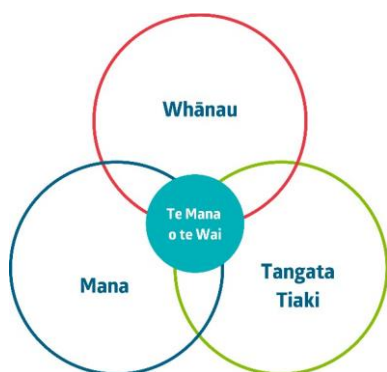


# People Welfare Toolkit

Your guide to emergencies



**Our water, our future.**

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## People Welfare Toolkit

This booklet has been produced to guide Wellington Water staff through a large-scale emergency.

An emergency is any event that endangers, or has the potential to endanger, people, and/or property.

**How is an emergency declared?** If an emergency situation occurs, the Head of Risk and Assurance or another senior leader (with appropriate authority) will declare an emergency for Wellington Water, including activating our [Emergency Management Team](#) (EMT).

(**Note:** the EMT may also be activated for other events e.g., significant disruptions to our service delivery.)

A declaration of an emergency will occur if:

- Civil Defence declares a national ([National Emergency Management Agency](#) – NEMA - lead) or Wellington regional ([Wellington Regional Emergency Management Organisation](#) – WREMO - lead) emergency, or if one of the councils declares a local emergency (e.g. earthquake, tsunami, flooding, pandemic, terrorism, etc.)

(Note: The Hutt City Council may activate its emergency sirens if there is an imminent threat).

- a Wellington Water-only threat or event occurs (e.g., fire, bomb threat, mass illness, etc.).
- a Pandemic is uncontained in New Zealand; texts are sent out by Civil Defence issuing or the Government initiates alert level protocols. The same or similar to the [COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

In any circumstance, the EMT will notify staff via text and/or email if an emergency is declared for Wellington Water.

You must follow the instructions and guidance provided by the emergency organisation.

## Quick guide: before, during, and after an emergency

Our Infrastructure Service Continuity Plan (responding to disruptions and emergencies on the three water networks) and Business Continuity Plans (making sure we have people and system capability following a disruption) will be activated as soon as practicable. Before these kick in, we need to make sure we're okay.

### Before an emergency:

- Make sure your details and emergency contacts are up to date in HRIS in OneCouncil.
- Have a family plan for emergencies, including where to meet and how to get to higher ground. Your plan should ensure your family has enough food, water (we recommend 20 litres per person per day) and amenities for *at least* three days in an emergency. A battery or wind-up radio, bottle gas cooker, cash, copies of important documents (online or paper), and a first aid kit are strongly recommended. See [www.getready.govt.nz](http://www.getready.govt.nz)
- Make sure you have your manager's and your colleagues' cell phone numbers loaded on your phone.
- Ensure that you always sign into work locations using the 'MRI on Location' phone app or equivalent accepted sign in procedure.
- Learn how to [access](#) Wellington Water on Twitter, Facebook, email, and the intranet from home and on your phone and check that your remote access works.
- Keep your laptop and mobile phone charged, get a plug-in USB phone charger for your car, and keep its fuel tank at least half-full. Keep some bottled water, warm clothes, and sturdy walking shoes in your car.
- Pack a getaway kit for the office. Include:
  - A water bottle and non-perishable snacks
  - comfortable walking shoes and change of clothes.
  - personal medication
  - sunhat and sunscreen
  - A copy of this People Welfare Toolkit and a printout of a safe route home.
- See [www.getready.govt.nz](http://www.getready.govt.nz) section on 'getaway kits' for more info.
- Fill the water bottles under your desk and refresh the water annually (mark the date re-filled on the bottle).

### During an emergency (the safety of people or property at risk):

- An Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be setup (led as appropriate by the Head of Risk and Assurance, Head of Health and Safety, or another nominated senior manager).
- If there is an earthquake: drop, cover, and hold. See [www.getready.govt.nz](http://www.getready.govt.nz)
- If there is a tsunami threat, head to higher ground; or if there is little or no time, stay in or head to a multi-storey building, to the 4<sup>th</sup> storey or above.
- Check on your family's welfare and do what's necessary.
- Listen to the radio or TV, follow the advice of Civil Defence, Police, and other emergency workers about access to buildings or parts of the city.

- If safe occupation of a building, office etc is compromised due access issues, loss of critical services or hazardous conditions follow the instructions of the EMT and emergency wardens.
- [EMT Structure](#)
- Head Office [Emergency Wardens](#) and [Floor Plan](#)
- The lead of the EMT will decide whether staff should go home or stay home. This will be communicated via emergency wardens, email, text and/or Twitter.

