Sustainability Corner

A Resilient Community

In the spirit of National Disaster Awareness Week, it is timely to consider the resilience of your family and your community.

In the simplest terms, resilience means the ability to bounce back. In the context of a disaster, it means 'adaptive capacity'. And that means core services will be designed with security and backup in mind. Despite the disaster, the lifelines will still function, basic goods will still be available and we will still be able to get out and help each other.

Bottom line – if you don't have a minimum of 3 days drinking water and food stored in your house right now, you are not resilient. In a disaster situation, you will immediately be depending on your neighbours to look after you, and you might prefer to be in a position to look after them.

However, being prepared is not the same as being resilient.

Resilience has a deeper meaning that goes far beyond disaster preparation. A resilient community minimises dependency on external supply of any resource. Like most New Zealand towns, Rotorua is not very resilient because our transport fuel, electricity and much of our food arrive via long and complex supply chains. Resilience is created if those chains are shortened and simplified.

For food and water, have a vege garden and rainwater tank, and support the farmers market. For energy, install low energy backups such as a solar water heater, a wetback, and a bicycle. Resilience is a way of life with benefits, such as better preparation for when disaster strikes.

Thanks again to Environmental Planner Ian McLean for contributing this week's Sustainability Corner item.