

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

From New Zealand Fire Service, Ambulance services and the New Zealand Police

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50 Years of 111

2008 is the 50th anniversary of the 111 emergency response service in New Zealand.

The service started as a trial in Masterton and Carterton in September 1958 and was progressively rolled out across the country, with full installation completed by 1988.

The New Zealand Fire Service, Ambulance services, the New Zealand Police and other partners are gathering this morning (8 May) to mark the anniversary and to launch a joint emergency services 111 website. They'll be joined by Police Minister Annette King.

Fire Service Director of Communication Centres, Ian Pickard, sees the 111 service as a significant investment in public safety by delivering a fast and effective way of contacting Fire, Police or Ambulance services.

"Before 111 when people wanted to report a fire, for example, they would either have to know the number for the local fire station – if they had a phone – or activate a fire alarm call box on a lamp post."

"Today, the three emergency services are answering more calls quicker, and dispatching emergency responses faster than ever before, utilising some of the most advanced systems in the world."

St John Chief Operating Officer Tony Blaber says "We believe the new 111 website will assist in building increased public awareness and understanding of the 111 service, its links to the Ambulance, Fire and Police Communications Centres, and the vital role that communications play in mobilising emergency services".

National Manager of the Police Communications Centres Superintendent Steve Fitzgerald says the regrettable events of four years ago did affect public confidence in the Police 111 service.

"However increased investment in our people and systems has allowed us to build the lessons from that time into our training and structures. This is paying off and we're seeing vastly improved levels of professionalism and service to the public.

"I believe Police now have a 111 service the public can, and should, have confidence in. Does that mean we'll always meet people's expectations? No – on rare occasions we won't. Our people start every shift aiming to get it right for the public, but there is no fail-safe emergency response system anywhere in the world. This is a human business and some days it's not easy."

The new emergency services 111 website can be found at www.111.govt.nz

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