#### **Emergencies during work hours:**

- Follow the advice of the EMT, the emergency Wardens and your manager.
- If a fire or bomb threat happens, a building evacuation will occur.
- If a large or long earthquake occurs and there is a risk of tsunami:
  - If you are in the Petone office building, stay or go to level seven until risks can be assessed. Hazards may exist outside and there is the potential for a tsunami. The EMT, the emergency wardens and your manager will advise you.
  - If you are outside, head to high ground. If there is not enough time, head to level six or above of a multi-storey building.
  - Refer [Tsunami Evacuation](#)
- Don't go home without telling your manager or someone else in your team. If you are concerned about your own safety, notify your manager that you are going home.
- If you are out of the office, try to phone, text or email to report your location to your manager as soon as you can. They will let you know what to do.
- If you are told to go home, stay there until further notice.

#### **Emergencies outside of normal working hours:**

- Be ready to evacuate your home, if necessary, with your disaster kit.
- When you can, call your manager or someone from your team.

#### **If you're a member of the EMT:**

- The appointed EMT Incident Coordinator will try to contact you. Contact another EMT member, the Head of Risk and Assurance or Head of Health and Safety or other senior manager if you haven't heard anything.

#### **If you're a frontline operations staff member:**

- When you can, and you have confirmed you and your family's safety:
  - Head to the nearest safe and accessible major Wellington Water facility. Take enough food, drink, clothes, and medication for three days.
  - Take a sleeping bag, phone charger, torch, batteries, radio and

protective clothing (if you think it will be required) and anything else you need to help in the response.

- Decide whether to walk, bike or drive (drive if you have a Wellington Water four-wheel drive vehicle).
- Record the state of the roads and assets as you go, including the date and time you pass them. Report this information to your manager or the EMT (email [emerg\\_ecc@wellingtonwater.co.nz](mailto:emerg_ecc@wellingtonwater.co.nz)).
- If the Police stop you on your way, explain your job; that you work for Wellington Water and you are required for first-line emergency work.
- If travel isn't possible, go to your nearest Council Emergency Operations Centre or Civil Defence Centre and let them know you work for Wellington Water.

#### Community Hubs

- If a disaster meant the phone networks were down, you can seek advice and help at a local civil defence community hub. Refer <https://wremo.nz/get-ready/community-ready/community-emergency-hubs/find-your-hub/>

#### After an emergency

- After an emergency has been activated, the EMT will provide updates as appropriate via all staff text, on our Intranet, (or if it's unavailable, our external website), Twitter and Facebook.
- Keep in contact with your manager and/or colleagues, or call (see later sections) one of the EMT Staff Welfare people or leave a message on the Emergency Phone Message Line.
- Check for updates and information about the offices, staff wellbeing and the emergency response's progress – check Wellington Water's Facebook page, Twitter, texts, your email, the Intranet, and our external website regularly.

## Keeping informed

#### Radio stations

- Listen to your local radio stations because emergency management officials will be broadcasting the most appropriate advice for your area.

#### Facebook Feeds

- <https://www.facebook.com/WREMONz>
- <https://www.facebook.com/NZCivilDefence/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/wellingtonwater>
- <https://www.facebook.com/wellingtoncitycouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/huttcitycouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/UpperHuttCityCouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/PCC.PoriruaCityCouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/SouthWairarapaDistrictCouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/kapiticoastdistrictcouncil>
- <https://www.facebook.com/MastertonDC>

<b>Official websites:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.facebook.com/cartertondistrictcouncil">https://www.facebook.com/cartertondistrictcouncil</a></li> </ul> <p>The following websites will also provide advice and guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.getready.govt.nz">www.getready.govt.nz</a> (general preparedness)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.wremo.nz">www.wremo.nz</a> (for Wellington region pre and post event, emergency hubs)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.civildefence.govt.nz">www.civildefence.govt.nz</a> (National emergencies)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.health.govt.nz">www.health.govt.nz</a> (e.g., Pandemic)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.gwrc.govt.nz">www.gwrc.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.huttcity.govt.nz">www.huttcity.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.wcc.govt.nz">www.wcc.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.pcc.govt.nz">www.pcc.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.upperhuttcity.com">www.upperhuttcity.com</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.swdc.govt.nz">www.swdc.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz">www.kapiticoast.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.cdc.govt.nz">www.cdc.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.mstn.govt.nz">www.mstn.govt.nz</a></li> <li>• </li> </ul>
<b>Wellington Water Phone number:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellington Water's main office line can be reached on (04) 912 4400.</li> </ul>
<b>Our Intranet:</b>	<p><a href="https://woogle.wellingtonwater.co.nz/Pages/Home.aspx">https://woogle.wellingtonwater.co.nz/Pages/Home.aspx</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>User ID:</b> wwm\youruserID (e.g., wwm\hsimpson)</li> <li>• <b>Password:</b> your usual WWL network password</li> </ul>
<b>Our website:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff notices and updates may be placed on our external website <a href="http://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz">www.wellingtonwater.co.nz</a>. Check it for updates if you can't find information elsewhere.</li> </ul>
<b>Yammer and Facebook</b>	<p>Familiarise yourself with both Yammer (if you are not already using Yammer) and Facebook so you are good to go in an emergency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yammer:</b> This app is <b>private</b> (it can only be seen by Wellington Water employees). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Username:</b></li> <li>○ <b>Password:</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Facebook:</b> This app is <b>public</b>, so anything you write can be seen by people outside the organisation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sign in with your personal account (it is free to join) or just search for Wellington Water:</li> <li>○ <a href="https://facebook.com/wellingtonwater">facebook.com/wellingtonwater</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Key contact phone numbers

