



GREYPOWER
NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION INC

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Government Urged to Respond: Grey Power's Call for Modern Sirens in National Emergency Alerting

The New Zealand Government is facing renewed pressure to strengthen community safety after the Grey Power Federation questioned the removal of legacy civil defence sirens and called for the re-establishment of next-generation, all-hazards alerting devices. This matter comes at a critical time, as the nation faces an ever-expanding spectrum of risks—from earthquakes and tsunamis to weather events and industrial emergencies—exposing the urgent need for a robust, inclusive, and layered approach to public warning systems.

Every Community Needs Modern, All-Hazards Sirens

Grey Power's concerns highlight a gap that has been growing with the decommissioning of outdated fire sirens across many local areas, particularly on the North Island's eastern coast. Local authorities justified these removals by citing the limitations of older sirens: confusing signals, lack of voice communication, and patchy coverage. However, rather than using this as an opportunity to deploy state-of-the-art replacements, most regions simply eliminated the sirens altogether.

This is not modernisation, but regression. The lack of action leaves a critical warning gap, especially in vulnerable, remote, and coastal communities where cellular coverage is unreliable and the need for immediate, area-wide notification is essential.

The Case for Integrated, Modern Siren Systems

Worldwide, best practice in emergency management has evolved to feature multi-channel alerting. Modern, digitally integrated sirens support—not replace—other modes, such as Emergency Mobile Alerts (EMA), social media, and radio. Countries like the USA, Japan, Germany, and Denmark have modernised siren infrastructure, deploying:

- **Self-powered, solar-enabled units** for resilience during power outages
- **Voice-capable systems** that broadcast real-time instructions in several languages.
- **Remote management and automated testing** to ensure reliability.
- **Targeted, location-aware alerts** for communities beyond cell signal reach.
- **Inclusive coverage**, benefiting children, elderly, tourists, and residents without smartphones.

Such all-hazards sirens are now standard with internationally recognised brands and could be easily integrated with New Zealand's current emergency systems, bridging the coverage gap for those hardest to reach and most in need.

Digital Alerts Are Not Enough

While digital alerts and mobile notifications play vital roles, reliance on smartphones alone is not sufficient. Many people do not keep phones nearby at night. Others, including elderly citizens or visitors, may not understand EMA signals or may not have coverage at all. In the event of rapidly developing hazards—like a local-source tsunami—seconds count. Outdoor alerting with audible sirens is irreplaceable in such moments.

A National Strategy Is Needed

Grey Power's question to the Government underlines this fundamental issue: who is responsible for ensuring every local body re-establishes effective, modern sirens? At present, there is no consistent national guideline or funding support for local authorities to deploy high-technology sirens in vulnerable areas. Without decisive, centrally led action, communities remain exposed to needless risk and confusion.

Time to Sound the Alarm: Government Action is Needed

The silence left by decommissioned sirens must not become a permanent feature of New Zealand's emergency landscape. The Government—and specifically Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) in partnership with Civil Defence—must urgently review their stance. It is critical to provide clear direction and resources to every local authority, so that all communities, especially the most vulnerable, are served by all-hazards, voice-capable, and power-resilient sirens, fully integrated into the national alerting system.

It is time for the Government to answer Grey Power's question and sound the alarm: prioritise the re-establishment of modern emergency sirens in every at-risk community. Lives depend on it.

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