

Developing Fast Trust in Emergency Management

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A practitioner framework for trust under conditions of
uncertainty



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Abstract

Trust is an operational resource in emergency management. It influences whether information is believed, whether people are willing to collaborate, whether communities act on advice, and whether emergency management systems can function effectively under conditions of uncertainty.

This paper explores the development of **fast trust** in emergency management, particularly in situations where practitioners, organisations and communities must work together rapidly, often without established relationships and with incomplete information.

Fast trust should not be understood as a shortcut around relationship-building, nor as something emergency management practitioners simply create on arrival. Trust frequently exists before the formal emergency management system enters a community or relationship. It may reside within whānau, hapū and iwi, community leaders, local organisations, professional networks, technical experts, responders and other established relationships. The first task for practitioners may therefore be not to build trust, but to **recognise where trust already exists**.

Drawing upon trust literature, practitioner experience and Māori, Indigenous, Pacific and diverse community perspectives, this paper examines the foundations of trustworthiness, including ability, integrity, goodwill and humility. It also considers reciprocal trust, contextual understanding, existing trust networks, shared goals, communication, adaptability, information integrity, leadership and human capacity.

The paper distinguishes **authority, acceptance and trust**. Formal authority may provide a mandate to act, professional or relational standing may provide entry into a relationship, but neither automatically confers trust. Trust is continually interpreted through what people experience of our behaviour.

The revised Fast Trust Model also recognises that trust does not develop in neutral conditions. Time pressure, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load influence how trust is established, exercised, strengthened, damaged and repaired. These conditions are particularly significant during emergencies, when the need for cooperation increases at the same time that the capacity of people and systems may be under considerable pressure.

At its core, this paper proposes that:

Fast trust is the disciplined practice of recognising existing trust, rapidly demonstrating trustworthiness, and creating sufficient confidence for people to work together under conditions of uncertainty.

Trust is therefore not something emergency management practitioners are entitled to expect from communities, colleagues or partner organisations. It is reciprocal, contextual and dynamic. It can be strengthened, damaged and repaired, and must continually be demonstrated through behaviour.

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Finally, I acknowledge Al Lawn. His approach to service, characterised by heartfelt dedication, considered judgement and an extraordinary willingness to sit, listen and kōrero, continues to exemplify the kind of leadership this paper seeks to describe.
The next cuppa is on me, Al.

This framework has never been the product of one person. It has emerged from practice, relationships, observation, research and the willingness of people to share what they have learned.

The 2026 revision continues in that spirit. It reflects further deployment, leadership, training and community experience, but it remains open to challenge and evolution.

Like trust itself, the model should never be considered finished.

2026 Revision Note

This paper was originally written in January 2024. It emerged from practitioner experience, conversations with emergency management colleagues, and an exploration of literature concerning trust, swift trust, organisational relationships and emergency management.

At the time, my central question was relatively straightforward:
How do we develop trust quickly when an emergency does not give us the luxury of time?

The framework has continued to evolve through deployment, training, leadership, governance, community engagement and further reflection. In that process, the question itself has changed. I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the assumption that emergency management practitioners arrive and then begin the process of 'building trust'. We rarely arrive in a trust vacuum.

Communities already contain relationships, knowledge, leadership, histories, capability and networks of trust. Some institutions may already be trusted; others may not. Previous emergencies and previous interactions with authorities may have strengthened or damaged those relationships long before the current event occurs.

The responsibility of the emergency management practitioner is therefore not simply to build trust quickly. It is first to understand the trust environment we have entered.

This revision does not replace the original thinking. It develops and, in several places, challenges it. The revised framework places greater emphasis on existing trust networks, reciprocal trust, contextual understanding, humility, information integrity, human capacity, and the conditions under which trust is exercised.

It also strengthens the distinction between authority, acceptance and trust. Emergency management practitioners may carry statutory authority, professional credibility or institutional standing. None of these automatically entitles us to the trust of another person or community. Similarly, the revised framework recognises that trust cannot be considered solely as something communities provide to emergency management institutions. If we expect communities to trust our knowledge, decisions and intentions, we must also be prepared to place appropriate trust in their knowledge, leadership, capability and relationships.