#### Senior Leadership Team

Name	Role	Contact
Pat Dougherty	<a href="#">Chief Executive</a>	021 450 094
Susannah Cullen	Group Manager Network Development & Delivery	021 927 942
Charles Barker	Group Manager, Customer Operations Group	021 987 379
Mark Ford	Group Manager, Business Services	027 289 8834
Julie Alexander	Group Manager, Network Strategy and Planning	021 815 162
Jeremy McKibbin	Group Manager, Network Management Group	021 435 631
Charles Barker	Director of Regulatory Services	021 987 379

#### Emergency Management Team (EMT) Leadership

Name	Role	Contact (when established)
Emergency Management Team	emerg_ecc@wellingtonwater.co.nz  The EMT phone may be unattended, but a voice (or text) message can be left. It will be periodically cleared.  <a href="#">EMT Structure</a>	021 794 144 (phone may not be monitored continuously)
Erin Ganley	Incident Coordinator	021 769 762
Garry Butler	Deputy Incident Coordinator	0275 399 411
Sam Lister	Network Controller	021 998 553

#### EMT – Staff Welfare

Name	Role	Contact
Robert Mackie	Head of, People and Capability	021 829 533
Rachel Goodfellow	People and Capability Lead	021 191 734
Chris Anderson	Head of Health and Safety	021 416 208
	Senior Health and Safety Advisor	

Commented [TOA1]: Vacant Position

#### EMT – BCP Building & Finance Continuity

Name	Role	Contact
Carey Anderson	Team Leader Office and Financial Services	021 309 825
Kerin Dallas	Receptionist	021 226 3943

#### EMT – ICT Continuity

Name	Role	Contact
Helen Rayner	Chief Digital Officer	027 274 3395
Niall Connolly	Manager Digital Operations	021 026 48465

#### EMT - Communications

Name	Role	Contact
Alina Siegfried	Senior Internal Engagement Advisor	021 240 4876



<b>Vanessa MacFarlane</b>	Head of Communications & Engagement	0273084648
<b>Melody McCabe</b>	Team Leader Comms and Engagement	021 199 6794

#### Important external phone numbers

Organisation	Contact
Carterton District Council	06 379 4030
Earthquake Commission (EQC)	0800 326 243
Emergency (Fire, Ambulance, Police)	111
Greater Wellington Regional Council	0800 496 734
Hutt City Council	04 570 6666
Hutt Hospital	04 566 6999
Kapiti Coast District Council	04 296 4700
Masterton District Council	06 370 6300
Porirua City Council	04 237 5089
South Wairarapa District Council	06 306 9611
Upper Hutt City Council	04 527 2169
Wellington City Council	04 499 4444
Emergency (Fire, Ambulance, Police)	111
Also, Ref Te Whatu Ora- <a href="http://www.ccdhb.org.nz/our-services/after-hours-and-emergency-care/">www.ccdhb.org.nz/our-services/after-hours-and-emergency-care/</a>	
EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)	0800 327 669
ACC Injury Enquiries	0800 101 996
Earthquake Commission (EQC)	0800 326 243
Hutt Hospital	04 566 6999
Housing New Zealand emergency assistance	0800 801 601
Kenepuru Hospital	04 385 5999
Kapiti Health Centre	04 385 5999
Masterton Hospital	06 946 9800
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	0800 20 90 20
Red Cross	0900 754 726
Wellington Hospital	04 385 5999
Work and Income	0800 559 009

