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Fire and Emergency New Zealand
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31 May 2023

R

By email: fyi-request-22680-dafc85b2@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe R,

Information Request – Auckland Communication Outage

I refer to your official information request dated 4 May 2023 asking for the following information;

“Additional information about the UHF voting network going offline in Auckland, steps taken to address the issue and any updates on the status of the buzzing tone.”

On 4 May 2023, you responded to our email clarifying what information you required;

“My understanding is that the UHF voting network went offline, and the Appliances were attempting to communicate via simplex to the communications center in Auckland using LMR Radios. However, despite sending tones, they did not receive any reply.

Furthermore, throughout the day, there were voices heard on the radio network inquiring about the situation, which were not those belonging to FENZ, this assumption of not FENZ staff is the questions were not following FENZ LMR protocol and sounded like what you would hear on UHF CB channels.

It seems that FENZ then switched back to VHF 75mhz and subsequently linked this to their UHF repeaters. However, since then, there has been a persistent and loud buzzing tone on all FENZ transmissions and communications Auckland have been having issues hearing transmissions due to "interference" I am currently hearing it as Communications Auckland dispatches job F3732326.”

I am writing to request any additional information you can provide on this incident, including the cause of the network outage, steps taken to address the issue, and any updates on the status of the buzzing tone.”

In accordance with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), please find below a response to your request.

Vital (a communication network) notified the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Communication Centre (Comcen) at 0754 on 3 May 2023, that there had been a power fault at their site and that a technician was being dispatched to investigate. By 0959 the technician was on site and the temporary power was restored shortly after. At 1444 Vital advised that the site was now back on Mains Power. Comcen advised the appliances that could operate on the UHF3 channel to do so during the outage. In situations such as this, crew can still be turned out by pagers and contact can still be made to and from the crews by cell phone.

The Auckland UHF radio network is currently undergoing a major upgrade. In the week of 1 May to 5 May 2023, there was a major cut on the main sky tower repeater of two key channels to the new equipment. The Auckland Comcen were advised this was occurring and of possible disruptions during this cutover. Nothing prevented the crews from responding to calls. It is likely the technicians working on the radio channel were carrying out voice testing as part of this work. The work underway to upgrade the network will mitigate issues such as the one mentioned above.

There have not been any reports from Comcen or the users of a buzzing noise on the channel. The transmitters and radios have a tone filter on them to prevent interference from adjacent channels.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa nā



Ethan Fett
Acting Manager, Information Requests