Finally, this revision gives greater attention to the conditions under which people are being asked to trust one another. Emergencies occur under time pressure, uncertainty and human load. People may be tired, frightened, overloaded, carrying previous experiences or operating within systems already under strain. These conditions matter.

The central proposition of the original paper remains.
Trust matters operationally.

What has changed is my understanding of where it begins.

Trust exists before we arrive. Our responsibility is first to recognise it.

Then we must demonstrate that we are worthy of being trusted in return.

Introduction

Trust is fundamental to human cooperation. It enables people to share information, accept vulnerability, rely upon the judgement or actions of others, and work together despite uncertainty about what will happen next.

These characteristics make trust particularly important in emergency management.

Emergencies create conditions in which people and organisations may need to cooperate rapidly, often with incomplete information, competing priorities, unfamiliar partners and significant consequences attached to decisions. Communities may be asked to act upon advice from people they have never met. Organisations may need to share information or resources across institutional boundaries. Practitioners may be deployed into places they know little about. Leaders may need to delegate consequential decisions to people with whom they have limited previous experience.

At precisely the point when uncertainty increases, so too does our dependence upon other people.

Trust is therefore not simply desirable in emergency management.

Trust is operational.

It influences whether information is believed, whether warnings are acted upon, whether people share what they know, whether organisations collaborate, whether responsibility can be delegated, whether communities engage with formal response structures, and whether people are prepared to accept the vulnerability inherent in relying upon one another.

The importance of trust extends across reduction, readiness, response and recovery. Relationships established before an emergency can materially influence what becomes possible during one. Experiences during response can strengthen or damage relationships that continue long into recovery. Decisions made under pressure may shape institutional and community trust for years afterwards.

This means trust should not be considered only when it becomes absent. Nor should emergency management assume that trust begins when the formal system arrives.

Communities, organisations and response systems already contain networks of relationship and trust. Trust may reside within whānau, hapū and iwi; local leaders and organisations; neighbourhoods and community groups; technical and professional networks; responders; businesses; faith communities; cultural organisations; government agencies; and relationships between individuals.

Some of those relationships may be strong. Others may carry histories of distrust, conflict or institutional failure.

The trust environment already exists. **Trust exists before we arrive.**

This proposition changes the starting point for emergency management practice.

Rather than beginning with the question: **How do we get this community to trust us?**

we might first ask:

Where does trust already exist, and what do we need to understand before we act?

This requires practitioners to identify trusted relationships, understand the context in which they operate, connect appropriately with existing networks, and avoid unnecessarily displacing community capability simply because it sits outside formal emergency management structures.

It also requires us to demonstrate our own trustworthiness.

Emergency management professionals may arrive carrying formal roles, statutory powers, uniforms, qualifications, organisational reputation or technical expertise. These may provide authority or credibility, but they do not automatically confer trust.

Authority can be assigned. Trust cannot.

Trust develops through what people experience of us: whether we are competent, whether we act with integrity, whether our intentions appear genuine, whether we communicate honestly, whether we listen, whether we honour commitments, whether we recognise the limits of our own knowledge, and whether we are prepared to place appropriate trust in others.

This last point is important.

Emergency management has often discussed community trust in terms of whether communities trust institutions, warnings, leaders or official information. That framing is incomplete.

Trust must be reciprocal.

If emergency management practitioners expect communities to trust our information, expertise and judgement, we must also be prepared to recognise and trust community knowledge, leadership, capability and relationships.

Trust must move both ways.

This paper develops the concept of Fast Trust as a practitioner framework for working under these conditions.

Fast Trust does not mean instant trust. It does not imply that relationships requiring years to develop can be manufactured through a series of techniques, nor that trust can be demanded because an emergency exists.

Instead, Fast Trust describes the disciplined practice of **recognising existing trust, rapidly demonstrating trustworthiness, and creating sufficient confidence for people to work together under conditions of uncertainty.**

The framework draws upon established trust literature, practitioner experience, emergency management research and Māori, Indigenous, Pacific and diverse community perspectives. It examines interpersonal and institutional trust, authority and acceptance, reciprocal trust, personal collateral, team trust, information integrity, cultural and contextual understanding, leadership and human capacity.

It also recognises that trust never develops in neutral conditions. Time, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load influence how people interpret information, institutions and one another.