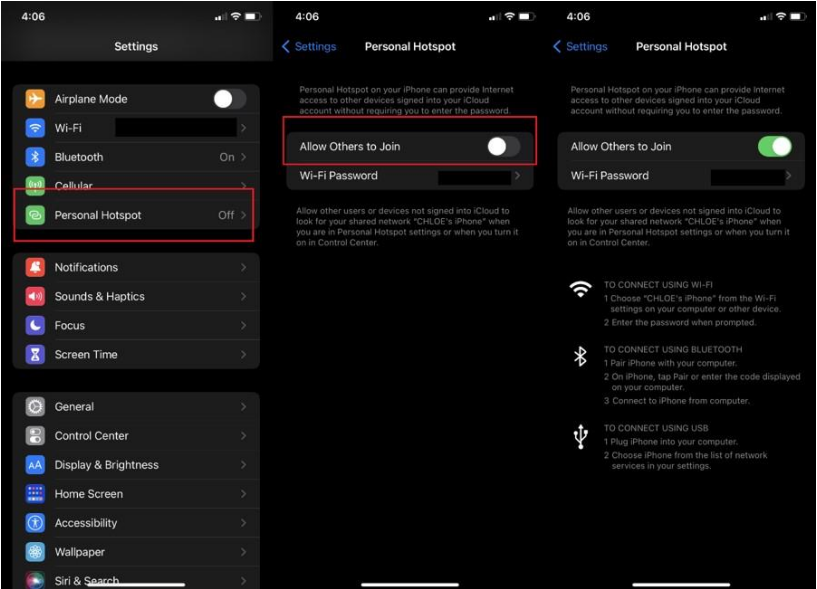
## Electronic access to Wellington Water

### Wi-Fi Hotspot your phone

#### Turn on Wi-Fi Hotspot For iPhone:

To set up a personal hotspot on your iPhone, go to **Settings > Personal Hotspot > Allow Others to Join** and toggle it to **on** (if you don't see Personal Hotspot in Settings, tap **Cellular > Personal Hotspot**).

Make note of the Wi-Fi password.



Open the Wi-Fi menu on the device you need to connect to the internet:



Look for your iOS device (e.g., iPhone), select it, then enter the hotspot password that is on your phone to connect:



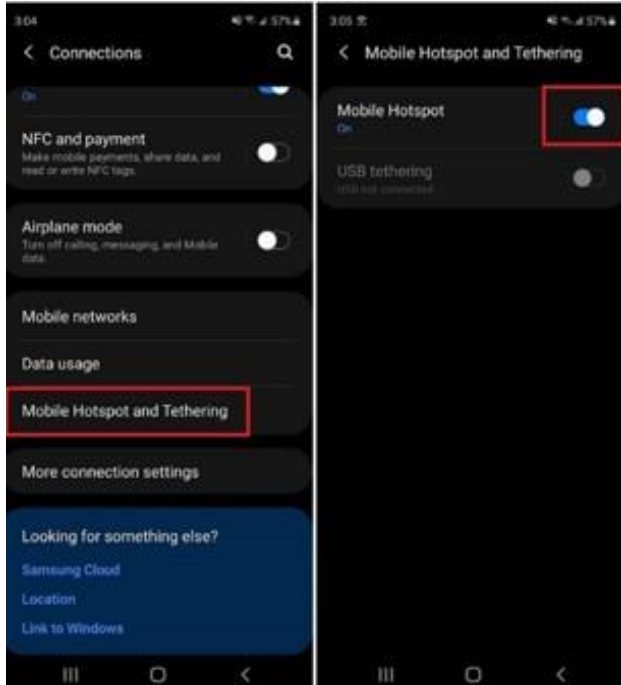
Once your secondary device is connected, you should now be able to surf the web (and consume mobile data).

Once you no longer need the Wi-Fi hotspot running, you can head back to **Settings > Personal Hotspot** and toggle the feature **off**.

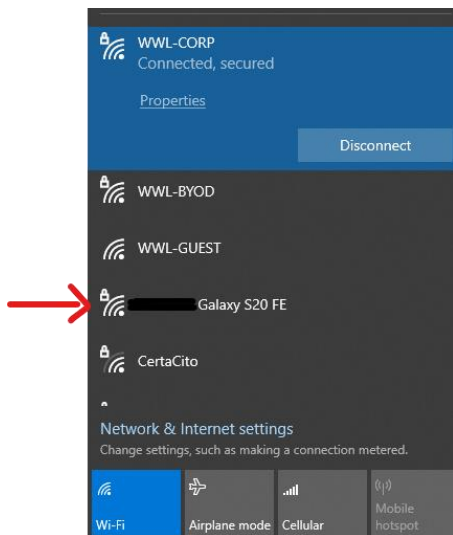
#### Turn On Wi-Fi Hotspot for Android Devices:

How you access hotspots on Android devices will depend on which phone you have and what version of Android you're running. You can generally open the pull-down shade and turn on your mobile hotspot from there or find it under settings.

