



4 August 2025



Reference: OIA-2024/25-1015

Tēnā koe ,

Official Information Act request relating to NEMA Staffing Levels

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 30 June 2025. You requested:

“Please can you tell me about staffing numbers at the National Emergency Management Agency. I’d like to know please:

- 1. whether there have been any redundancies at this agency since the national / act / nz first coalition has been in power. If so, numbers, job titles, role location, salary bands and job descriptions to be provided please.*
- 2. During the same period, whether there have been any vacant roles that have intentionally not been filled. Numbers, location, job titles, job descriptions and salary bands please.*
- 3. How many new workers (inc contractors) have started at this agency during the same period. As above: job titles, location, salary bands and role descriptions please.*
- 4. Copies of all internal communications within this agency and between members of this agency and key stakeholders in other agencies about staffing numbers, including but not limited to the question whether staffing and budget has been considered adequate to meet expected agency demands. Where redactions are made to staff names for privacy reasons, I’d still like to know the job title and agency of the senders and recipients please. Where the same people are involved in multiple lines of communication, I’ll need a way of identifying this if their names are redacted, eg a consistent URN used throughout your response, thanks.*
- 5. During the same period, any communications within this agency and between members of this agency and key stakeholders in other agencies related to the recent extreme weather event in the context of staffing numbers and operating budget, and*
- 6. Copies of all press lines, including any if-asked lines, related to staffing levels and budget for this agency for the same period.”*

On 15 July 2025, you clarified your request:

“I’m referring to the flooding in the Tasman region.

Re: Parts 4&5, the request covers internal and external comms, but not just written. As you know OIA applies to info that is known, not just written. So e.g. if the person responsible for overall budgets has had a phone call with treasury to ask for more money to pay for staffing that would be covered even if no written record was made.

You’ll need to identify who in the organisation had budget responsibility for staffing and who they talk to about it. I assume Treasury but I expect there are others. I expect HR and team leaders will know about requests to fill or create new roles. Who would receive the message from treasury(?) that NEMA isn’t allowed to recruit to fill its vacancies and who would push back against that. The chief executive? It’s not really

possible for me to know that myself without a detailed org chart and position descriptions. You'll need to make some enquiries with NEMA to understand the position. They will obviously know who their key govt and internal stakeholders are for this kind of request.

I'm sure NEMAs IT team can do adequate key-word searches in Teams and Outlook logs for the relevant written data. It will all obviously be backed up in logs and archives etc and the govt decision to cut public sector workers is relatively recent."

The National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) view was that your clarification had widened the scope of your original request, particularly as it relates to Part 4, and, as such, we asked that you consider further refinement. No further clarification has been received from you, so the present response covers your clarified and original requests.

Interpretation

We have interpreted the timeframe for your request as being from 27 November 2023, the date the current administration's term commenced, to 29 June 2025, the date of your original request. The exception to this is Part 5, which you have clarified relates to the Nelson Tasman flooding event of 24 June 2025.

Part 1 – Redundancies

There have been no redundancies at NEMA during the above timeframe.

For historical context, relevant information is publicly available, as of **22 May 2025**, under question 11 (page 7) of this document: https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/54SCGOA_ADV_42804463-deea-4dfc-cdc6-08dd9cbad1c0_GOA37363/c136f0977cb88114f7a38f02b1dc3870c8e6f7ce

Parts 2 and 3 – Vacant Roles and New Workers

NEMA does not report on or track records of unfilled vacancies or associated details (e.g., job titles, locations, and salary bands) and there is no obligation on NEMA to create information in order to respond to a request as the Act only applies to information that is already held.

Regarding new starters, no significant staffing changes occurred in the 2023/24 year, with staff numbers remaining steady. NEMA has grown incrementally since its establishment in December 2019.

For contractor data, relevant information is publicly available. For the 2024/25 financial year (as at 31 March 2025): https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/54SCGOA_EVI_42804463-deea-4dfc-cdc6-08dd9cbad1c0_GOA37364/f5b7158f8da92d100a60c3486b17e2875a498c89

For the previous financial year (2023/24): https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/54SCGOA_EVI_42804463-deea-4dfc-cdc6-08dd9cbad1c0_GOA37364/f5b7158f8da92d100a60c3486b17e2875a498c89.

Further information for the previous financial year is also available in the Appendices: https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/54SCGOA_EVI_6e98c62c-f3ab-41ab-b3eb-08dd0731b318_GOA31349/b7baf6f7ca846b893fd4ec7284755755966f930e.

Parts 4 & 5 – NEMA Communications about Staffing

You have requested copies of all communications, both internal and external, about staffing numbers and operating budgets, with emphasis on adequacy to meet agency demands (Part 4), and specifically related to the June 2025 Tasman flooding event (Part 5).

We assessed the original framing of these parts of your request as being likely to require substantial collation. In order to enable us to respond to these parts of your request, and avoid a refusal under section 18(f) of the Act, we asked that you specify:

- which “key stakeholders” and “other agencies” you are referring to in these parts of your request.
- whether you are seeking all communications or would be willing to limit this to, for example, formal written documents (e.g. briefings, aide-memoires, memos, reports)
- whether you are seeking NEMA’s internal communications, external communications, or both.

In your reply, you clarified that the request deliberately includes oral and non-recorded forms of communication, as well as written, and must cover both internal and external. You also indicated that you would expect NEMA to determine the relevant stakeholders. For Part 5, you clarified that you were referring to the Nelson Tasman event.

While we appreciate your efforts to clarify your request, the scope of the part 4 of your request remains unmanageable for us. NEMA operates in a dynamic environment and often communicates with stakeholders during and after emergencies. Staff may be deployed in response to emergencies in their emergency management capacity.

NEMA does not store all communications (written or oral) in a centralised or accessible manner that allows for searching against staffing or budget themes. Identifying all relevant internal and external stakeholders, including oral communications that may not be formally recorded, and assessing relevance to your request across the breadth of information sought, would require significant effort, and unreasonably interfere with NEMA’s ability to carry out its operations effectively.

For these reasons, we have decided to refuse part 4 of your request under section 18(f) of the Act. This refusal does not imply the existence of extensive, or indeed any, relevant information. Rather, it is the extensive search and collation required to make an assessment, identifying potentially relevant material across different formats and a variety of stakeholders.

We would encourage you to consider resubmitting a refined request. Narrowing the scope to formal written documents, specific external stakeholders, and/or a more targeted timeframe could make the request more manageable. If you would like to discuss how to refine your request further, we would be happy to provide guidance.

For the Nelson Tasman event between **24–29 June 2025** (the latter being the date of your original request), the incident was primarily led by the **Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Emergency Management Group**, and NEMA does not hold any relevant information regarding staffing or budget considerations. Part 5 of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist. If you are interested in discussions of staffing at the **Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Emergency Management Group**, you can of course make a separate request to them for information relating to this.

Part 6: Press Lines

NEMA has not issued communications as described in your request. In response to a January 2024 media query on cost-saving, NEMA advised that:

“NEMA has not sent any communications as described in your request. We have not made job cuts, do not currently have proposals for job cuts, and have not offered voluntary redundancies to staff.

Please direct the question about cost savings to Treasury, who are best placed to respond.”

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Nāku noa, nā,



Sarah Holland
Chief Advisor