The purpose of the framework is therefore not to provide a formula for making people trust us.

It asks a more useful question:

How do we behave, individually and collectively, in ways that are worthy of trust?

The Concept of Trust in Emergency Management

Trust has been examined across philosophy, psychology, sociology, organisational theory and emergency management. While definitions vary, common themes include expectations about another party's reliability, competence, intentions and integrity, together with a willingness to accept some degree of vulnerability.

That element of vulnerability is particularly relevant to emergency management.

To trust is, in some way, to place something of value within the actions or judgement of another.

During emergencies, that may involve personal safety, information, resources, reputation, responsibility, community wellbeing or confidence in a decision whose consequences are not yet fully known.

A member of the public may trust that an evacuation warning is based upon credible information.

A Controller may trust an Intelligence function to provide the best assessment possible from incomplete evidence.

An agency may trust another organisation to deliver an agreed task.

A community may trust that information it shares with authorities will be heard and used appropriately.

A leader may trust an officer to exercise delegated authority without constant supervision.

An emergency management practitioner may trust the situational awareness of a local community leader whose knowledge cannot be reproduced through formal datasets.

In each case, trust enables action despite uncertainty.

This makes trust both **relational and operational**.

Interpersonal and institutional trust

Emergency management operates simultaneously through interpersonal and institutional forms of trust.

Interpersonal trust concerns confidence between people. It is influenced by experience, competence, integrity, relationships, communication and behaviour.

Institutional trust concerns confidence in organisations, systems, roles, processes and authorities. It may be shaped by organisational performance, transparency, fairness, previous experiences, institutional reputation and wider historical relationships.

The two are connected but should not be treated as interchangeable.

A person may distrust an institution while trusting an individual who works within it. Equally, an organisation may carry considerable public confidence while an individual representative quickly undermines that confidence through their behaviour.

This interaction becomes particularly important during deployments. Practitioners do not arrive carrying only their individual reputation. They may also carry the reputation, history and perceived legitimacy of the institution they represent.

Similarly, the community they enter is not beginning the relationship without history.

Previous emergencies, government decisions, experiences of inequity, relationships with responders, cultural experiences, promises kept or broken, and earlier engagement with institutions may all influence the starting conditions for trust.

Practitioners may therefore inherit trust they did not personally earn.

They may also inherit distrust they did not personally create.

Understanding that starting point is part of contextual competence.

Trustworthiness before trust

A useful distinction for emergency management practice is between **trust** and **trustworthiness**.

We cannot control whether another person chooses to trust us.

Nor should we assume that because we consider ourselves trustworthy, another person or community is obliged to reach the same conclusion.

What practitioners can influence is their own behaviour.

Trustworthiness can be demonstrated through:

- **competence** — possessing and appropriately applying the capability required for the situation;
- **integrity** — acting consistently with ethical principles and stated commitments;
- **goodwill** — demonstrating genuine concern for the interests and wellbeing of others;
- **humility** — recognising the limits of one's own knowledge and authority;
- **honesty** — communicating what is known, unknown and uncertain;
- **reliability** — doing what we say we will do, or explaining when circumstances prevent it;
- **respect** — recognising the knowledge, relationships, authority and dignity of others; and
- **accountability** — accepting responsibility for decisions, actions and their consequences.

This distinction changes the leadership question.

Rather than asking:

How do I make them trust me?

the practitioner asks:

How do I behave in a way that is worthy of trust?

The distinction also protects against treating trust as a communications problem.

Trust cannot simply be messaged into existence. A communications strategy may describe an organisation as transparent, collaborative or community-led, but if people's lived experience contradicts those claims, communication alone is unlikely to sustain trust.

Behaviour provides the evidence.

Competence and epistemic humility

Competence is consistently associated with trustworthiness and remains fundamental within emergency management. People need reasonable confidence that those exercising responsibility possess the knowledge, skills and judgement required for their role.

However, competence should not be confused with certainty.

Emergency management routinely requires decisions in situations where information is incomplete, conditions are changing and no single individual or organisation possesses all relevant knowledge.

In these environments, an important expression of competence is **epistemic humility**: understanding the boundaries of what we know.

A practitioner may possess extensive emergency management expertise while knowing very little about the community, place, history or relationships into which they have deployed.