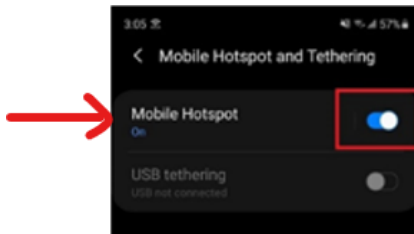
Go to **Settings > Mobile Hotspot and Tethering > Mobile Hotspot** and toggle it **on**



Look for your Android device (e.g., Samsung Galaxy), select it:



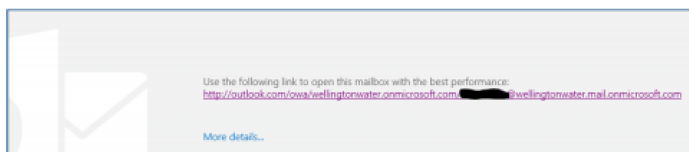
If prompted for a password, then tap on **Mobile Hotspot** and enter the password that is displayed to connect:



Once your secondary device is connected, you should now be able to surf the web (and consume mobile data).

Once you no longer need the Wi-Fi hotspot running, you can head back to **Connections > Mobile Hotspot and Tethering** and toggle the feature **off**.

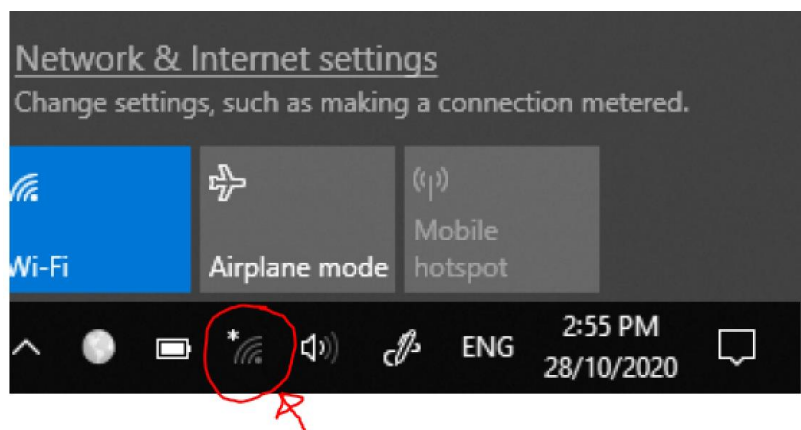
- Accessing email externally**
- Type in the following url: <https://webmail.wellingtonwater.co.nz>
  - Domain\username: your WellingtonWater email address
  - Password: The same login password you use to open your work computer.
  - You will be prompted to click a link to go to the new webmail.



**Accessing your work laptop from outside the office**

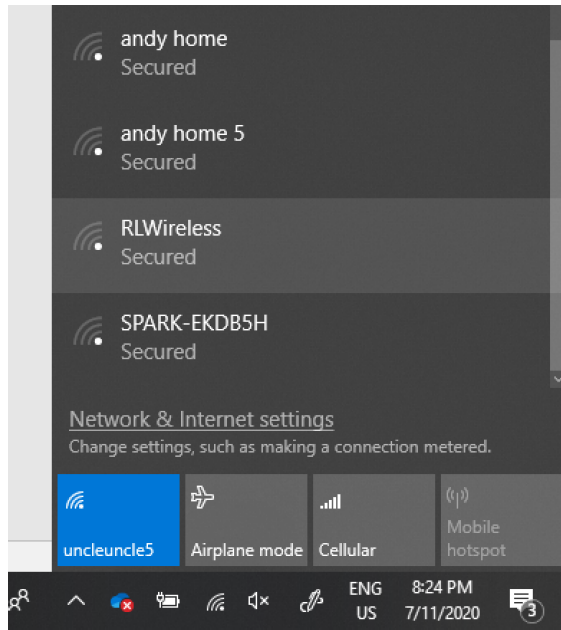
How to connect to a new WIFI network.

- Use standard Windows WiFi connection circled in red.



