
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
RFP	Request for Proposal
SDC	Southland District Council
SitRep	Situation Report
SOLE	State of Local Emergency

Appendix E – Draft Terms of Reference

Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group
Draft Terms of Reference - Focused Technical Review
October 2025 Severe Wind Event – Generator Deployment, NZDF Liaison and Governance Information Flows

1. Background

The severe wind event of 23–24 October 2025 required a coordinated multi-agency response across Southland. A number of operational and coordination learnings have already been identified through agency debriefs and the EMS Governance Workshop of 19 February 2026.

Subsequent public commentary has raised questions regarding generator deployment and liaison with national agencies, including the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).

In the interests of factual clarity, institutional learning, and continued public confidence in Southland's emergency management arrangements, the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group proposes to commission a focused, time-bound technical review.

This review is intended to clarify processes and strengthen system resilience. It is not a performance or personnel review.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this review is to provide factual clarity, support institutional learning, and contribute to restoring and maintaining confidence in Southland's emergency management arrangements.

1. Clarification of relationships/coordination between individual councils and the Emergency Control Centre in an emergency situation.
    - Identify any procedural improvements that would strengthen future coordination and governance clarity.

    Controllers
    Mayors
    Chief Executives

- Noting the implications that occurred around the election and swearing in of the Mayors – review whether there are any practicable options available to Councils.
- Verify the role of Councils' Incident Management Teams and how they work in with the Emergency Control Centre.

1. Clarification on process with regards to:
   - governing liaison with NEMA and NZDF regarding potential airlift support;
   - verify and document the factual timeline relating to generator identification, prioritisation and deployment during the October 2025 event.

3. Scope

The review will examine the period: 23 October 2025 to 31 October 2025

The scope is deliberately limited to the following areas:

A. Generator Identification and Deployment

i When and how generator needs were identified.

ii The criteria used for prioritisation of generator allocation.

iii Coordination with MPI, lifelines utilities, Rural Advisory Groups and other stakeholders.

iv The interaction between local resource availability and requests for external assistance.

B. NZDF Liaison and Airlift Protocols

i The formal authority and process for requesting NZDF assistance.

ii Communications between EMS, NEMA, MPI and NZDF in relation to generator support and potential airlift.

iii Verification of whether any flight was requested, scheduled, available, declined, or not required.

iv Lessons regarding clarity of national–regional coordination pathways.

C. Information Management and Record-Keeping

i Event logging practices relevant to generator deployment and NZDF liaison.

ii Completeness and accuracy of records relating to key operational decisions within scope.

D. Governance Information Flows and Transitional Arrangements

i Information flows to Chief Executives and elected members during the event.

ii Operating arrangements during the post-election / pre-swearing-in period.

iii Identification of whether clearer protocols are required for governance engagement during transitional periods.

If, in the course of the review, the reviewer identifies issues that suggest broader systemic, structural or governance matters beyond the defined scope, the reviewer may highlight these and provide advice on whether further review or work may be warranted.

4. Out of Scope

This review will not:

- Re-run the full operational debrief of the October 2025 event.
- Evaluate individual conduct or performance.
- Duplicate agency-specific internal reviews.
- Examine unrelated aspects of the storm response.
- Re-open broader EMS structural or funding matters.

Those matters are being addressed through existing workstreams and the ongoing EMS system optimisation discussions.

5. Key Questions

The review will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the verified timeline of events relating to generator need, prioritisation and deployment?
2. What formal processes govern requests for NZDF support, and were those processes followed?
3. Did any misunderstandings arise from informal or parallel communication channels, and what do these indicate about coordination and decision-making pathways?
4. Were governance information flows appropriate, and were roles and expectations between governance and operational leadership sufficiently clear given the circumstances, including the transitional post-election period?
5. What practical improvements can be implemented to strengthen clarity and coordination in future events?
6. Did the post-election and pre-swearing-in transitional period create any ambiguity in governance roles, authority, or access to information, and how was this managed?

6. Methodology

The reviewer will:

- Review relevant logs, situation reports, briefings, and correspondence.
- Conduct targeted interviews with key participants where necessary.
- Cross-reference relevant national agency information as required.
- Produce a factual, evidence-based account supported by a verified timeline.

The methodology will be proportionate to the limited scope of the review.

NB: This review will be undertaken alongside existing EMS improvement workstreams and previous review findings. It is not intended to duplicate those processes, but to complement them by providing a focused, evidence-based account of the October 2025 event.

7. Deliverables

The reviewer will provide:

- A concise written report (target maximum 20 pages).
- A verified timeline of key decisions and communications.
- Findings in relation to generator deployment and NZDF liaison.
- Practical, implementable recommendations.
- An executive summary suitable for public release.
- An indication of whether the findings suggest that further targeted or system-level review may be warranted.

8. Timeframe

The review will be completed within four to six weeks of commissioning.

9. Governance and Reporting

The review will be commissioned by the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group and conducted by an independent reviewer.

The final report will be presented to:

- The Southland CDEM Group
- The Chief Executives Group (CEG)

The CDEM Group will determine any public release of the executive summary.

10. Review Principles

The review will be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- Factual accuracy
- Systems improvement
- Institutional learning
- Proportionality
- Respect for operational professionalism

C3 Consulting

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