

LEADING THE WAY IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

As New Zealand's incubator for disaster risk management, Massey's Joint Centre for Disaster Research (JCDR) explores a range of emergency management subsections including community resilience, planning, hazard education, public response to warning systems and recovery management. Across the spectrum, the centre advocates a need for citizens to be informed and central in emergency management efforts.



Director for the Joint Centre for Disaster Research, Professor David Johnston believes Citizen Science, which supports and enables the public in becoming active participants in scientific research rather than being just observers and/or recipients, is key.

“At-risk communities and their citizens need to be empowered and supported to have a more active role in the science that informs risk management. Several existing Citizen Science projects testify to the value of active participation of the community in research about disaster risk and its management,” he says.

The notion of working closely with people and communities filters throughout the centre. It underpins their teaching and research efforts, which aim to understand the impacts of disasters on communities, improve risk management, and enhance community preparedness, response and recovery from natural, man-made and environmental hazard events.

Professor Johnston is also involved with a \$21.5 million government funded study termed QuakeCore. The project places New Zealand at the worldwide forefront of earthquake disaster resilience by utilising New Zealand as a natural earthquake laboratory.

His portion of the project will be done in partnership with Professor Bruce Glavovic and focus on “the human dimensions of earthquakes; exploring issues around land-use planning, risk governance, community engagement and participation in risk reduction and behaviour responses to earthquake shaking,” he says.

The JCDR is also an International Centre of Excellence in Community Resilience. A project is currently under way in collaboration with the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office to answer the question ‘How does a community make itself resilient to future disasters?’ Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) programme sponsors the initiative.

Professor David Johnston is a Senior Scientist at GNS Science and Director of the Joint Centre for Disaster Research. His research focuses on human responses to volcano, tsunami, earthquake and weather warnings, crisis decision-making and the role of public education and participation in building community resilience and recovery. Professor Johnston is the Chair of the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk Scientific Committee (IRDR), a programme co-sponsored by the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster reduction (UNISDR). He is also on New Zealand’s Royal Society Social Science Advisory Panel, as well as the editor of the Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies, and the founding editor of the Journal of Applied Volcanology.