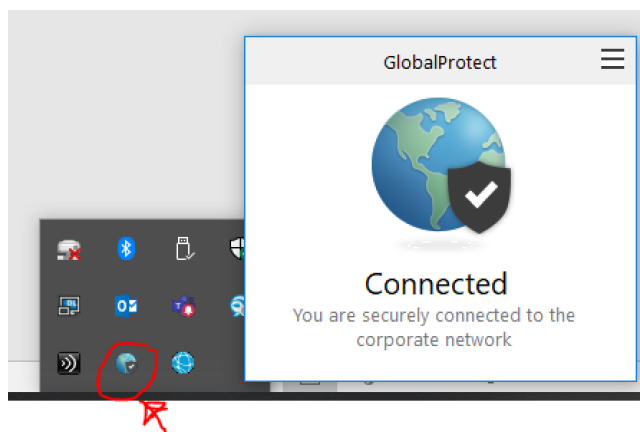
- Select your Wifi name from the list that you want to connect to.

Here is an example:

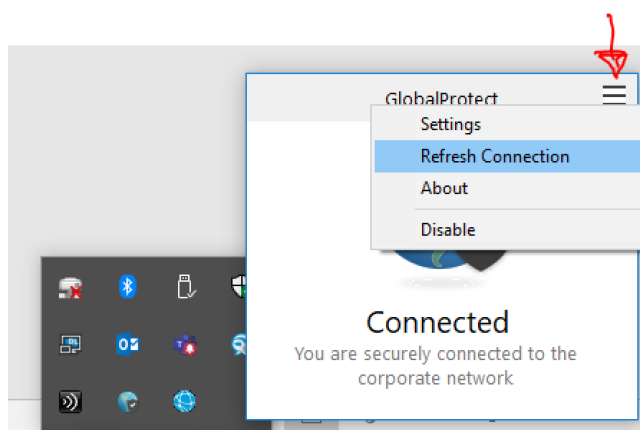


- Enter the WIFI key of whatever the network is you are connecting to. If it's at your home, enter your home WIFI KEY.

To access the VPN from a Corporate PC or Laptop Global Protect should automatically connected when you have internet connection.



In case if it doesn't, just click on "Connect" or go into the top right corner of the Global Protect window and select "Refresh Connection".



## VDI Remote Access Procedure (to get onto the network without work laptop)

Note: This is by request only, will need manager and WWL ICT approval in order to gain access.

## Returning to Work

<b>Before returning to work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure your family is okay before returning to work.</li><li>• Speak with your manager or an employee support person if you have any concerns about home commitments or other anxieties about returning to work. Changes to your working arrangement can be considered.</li><li>• Before letting staff come back to work, the safety of the buildings will be checked. This includes the building structure, its utilities, fittings, hazardous substances, machinery, new and known hazards.</li></ul>
<b>Returning to work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our priority is to support ourselves as individuals and ensure our safety.</li><li>• If clean-up work is required, Wellington Water will provide the right clothing and equipment, and identify hazards before work starts. If you help with the clean-up, please be careful.</li><li>• Transportation is likely to be an issue – raise this with your manager or one of the People &amp; Capability team.</li></ul>
<b>Keep yourself safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look out for fatigue, especially while driving or operating machinery.</li><li>• Adjust tasks as necessary.</li><li>• Take extra rest breaks; take a nap if needed.</li><li>• Talk to your manager and/or staff welfare officer if you have any concerns.</li><li>• Ensure that you sign into work locations using the 'Who's on Location' app or equivalent system</li></ul>
<b>Keep in touch with your manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do this through text messages, phone calls, email, meetings – keep the communication lines 'open'.</li></ul>
<b>As things gets back to normal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember: safety is the top priority.</li><li>• Get back to normal routines wherever you can.</li><li>• Work with health and safety and union representatives as appropriate.</li><li>• Don't speak on behalf of the business to media unless you have been allocated this responsibility. See Wellington Water's Media Policy for more details.</li></ul>
<b>Help each other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff welfare officers are the go-to people with up-to-date information about community support and counselling services. See the section on Managing stress and trauma.</li></ul>



## Employment Stuff – FAQ

**Whose responsibility is it to ensure the workplace is safe?** The EMT (or the Head of Risk and Assurance, Head of Health and Safety, and/or the Head of People and Capability) will advise all staff when, and whether, the workplace/office is open. You'll likely hear through a text or email.

**Do I have the right to refuse to do work I consider unsafe?** Discuss the work and any concerns before it gets to this point. If the leadership team has decided it is safe, they should share their knowledge and reasoning with you.

**Who decides if I must go to work if it is open?** This needs to be discussed between you and your manager, considering your personal situation, Wellington Water's needs, and whether others are available.

**If I need to stay home to look after my family, how does that work?** Both parties should take a practical approach to this situation. Discuss your needs with your manager, recognising the unique nature of the event, the disruption it's caused and the need for flexibility.

**What if it is my workday, and work is closed. Do I get paid?** A major crisis/event could cause a range of damage to businesses in the Wellington region, and it may take time for our workplace to re-open.

