# Government Policy – local committees to support Fire and Emergency New Zealand

## Fire Services Review results in new model for New Zealand’s fire services

In November 2015 the Government announced that as a result of the Fire Services Review, New Zealand’s fire services would be merged into a new organisation, to be called Fire and Emergency New Zealand, with local committees to provide regional influence that informs local management on the local risks and needs.

## Fire and Emergency New Zealand will succeed NZ Fire Service Commission

For practical and legal reasons Fire and Emergency New Zealand will be a successor to the current Crown entity (the New Zealand Fire Service Commission). It will have an expanded role – as it will be an amalgamation of the current New Zealand Fire Service, the National Rural Fire Authority, and the Rural Fire Authorities (including Enlarged Rural Fire Districts).

The Minister announced a new Board for the Commission in April 2016 and tasked it with managing the transition to the new unified organisation on 1 July 2017.

## Local committees will ensure there is strong community engagement

During the public consultation on the fire services review in 2015, stakeholders said that any changes must ensure that fire services meet local community needs and risks, and have strong community engagement with local decision-making about the fire services.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand will unify urban and rural fire services with a new way of working, an improved culture, and a local committee structure to enable stronger links between FENZ and the communities it serves and protects. These committees will provide a strong local influence to ensure the local voice balances the national direction.

Fire services will be delivered against sound risk management principles and the risk profile of particular communities or industries.

## Next steps in setting up local committees

The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Bill was introduced into the House of Representatives in June 2016 to set up Fire and Emergency New Zealand from mid-2017. The Board of the New Zealand Fire Services Commission is leading the transition to the new organisation, and will work with stakeholders to plan a process for making decisions about the local committees and how and when to set them up.

There will be public consultation on the boundaries of the new committees, and there will be a process developed for deciding who sits on the new committees.

The new organisation will provide support for the committees and will have to set up operating guidelines to set out how the committees will work and how they will interact with the new organisation.

**Importance of local committees is reflected in the legislation**

Given the importance of local committees, their function is mandated in the Fire and Emergency New Zealand legislation. Funding has been allocated to set up the committees and support their ongoing activity.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand will decide how many committees are needed and their boundaries. It will provide support for the committees and have operating guidelines that set out how the committees will work and how they will interact with Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

The detailed Cabinet decisions on how the local committees will operate are in the [Cabinet minute](https://www.dia.govt.nz/vwluResources/fire-services-review-CAB-15-MIN-0207/$file/fire-services-review-CAB-15-MIN-0207.pdf) on the Department of Internal Affairs website www.dia.govt.nz/Fire-Services-Review

Many of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts have been very successful at forming good relationships with their local authorities and could form a model for how the new committees will operate. One of the principles of the reforms is to build on what is already working well.

## A 21st century fire service is one that contributes to strong communities

The fire services review in 2015 was tasked with ensuring New Zealand’s fire services are modern, efficient, have a sustainable volunteer firefighter base and meet the needs of both urban and rural communities.

Fit-for-purpose 21st century fire services are flexible and adaptable, coordinated with strong leadership, able to provide a consistent and effective service, and contribute through partnerships to strong local communities.