A technical expert may understand modelling but lack first-hand knowledge of what is occurring on the ground.

A local leader may possess exceptional contextual knowledge while requiring technical advice about a particular hazard.

These forms of knowledge need not compete.

Effective emergency management requires practitioners to recognise which knowledge is needed, where it resides and when their own understanding is insufficient.

This means being able to distinguish between:

- **What I know.**
- **What I think.**
- **What I do not know.**
- **What I need to know.**
- **Who else may know it.**

Asking for expertise is not evidence of incompetence.

Knowing what you don't know is part of competence.

Trust is dynamic

Trust should not be treated as a fixed state that, once achieved, remains available indefinitely.

It changes.

Every interaction can provide new evidence about whether a person, organisation or system is worthy of trust. Commitments are honoured or broken. Information proves accurate or inaccurate. Leaders listen or dismiss. Organisations cooperate or retreat into institutional boundaries. Communities see whether participation genuinely influences decisions.

Trust may therefore strengthen, weaken or disappear as circumstances evolve.

This is particularly important during emergencies because behaviour is highly visible and the consequences of failure may be significant.

A relationship developed over years can be damaged in minutes.

Conversely, difficult circumstances can strengthen trust when people experience competence, honesty, care and mutual reliance under pressure.

Maintaining trust therefore requires continued demonstration of trustworthiness.

It also means recognising that **trust can be repaired**.

Where information proves wrong, commitments cannot be met or decisions cause unintended harm, attempts to protect organisational reputation through silence or defensiveness may create further damage. Acknowledging what occurred, explaining what is known, accepting appropriate responsibility and demonstrating what will change can provide the foundations for repair.

Trust repair is not guaranteed. Those affected ultimately determine whether confidence is restored.

But accountability creates the possibility.

Taken together, these characteristics support a central proposition of this paper:

Trust is an operational resource.

It enables information to move, decisions to be made, authority to be delegated, uncertainty to be tolerated, resources to be shared and people to coordinate across organisational and community boundaries.

Like other operational resources, trust can be strengthened, depleted, misapplied or lost.

Unlike many operational resources, however, it cannot simply be directed, purchased or requisitioned.

It exists within relationships.

That is why the development of Fast Trust begins not with techniques for persuading people to trust emergency management, but with understanding **where trust already resides and how we demonstrate trustworthiness within that environment**.

Setting the scene through Personal Experience

The Fast Trust Model did not begin with theory.

It began with practice.

Across almost two decades within the emergency management ecosystem, I have repeatedly observed situations in which the effectiveness of a response depended not simply upon structures, plans, authority or technical capability, but upon whether people were willing to trust one another sufficiently to act together.

Three experiences were particularly influential in the development of this thinking.

Viewed together, they raised three different questions:

- **Where does trust already live?**
- **How does trust move?**

- **What does competence look like when we enter somebody else's context?**

These experiences became the starting point for the Fast Trust Model.

Experience One — Where Trust Already Lives

During one emergency, I was involved in the establishment of a Civil Defence Centre (CDC) within an affected community.

The centre was properly established, resourced and staffed. From an emergency management perspective, it represented the formal mechanism through which affected people could seek information, support and assistance.

Yet relatively few people came.

Approximately eight to ten people used the official CDC.

Meanwhile, an existing community organisation nearby had spontaneously become a focal point for the community. Approximately 1,000 people were gathering there.

The contrast was impossible to ignore.

The formal response system had established the place people were *supposed* to go.

The community had gone somewhere else.

Why?

Because people gravitate towards sources they trust, even in crisis situations - and particularly during periods of uncertainty.

The community organisation was familiar. Relationships already existed there. People knew the individuals involved. It was already part of the social fabric of that community.

Our CDC was not.

We subsequently redirected emergency management resources towards the community-led centre, recognising that it had already established the relationships and confidence we were trying to create.

At the time, I understood this primarily as a lesson about the importance of community trust.

I now interpret it differently.

The community did not lack trust. We had failed to recognise where trust already lived.

That distinction matters.

Emergency management practitioners can unconsciously assume that the formal response structure represents the centre of an emergency. From inside the system, it may appear logical that communities will orient themselves towards our centres, our information channels and our structures.