**I can't get into work today for good reason. Do I get paid?** We will need to talk to each other about workable solutions to help in the recovery. Generally, your salary will be paid if you are willing and able to perform work and work is available. Each person's circumstances may differ; so, they will need to be treated on a case-by-case basis.

If you've been allocated a laptop, working from home is an alternative. We can also agree on temporary arrangements that are additional to, or different from, your current employment arrangements if we think this will benefit.

Staff can take sick leave if they are injured or sick, if their partner or dependents are injured or sick, they can take domestic leave if they are entitled to and have domestic leave available. Annual leave can be given if required.

**If I have concerns that I feel are not being resolved, what should I do?** You should talk to an employee support person, a health and safety representative, or your union representative.

**What if no agreement can be reached?** The Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) can help with any issues. Call 0800 20 90 20.

**Does Wellington Water have the right to ask staff to go to work and help with clean up?** Wellington Water's employment agreements have clauses which say that because of the nature of our business, you may be required to help in an emergency event if you can. Keep your manager in the loop so you can find a practical solution.

Because we manage water assets, we'll want to be up and running as

soon as we can. If you are being asked to do work you don't normally do, talk about your capability to do the work, ask who will supervise you, and what protective gear you will need. The main concern always is your safety.

**What safety gear should be used in the clean-up?** Appropriate protective clothing and equipment must be used when required. This includes heavy shoes/boots, a helmet, safety glasses and a protective jacket, and trousers if required.

**If I have a concern about gas or chemicals in the workplace, what should I do?** Evacuate the workplace immediately, call 111, contact the Health and Safety team.

## Managing stress and trauma

It is important to recognise that responses and coping strategies differ from person to person. A crisis usually means there is a need for extra support or expert assistance, and seeking help early is one of many positive coping strategies.

### Support and counselling services

For support for yourself and your family, call our Employee Assistance Programme provider EAP Services on **0800 327 669 (0800EAPNOW)**. This service is FREE for Wellington Water staff.

A list of social support services put in place by the Government is also available online [www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz).

### Other counselling services

- **Workplace Support:** 0800 443 445
- **Relationship Services:** 0800 RELATE (0800 735 283)
- **Citizens' Advice Bureau:** Ask what counsellors are near your location. 0800 FOR CAB (0800 367 222) / [www.cab.org.nz](http://www.cab.org.nz)
- **Lifeline:** 0800 543 354 (this is a 24 hour/7-day service)
- **Skylight Trust:** 0800 299 100
- **Victim Support:** 0800 842 846 / [www.victimsupport.org.nz](http://www.victimsupport.org.nz)
- **Youthline:** **0800 376 633** / Free TXT 234 / [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)

## Your Wellbeing

### Tips for recovering from disasters and other traumatic events

Disasters are often unexpected, sudden, and overwhelming. In some cases, there are no outwardly visible signs of physical injury, but there still is a serious emotional toll. It is common for people who have experienced traumatic situations to have very strong emotional reactions.

This is a normal response. Understanding normal responses to these abnormal events can help you cope effectively with your feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, and help you return to normal.

### What happens to people after a disaster or other traumatic event?

Shock and denial are typical responses to traumatic events and disasters, especially shortly after the event. Both shock and denial are normal protective reactions.

Shock is a sudden and often intense disturbance of your emotional state that may leave you feeling stunned or dazed.

Denial is about not acknowledging that something very stressful has happened, or not fully experiencing the intensity of the event. You may temporarily feel numb or disconnected from life.

As the initial shock subsides, reactions will vary from one person to another. The following examples, however, are normal responses to a traumatic event:

- **Feelings become intense and sometimes are unpredictable:** You may become more irritable than usual, and your mood may change back and forth dramatically. You might be especially anxious or nervous, or even become depressed.

- **Thoughts and behaviour patterns are affected by the trauma:** You might have repeated and vivid memories of the event. These flashbacks may occur for no apparent reason and may lead to physical reactions such as rapid heartbeat or sweating. You may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions or become more easily confused. Sleep and eating patterns also may be disrupted.
- **Recurring emotional reactions are common:** Anniversaries of the event, such as at one month or one year, can trigger upsetting memories of the traumatic experience. These 'triggers' may be accompanied by fears that the stressful event will be repeated.
- **Interpersonal relationships often become strained:** Greater conflict, such as more frequent arguments with family members and co-workers, is common. On the other hand, you might become withdrawn and isolated and avoid your usual activities.
- **Physical symptoms may accompany the extreme stress:** For example, headaches, nausea, and chest pain may result and may require medical attention. Pre-existing medical conditions may worsen due to the stress.

