



EMERGENCY AND CIVIL DEFENCE SERVICES

United**Future's** Emergency Services Policy unifies the emergency services on a policy and funding level, yet enables them to keep their distinct individual roles. Services will better be able to work jointly or individually, as required, in times of local emergency. They will also co-ordinate effectively during a major national emergency. United**Future's** policy will give emergency services the distinct attention in government they deserve, by removing the control of emergency services from the Department of Internal Affairs.

It is United**Future** policy to:

- Establish a Minister of Fire and Emergency Services to remove the present ambiguous relationship between Fire and Rescue Services and the Department of Internal Affairs
- Abolish the Fire Service Commission and the present Ministry of Civil Defence and replace them with a Fire and Emergency Services Authority. FESA will be directly responsible to the Minister of Fire and Emergency Services and completely separated from the control of the Department of Internal Affairs.
- Ensure that the new Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA):
 1. Assumes responsibility for funding, auditing, and purchase and contract agreements.
 2. Develops policy and establishes and monitors national operational standards to ensure the better co-ordination of emergency services.
 3. Funds the establishment of three common communication centres nationwide to handle all emergency calls.
 4. Integrates and co-ordinates under a single authority the different emergency services, including the armed services, on both national and local levels to deal with civil emergencies.
- Re-establish the Fire Service as a fully integrated Fire and Rescue Service composed of permanent and volunteer personnel. This new service will be funded through an equitable regime based on life and property risk values consistent over all sectors to replace the EQC levy - as recommended by the Fire Service Commission and the Insurance Council in 1996. This funding system would seek to better equip emergency services while also coordinating effective use of resources such as buildings, equipment and expertise.
- Introduce more flexibility for EQC claims procedures.
- Introduce legislation that recognises looting as a specific crime, including a harsh penalty regime.
- Ensure that public donations to national disaster relief are matched dollar for dollar by the government.
- Promote co-operation between community groups, such as Neighbourhood Support and Community Patrol groups, and police and local councils. Encourage these groups to share information, develop community safety initiatives in line with Police Crime Reduction Strategies, and to also function as Emergency Readiness teams, providing a street level infrastructure for civil defence assistance.
- Increase staffing levels at Police Communications Centres to ensure that 111 calls are responded to promptly and effectively, and consider returning them to control at the regional level to utilise local knowledge.
- Establish a dedicated non-emergency phone line to deal with petty crime, operated at the local level.
- Ensure that ambulance and air rescue services are maintained at a level that does not compromise public safety