Communities do not necessarily experience the emergency in that way.

They may orient themselves towards people, places and organisations they already know.



In this example, redirecting resources was therefore more than an operational decision. It required the formal system to recognise community capability and place trust in a network operating outside its own structures.

The experience changed the question for me.

Instead of:

How do we get people to come to us?

perhaps the first question should have been:

Where are people already going, and why?

The lesson is simple:

Before attempting to build trust, identify where trust already lives.

Experience Two — How Trust Moves

A second experience reinforced the importance of communication, but also challenged my understanding of what effective communication actually means.

During an emergency response, significant effort was being made to provide communities with timely and accurate information.

From inside the formal system, communication was occurring.

Information was being produced.

Messages were being distributed.

Channels were operating.

Yet it became increasingly apparent that some of those messages were not achieving the desired effect within the community.

The issue was not necessarily the content.

It was the relationship between the message, the messenger and the people receiving it.

People were more receptive to information when it came through individuals and networks they already knew and trusted. Community leaders, iwi representatives and other trusted figures were able to carry information into relationships that the formal emergency management system did not possess.

This reinforced an important principle:

Effective communication in emergency management is not just about the content of the message, but also about the medium and the messenger.

But continued reflection has taken that lesson further.

Information being sent does not mean information has been received.

Information being received does not mean it has been **understood**.

Information being understood does not mean it has been **believed**.

And information being believed does not necessarily mean it will be **acted upon**.

Trust influences every one of those transitions.

Trusted community leaders are therefore not simply alternative communications channels through which emergency management can distribute official messages. They are part of an existing trust environment.

That distinction is important because there is a risk that formal systems approach community relationships transactionally:

We have a message. You have trusted relationships. Please carry our message for us.

That is not reciprocal trust.

If emergency management expects trusted community networks to carry information **outward**, it must also be prepared for knowledge, concerns and perspectives to travel **back through those same relationships and influence the response**.

Community leaders may know why a message is not landing.

They may identify emerging needs that have not yet reached formal reporting structures.

They may understand the history influencing people's response to an official warning.

They may know that a technically correct message will be interpreted differently because of previous experiences.

They may challenge our understanding of what is occurring.

That knowledge matters.

Trusted networks should not merely amplify our voice. They should change what we hear.

The experience therefore became about more than effective communication.

It demonstrated **how trust moves**.

Trust moves through relationships.

And effective emergency management requires information to move in both directions through them.

Experience Three — What Competence Really Means

A third experience involved deploying into a culturally complex environment where my professional emergency management knowledge was useful, but insufficient on its own.

I brought technical knowledge and experience.

That capability mattered.

It enabled me to understand the emergency management system, identify potential pathways through the problem, recognise operational requirements and consider what might be required beyond immediate response.

I was also able to draw upon previous experience to think beyond the immediate delivery of aid and consider longer-term resilience and capability.

However, technical knowledge alone could not tell me what a successful outcome should look like for that community.

I had entered somebody else's context.

Understanding that context required listening.

It required relationships.

It required recognition that local people held knowledge I did not possess: knowledge of place, culture, history, community relationships, leadership, capability and what would or would not work in practice.

The solution therefore did not emerge from applying technical emergency management expertise to the community.

It emerged by bringing technical knowledge into relationship **with** community knowledge, cultural understanding and local leadership.

That distinction has become increasingly important to my understanding of competence.

Emergency management rightly values expertise. People operating in consequential environments need to be capable. Competence is fundamental to trustworthiness.

But competence should not be confused with having every answer.

A deployed practitioner can know emergency management exceptionally well while knowing very little about the place they have entered.

A technical specialist may understand modelling but not local history.

A senior officer may understand coordination structures but not the relationships within a particular community.

A community leader may possess exceptional situational and contextual knowledge while needing specialist technical advice about a hazard.

No single person holds the complete picture.

An important expression of competence is therefore **epistemic humility**, the ability to recognise the boundaries of one's own knowledge and actively seek the knowledge of others.

That means being comfortable saying:

- **I don't know.**
- **I may be wrong.**
- **Tell me what I'm missing.**
- **Who else needs to be part of this conversation?**
- **What do you know that I cannot see from where I am standing?**



These are not signs of weak leadership.

