



## Memo

**To:** Ron Devlin, Te Hiku Region Manager

**Cc:** Mal Tipton, Te Hiku Property Manager  
Wipari Henwood, Area Manager Muri Whenua  
Deane Ingram, Te Hiku Planning and Performance Manager

**From:** Myles Taylor, Principal Rural Fire Officer

**Date:** 15 July 2020

**Action:** Request for new Fire Station build for the Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade.

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### Reference:

- A. Report on Fire and Emergency New Zealand Operational Impact at Matauri Bay (Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade) dated 17 June 2020.

### Aim:

The purpose of this memo is to detail the current situation of the Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade and seeks support for a new fire station to be built on land leased by Fire and Emergency NZ (FENZ) in the Matauri Bay community.

### Background:

Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade was created in 1998 under the Far North District Council (FNDC) who were then acting as the Rural Fire Authority for the Far North. The brigade adopted the name Cavalli Volunteer Rural Fire Force (VRFF) as this described the greater geographical area they respond to, however the brigade is actually located in the Matauri Bay Community.

The brigade was started due to the community identifying the need for a fire response capability after a caravan caught fire in Matauri Bay resulting in the loss of several children. At the time the preferred mechanism to create an emergency response presence in a rural setting was to establish a VRFF under the umbrella of the FNDC. Through local fundraising and with support of the FNDC an appliance and PPE was secured and training under the old Rural Fire Unit Standards was undertaken.

For the first 20 years of their existence the brigade occupied an old hay shed that was "loaned" to the brigade as a temporary shelter until a permanent home could be found. Unfortunately, this temporary solution lasted for two decades as no new site was identified due to the lack of suitable infrastructure within the Matauri Bay community.

In 2017 after the creation of FENZ, an area of land across the road from the old station was secured through a 30-year lease and designs for a new fire station were drawn up, then Building and Resource Consents obtained under the direction of the then Region Manager Rural.

The old hay shed that was previously used as a fire station was no longer available, so the brigade became homeless whilst they waited for the new station to be built or an alternative solution found.

To accommodate the brigade whilst the proposal for the new building was processed, the FENZ property team located two shipping containers and some water tanks onto the new site for the

brigade to use as a temporary home. The fire truck was relocated to another farm shed approximately 2km down the road.

During successive station visits by both Northern Rural Fire Authority and subsequently FENZ senior management the brigade was told that a new station would be built on the site that had been secured and as a result an expectation has been created within the community. To further emphasize that a station would be built a sign was erected by FENZ on the site showing a plan of the new station and stating it would be built soon.

At Ref A, an Operational Impact Report for Matauri Bay has been provided by the Planning and Performance Manager (Te Hiku). Key elements of this report are highlighted below to illustrate why a new station for Cavalli VFB is critical. A copy of the report is appended to this memo.

### **Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade**

The current personnel count of the Cavalli VFB is 13 members. Over the last several years it has become increasingly difficult to attract new members and the brigade now relies on a core of dedicated people. The lack of a dedicated fire station or any basic facilities has a significant negative impact on the ability to recruit and retain volunteers from the local community. Conclusions on the viability and sustainability of this brigade cannot be made based on current membership as the lack of facilities has and continues to be a major deterrent to attract and retain more people.

The local community is extremely supportive of the VFB but they have a low opinion of the infrastructure provided which does cause a reputational issue for the organisation.

The current situation of using shipping containers for training and housing PPE with the fire appliance stored 2km down the road is completely inadequate and not in keeping with FENZ minimum Health and Safety standards with regards to providing a safe working environment. The lack of basic hygiene and decontamination facilities means FENZ is falling well below its duty of care requirements for a volunteer station and is a source of frustration to the team. Under the current situation volunteers are returning from medical and fire calls with no ability to conduct decontamination. As a result, private vehicles and washing facilities in homes are being exposed to potential carcinogens and/or blood products thus forcing volunteers to potentially contaminate surfaces that their families come into contact with.

The current lack of a station does not meet operational training/response needs nor allow the brigade to function effectively as a FENZ VFB. This is an isolated community that is easily cut off from other communities when a major emergency occurs and therefore a dedicated fire station is considered a key piece of local resilience infrastructure.



