

Media release – Monday 25 February

Emergency management moves to the Coast

Managers at Tai Poutini Polytechnic are impressed at the high calibre of local search and rescue experts they have found after relocating the Emergency Management department to Greymouth.

Formerly based in Palmerston North the Emergency Management department began operating from Greymouth with five staff in February. Head of Department Dave Ritchie says while one staff member has come from Hamilton the rest were recruited on the West Coast.

“It was amazing what kind of emergency management skills we were able to find on the West Coast. Between Westport and Hokitika we located some highly experienced search and rescue managers, including nationally recognised whitewater and technical rope rescue experts. Staff have experience in disasters including the Christchurch earthquakes, San Francisco earthquake, Australia’s Black Sunday bushfires and the Pike River Mine Disaster,” he says.

TPP is the Government’s preferred training provider for Search and Rescue and Emergency Management training and delivers its programmes throughout New Zealand. The polytechnic expects to train around 900 students annually, most of those taking part in short award training, although TPP also offers a level 6 Diploma in Applied Emergency Management.

TPP’s Emergency Management Team Leader Keith Morfett says as well as continuing to deliver its core training the new team is currently re-vamping its programmes to reflect lessons learnt from recent events like the Japanese tsunami and Canterbury earthquakes.

“Post the Christchurch earthquake there is a lot of opportunity to improve on how we cope with a disaster. Inquiries found Christchurch did not have a co-ordinated multi-agency approach so we are putting an emphasis on quality multi-agency training,” he says.

TPP is also keen to see much more flexibility in how it delivers its programmes and will continue to provide training for all Search and Rescue volunteers. This training is funded by the Government with students nominated by NZSAR and other Search and Rescue organisations.

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