Under uncertainty, they may be evidence of highly competent leadership.

Knowing what you don't know is part of competence.

What These Experiences Changed

When I originally reflected upon these experiences, I was attempting to understand how trust could be established quickly in emergency management.

That question remains important.

But almost two decades within the emergency management ecosystem, together with continued deployment, leadership, training and community engagement since the original paper was written, have shifted my thinking.

I no longer believe the central question is simply:

How do we build trust quickly?

That framing places the emergency management practitioner at the centre of the trust relationship.

The experiences described above suggest something different.

In the first experience, **trust already existed**. The formal system needed to recognise it.

In the second, trust moved through **relationships and trusted networks**, and effective communication required information to move in both directions.

In the third, professional competence became most useful when it was combined with **humility and the knowledge of others**.

Together, these experiences lead to three foundational propositions:

1. Trust exists before we arrive.

Communities and organisations already contain relationships, histories, capability and networks of trust. Our first responsibility is to understand the environment we have entered.

2. Trustworthiness must be demonstrated, not asserted.

Authority, professional status and technical expertise may establish credibility, but trust develops through what people experience of our competence, integrity, goodwill, humility and behaviour.

3. Trust must move both ways.

We cannot reasonably expect communities, colleagues or partner organisations to trust our knowledge and judgement while remaining unwilling to place appropriate trust in theirs.

These propositions now sit at the foundation of the revised Fast Trust Model.

They also suggest that fast trust is not primarily about **speeding up relationship-building**.

It is about becoming much better, much faster, at understanding the relationships already around us and behaving in ways that allow people to work together despite uncertainty.

That is the problem to which the concept of Fast Trust now turns.

Understanding Fast Trust

The concept of fast trust is particularly relevant to emergency management because emergencies frequently require people and organisations to work together before conventional relationships have had time to develop. Personnel may be deployed into unfamiliar regions, agencies may be brought together within coordination structures for the first time, and community leaders may find themselves working alongside government officials and responders with whom they have had little or no previous contact. These relationships are expected to become functional quickly, often while information remains incomplete and the consequences of decisions are significant.

Research into rapidly developing trust provides a useful starting point for understanding this challenge. Yu, Saleem and Gonzalez (2014) examined how initial impressions and subsequent interactions influence the development of trust, while wider trust literature points to the importance of perceived competence, integrity, benevolence, predictability and vulnerability. The concept of swift trust similarly recognises that temporary groups may begin working on the basis of assumptions about professional roles, reputation and expected behaviour before deeper interpersonal trust has developed (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). These ideas are useful within emergency management, but the environment in which emergency management operates introduces additional complexity. People may not only be unfamiliar with one another; they may also bring different organisational mandates, cultural perspectives, professional disciplines, histories and experiences of the institutions represented within the response.

For this reason, fast trust should not be understood as instant trust, nor as a method for compressing relationship-building into a short series of prescribed behaviours. Some relationships take considerable time to develop, and there are circumstances in which distrust is entirely rational. A community that has experienced repeated institutional failure, for example, may have good reason to approach a government agency cautiously. Similarly, practitioners working across organisational boundaries may have previous experience that influences their willingness to rely upon another agency. Fast trust cannot erase that history simply because an emergency creates urgency.

The revised concept instead begins from the premise that trust already exists within the environment into which emergency management practitioners enter. The practical challenge is to recognise those existing relationships, understand the context in which they operate, demonstrate trustworthiness and establish sufficient confidence for people to work together despite uncertainty. In this paper, **fast trust is therefore defined as the disciplined practice of recognising existing trust, rapidly demonstrating trustworthiness, and creating sufficient confidence for people to work together under conditions of uncertainty.**

The idea of “sufficient confidence” is deliberate. Emergency management does not always require the depth of trust associated with long-standing personal relationships. A newly formed team may need enough confidence in one another's competence and integrity to share information, delegate responsibility and coordinate activity. A community may need enough confidence in an information source to consider and act upon a warning. Two organisations may need sufficient confidence in each other's intentions and capability to share resources or accept operational dependencies. These relationships may deepen over time, but the immediate requirement is often to establish enough justified confidence for collective action to become possible.

