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Rangitaiki community moves into recovery mode

The rural community of Rangitaiki has moved into recovery mode following the snow storm last Saturday that closed roads, brought down power lines and isolated the community for days.

This week Taupō District Council's Civil Defence team has helped coordinate the response, working closely with lines company Unison on restoring power to a number of affected properties. More than 200 power poles were damaged in the storm, cutting the electricity supply to hundreds of homes. The majority of affected properties had power restored through the use of generators yesterday but repairs are likely to take some weeks.

As well as being without power, snow also closed the Napier-Taupō Road (State Highway 5) from Friday night until Tuesday morning, and families living on farms relying on access to the highway were stranded until graders could be brought in to assist in clearing roads.

Council group manager community, risk, relations and support, and Civil Defence recovery manager Brian Fox said the Civil Defence team helped coordinate responses in a number of areas. Staff were also able to assist farmers to gain access to loaders so they were able to manage their stock in the extreme conditions.

"Our early response was to make a number of visits to houses in the area to ensure everyone was safe and warm and had access to fresh water and showers if needed. We were also able to ensure farmers could get access to the main road and stock could be moved off farms.

"Our focus now moves to helping the community in the recovery phase as initial response activities are completed."

Emergency manager Ian Connon said the Rangitaiki community had also pulled together to ensure everyone was safe and had the support they need.

"These residents have really rallied together as a farming community and are supporting each other, which is great to see. We'll continue to assist and support them where we can."

Mr Connon said the snow event highlighted the need to have an emergency survival kit ready at all times with supplies to last at least three days. This should include food, water, a primus or gas barbeque to cook on, blankets and a first aid kit. For more information, visit getthru.govt.nz.

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