*Cavalli VFB: Current fire station comprising two shipping containers on a leased site.*

## **Operational Capability Requirement:**

Geographic analysis in the Operational Impact Report shows Cavalli First Response Area (FRA) has on average 18.7 incidents per annum with the majority being Medical Events (4.3) at 23.2% of all incidents, followed by Other Fires (4.0) at 21.4%, Vegetation Fires (3.0) at 16.1% and Motor Vehicle Accidents (2.7) at 14.3%. In terms of FENZ providing the most efficient operational response capability to the community, Cavalli VFB became a MED Co-Responder in April 2020; thus, moving forward the VFB call rate is expected to increase as neighbouring VFBs are no longer required to respond to those Medical events. Furthermore, Cavalli will be first responder to all fires and Motor Vehicle Accidents.

In terms of value that Cavalli VFB provide a specialist wildfire response to the wider station cluster residing between two urban stations with Kerikeri to the south and Kaeo to the west; they were alerted to 30 calls in the 2019/20 financial year of which they responded to 27. Furthermore, Cavalli VFB provides a key FENZ response capability/presence on a semi-isolated coast that attracts holiday makers and tourists in addition to the local residents. The area they cover is characterized as scrubland, farmland, and forestry. Fuel loadings are extremely high and the need for a team that have strong wildfire suppression capability is essential. This capability compliments the skills of both neighbouring brigades and fully aligns with the organisation's proposed modular service delivery concept.

The Operational Impact Report details that the majority of calls within the Cavalli FRA are medical and vegetation type events. Of significance the report details the Cavalli VFB response times to these events as being only marginally better than that of the Kaeo Brigade; this key fact highlights that not having a dedicated fire station creates increased risk to the Matauri Bay community due to the practicable inability for Cavalli VFB to respond in a timely manner despite best endeavors.

Unfortunately, the current set up requires a member of the brigade to travel 2km down the road from where the rest of the crew are getting ready in order to retrieve the fire appliance out of a secure shed, lock the shed back up then travel 2km back to pick up the crew then attend the incident. Any response is delayed by at least 10mins due to this function alone. The report also highlights that in terms of drive time (all things being equal in terms of having a dedicated fire station) then Cavalli VFB would be the first arriving appliance to incidents across its FRA.

The lack of a dedicated Cavalli Fire Station is also negatively impacting upon the neighbouring station cluster and volunteerism within those VFBs as any unnecessary responses by Kaeo or Kerikeri volunteers creates additional work for them.

In real terms, the lack of a dedicated fire station delays responses to such an extent that it results in Cavalli VFB having K2 arrival times that match neighbouring VFB responses; so the fundamental choice that is derived for FENZ is "a dedicated fire station is required for Cavalli VFB to exist and provide a timely response to the community; otherwise there is no reason for the VFB to exist at all".

## **Request:**

In order for FENZ to have an effective operational capability presence within the Matauri Bay community, a new dedicated fire station is required at 1405 Matauri Bay Road to host Cavalli VFB. At present, the current infrastructure is not fit for purpose, does not meet its operational requirements exposing the community to increased risk and negatively impacts the health safety and wellbeing of our volunteers.

The approved plans for the proposed fire station build are a single level structure that once completed will meet IL4 seismic requirements and all current design guidelines wherever practicable.

The project is currently shovel ready with community and iwi support, building consent and resource consent in place and funding identified. Once approved all that is required is for a contractor to be appointed and for construction to begin.

The memo requests Region Manager support to:

- NOTE the fire and emergency risks within the Matauri Bay community;
- NOTE the operational risks that Cavalli VFB currently experience in providing a FENZ capability presence within Matauri Bay;
- NOTE the proposed Cavalli Fire Station is "shovel ready" and only requires senior FENZ leadership approval;
- ENDORSE building a new dedicated fire station at 1405 Matauri Bay Road to host Cavalli VFB; and
- REPRESENT the proposal to build a dedicated Cavalli Fire Station within FY20/21 to FENZ senior leadership for approval.

Myles Taylor  
Principal Rural Fire Officer  
Northern Whangarei Kaipara Rural Fire District

Enclosure:

1. Report on Fire and Emergency New Zealand Operational Impact at Matauri Bay (Cavalli Volunteer Fire Brigade) dated 17 June 2020.