Developing fast trust therefore begins with understanding the trust environment rather than immediately attempting to create new relationships. Practitioners should seek to identify the individuals, organisations and networks through which trust, information and influence already move. In communities, these may include whānau, hapū, iwi, marae, neighbourhood groups,

community organisations, churches, cultural organisations, businesses or individual leaders. Within an emergency management system, existing trust may sit within professional networks, previous deployment relationships, established agency partnerships or informal connections between experienced practitioners. Understanding these networks provides insight into both capability and the relationships through which cooperation may be possible.

This process should also identify where trust is absent or has previously been damaged. Historical relationships matter. Previous emergency responses, government decisions, organisational behaviour, unmet commitments or experiences of inequity may influence how a community or partner organisation interprets the actions of those arriving during the current event. Practitioners may inherit both confidence and distrust that they did not personally create. Recognising this does not mean accepting responsibility for every historical failure, but it does require an understanding that the relationship does not necessarily begin at the point of first contact.

Once that environment is better understood, the practitioner must demonstrate trustworthiness through behaviour. Competence remains important. People need confidence that those exercising responsibility have the capability to perform their role. In emergency management, however, competence also requires an understanding of the limits of one's own expertise. A deployed officer may understand coordination systems exceptionally well while knowing little about the community in which those systems are being applied. A technical specialist may possess detailed hazard knowledge while lacking first-hand situational awareness. Local communities may hold knowledge of place, people and previous events that is unavailable through formal information systems. Competence therefore includes the ability to identify what knowledge is required, where it resides and when the expertise of others should influence our own assessment.

Integrity and goodwill are equally important. Trust is strengthened when actions are consistent with stated intentions, commitments are honoured and practitioners demonstrate genuine concern for collective outcomes rather than simply protecting organisational interests. This is particularly significant where different agencies or communities enter an emergency with competing priorities. Shared goals can provide an initial basis for cooperation, but trust develops through evidence that those goals are reflected in behaviour. Where commitments cannot be met, explaining why and addressing the consequences is likely to be more credible than allowing expectations to remain unresolved.

Communication is one of the most visible ways in which these qualities are experienced. Early communication can reduce uncertainty, clarify roles and begin establishing expectations about how people will work together. Its value, however, is not simply a matter of speed or volume. Effective communication requires listening, transparency and an ability to distinguish between what is known, what remains uncertain and what may change. It also requires practitioners to consider who is communicating and through which relationships information is most likely to be understood and trusted. As the earlier experiences demonstrate, the messenger and the relationships surrounding the message may be as consequential as the content itself.

Fast trust also requires adaptability. Emergency environments change quickly, and people are continually receiving new information about both the situation and one another. Initial assumptions may prove wrong, community feedback may reveal information that was previously unavailable, and an operational approach that appeared appropriate at the beginning of an event may become ineffective as conditions change. Practitioners who remain rigid in order to project confidence may ultimately undermine trust. Responsiveness to new evidence, including a willingness to acknowledge uncertainty or change a decision, can instead demonstrate sound judgement and integrity.

Leadership plays an important role in creating the conditions within which these behaviours occur. The original Fast Trust Model emphasised decisive leadership, and decisiveness remains important where delay creates risk. Continued reflection suggests, however, that decisiveness should not be confused with speed for its own sake. Effective leadership under uncertainty requires judgement about when immediate action is necessary and when the more responsible decision is to seek additional information, bring other voices into the discussion or allow a short period for consideration. Visible, calm and proportionate leadership can provide confidence without creating an expectation that leaders must always possess certainty.

Fast trust must also operate across organisational boundaries. Emergency management is inherently interdependent, and no single organisation possesses all of the resources, information, authority or relationships required for complex events. Trust between organisations can therefore influence the speed with which information is shared, resources are deployed and joint decisions are made. Pre-existing relationships are particularly valuable because they reduce the amount of relational work required once an emergency occurs. Where those relationships do not exist, clear expectations, reliable behaviour and transparent communication become even more important.

The same principle applies within teams. Leaders need to place appropriate trust in the capability and judgement of their people, particularly where operational tempo makes centralised decision-making impractical. Practitioners in turn need confidence that leaders will provide clear intent, appropriate authority and support when difficult decisions are required. Fast trust is weakened when responsibility is ostensibly delegated but meaningful authority remains tightly controlled, or when people fear that reasonable decisions made in good faith will later be judged without regard to the uncertainty under which they were made.