#### How do people respond differently over time?

It is important for you to realise that there is not one 'standard' pattern of reaction to the extreme stress of traumatic experiences. Some people respond immediately, while others have delayed reactions — sometimes months or even years later. Some have adverse effects for a long period of time, while others recover rather quickly.

Reactions can also change over time. Some people who have suffered from trauma are initially energised by the event to help them with the challenge of coping, only to later become discouraged or depressed.

Several factors tend to affect the length of time required for recovery, including:

- **The degree of intensity and loss:** Events that last longer and pose a greater threat, and/or where loss of life or substantial loss of property is involved, often take longer to resolve.
- **A person's general ability to cope with emotionally challenging situations:** People who have handled other difficult, stressful circumstances well may find it easier to cope with the trauma.
- **Other stressful events preceding the traumatic experience:** People faced with other emotionally challenging situations, such as serious health problems or family-related difficulties, may have more intense reactions to the new stressful event and need more time to recover.

#### How should I help myself and my family?

There are several steps you can take to help restore emotional wellbeing and a sense of control after a disaster or other traumatic experience, including the following:

- **Give yourself time to adjust:** Anticipate that this will be a difficult time in your life. Allow yourself to mourn the losses you have experienced. Try to be patient with changes in your emotional state.
- **Ask for support from people who care about you and who will listen and empathise with your situation:** But keep in mind that your typical support

system may be weakened if those who are close to you also have experienced or witnessed the trauma.

- **Communicate your experience:** In whatever ways feel comfortable to you — such as by talking with family or close friends or keeping a diary.
- **Find out about local support groups that often are available:** For example, those who have suffered from natural disasters or other traumatic events. These can be especially helpful for people with limited personal support systems.
- **Try to find groups led by appropriately trained and experienced professionals:** Group discussion can help people realise that others in the same circumstances often have similar reactions and emotions.
- **Engage in healthy behaviours to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress:** Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest. If you experience on-going difficulties with sleep, you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques. Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- **Establish or re-establish routines:** Examples are eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. Take some time off from the demands of daily life by pursuing hobbies or other enjoyable activities.
- **Avoid major life decisions such as switching careers or jobs if possible:** These activities tend to be highly stressful.

**When should I seek professional help?**

Some people can cope effectively with the emotional and physical demands brought about by traumatic events by using their own support systems. But it's not unusual to find that serious problems persist and continue to interfere with daily living. For example, some may feel overwhelming nervousness or lingering sadness that adversely affects job performance and interpersonal relationships.

People with prolonged reactions that disrupt their daily functioning should consult a trained and experienced mental health professional. Psychologists and other appropriate mental health providers can help educate people about normal responses to extreme stress. They work with people affected by trauma to help them find constructive ways of dealing with the emotional impact.

With children, continual and aggressive emotional outbursts, serious problems at school, pre-occupation with the traumatic event, continued and extreme withdrawal, and other signs of intense anxiety or emotional difficulties all point to the need for professional assistance. A qualified mental health professional can help these children and their parents understand and deal with thoughts, feelings and behaviours that result from trauma.

*(Managing Traumatic Stress, August 2011) American Psychological Association Website.*

## Government and community support

A list of agencies that can offer you support:

- **Work and Income and Community Link Service Centres:** You don't need to be on a benefit to get help from Work and Income. Visit <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/> or phone **0800 559 009** or visit a service centre.
- **Child, Youth and Family Support:** If you're concerned about a child or young person, need help or advice call <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/> **0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)** at any time.
- **ACC:** If you are injured, ACC can help with treatment and other support. The first step to getting help from ACC is to visit a doctor, Accident and Emergency clinic, physiotherapist, or other health professional. As well as treating your injury, your health professional will help you fill out an ACC claim form and sent it to ACC. [www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)
- **Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment:** For information about employment relations for those affected by the event – call **0800 20 90 20** or visit their website [www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz)
- **WorkSafe New Zealand:** For information about health and safety issues, call 0800 030 040 or visit [www.worksafe.govt.nz](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz)
- **Red Cross:** In an emergency event, several organisations will offer assistance to those affected. Contact the Red Cross on [www.redcross.org.nz](http://www.redcross.org.nz) or call **0800 754 726**.
- **Salvation Army:** Salvation Army staff and volunteers work alongside Civil Defence and local councils to help disaster victims and emergency workers with practical care. Visit [www.salvationarmy.org.nz](http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz)
- **Skylight Trust:** The Trust offers a wide range of services to support those facing tough times of change, loss, trauma, and grief – whatever the cause, and whatever their age. Their website has a large amount of information and resources at [www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)