Taken together, these factors suggest that developing fast trust is less about applying a predetermined sequence of techniques and more about **rapidly understanding a relational environment and behaving appropriately within it**. Existing networks, competence, integrity, goodwill, humility, communication, shared purpose, adaptability and leadership interact rather than operate independently. Their relative importance will also vary according to context.

This is why a universal formula for fast trust would be both unrealistic and potentially counterproductive. The practitioner task is instead to notice what the situation requires. In one environment, technical competence may need to be demonstrated quickly. In another, the priority may be acknowledging a history of institutional distrust. Elsewhere, the most important action may be finding the person or organisation that already carries community confidence and asking how the formal response can support rather than duplicate what is already occurring.

Fast trust therefore requires both capability and curiosity. It asks practitioners to enter unfamiliar environments without assuming that their formal role places them at the centre of the system. It requires sufficient confidence in one's own expertise to contribute meaningfully, alongside sufficient humility to recognise expertise in others. Most importantly, it requires an understanding that the objective is not to persuade people to trust us, but to establish conditions in which people have reasonable grounds to decide that working together is possible.

This understanding provides the basis for the next distinction within the framework: the relationship between **authority, acceptance and trust**. Although these concepts may overlap in practice, they are not interchangeable, and confusing them can create significant problems for emergency management practitioners entering unfamiliar teams or communities.

Authority, Acceptance and Trust

Authority, acceptance and trust are related concepts in emergency management, but they are not interchangeable. Distinguishing between them is particularly important when practitioners enter unfamiliar communities, organisations or response structures, because a formal mandate to act does not necessarily mean that those affected accept our presence, our decisions or our judgement.

Authority derives from the mandate, responsibility or power attached to a role, organisation or statutory function. Within emergency management, authority may determine who can make particular decisions, direct activity, commit resources or exercise specific powers. It provides necessary clarity within complex operating environments and is an important part of effective coordination. Authority can, however, exist before any interpersonal relationship has been established. A person may hold considerable authority because of the position they occupy while remaining largely unknown to the people with whom they are expected to work.

Acceptance is different. It is relational rather than primarily structural and describes the extent to which a person or organisation is acknowledged and permitted to participate within a group, community or network. Acceptance may arise through familiarity, cultural connection, shared relationships, recognised expertise, common purpose or the endorsement of someone who already carries trust. It can provide an important pathway into relationship, particularly where the practitioner is entering a context that is not their own.

In Māori and other culturally diverse environments, acceptance may be influenced by an individual's willingness and ability to engage appropriately with local values, practices, relationships and leadership. Shared cultural understanding or established connections can create an initial point of recognition and reduce some of the distance between people. This can be particularly important in emergency management, where practitioners may have little time to establish relationships before consequential work needs to begin.

Acceptance should not, however, be mistaken for trust.

Trust requires something more. It involves a willingness to accept vulnerability based upon confidence in another person's or organisation's competence, integrity, intentions and behaviour. Where acceptance may provide an opening for engagement, trust influences the extent to which people are prepared to rely upon one another once that engagement begins.

This distinction is important because emergency management practitioners can easily carry one of these forms of standing and assume that the others will follow automatically. A statutory role may provide authority without acceptance or trust. Cultural connection may create acceptance without demonstrating the competence required for trust. Professional expertise may create initial credibility while saying little about whether a person will act with integrity. Conversely, a local community leader may possess no formal emergency management authority while carrying considerable trust and influence within the affected community.

The relationship between authority, acceptance and trust is therefore not necessarily linear. Acceptance can create favourable conditions for trust to develop, but it does not guarantee that outcome. Formal authority can enable action, but the exercise of authority can either strengthen or

undermine trust depending upon how it is used. Trust may also exist independently of formal authority, particularly within community relationships and informal networks.

This creates an important consideration for deployed personnel. When practitioners enter an unfamiliar Emergency Coordination Centre, community or multi-agency environment, the role printed on a vest, identification card or organisational chart communicates something about formal responsibility. It does not communicate everything others may need to know before deciding whether to rely upon that person.

A senior officer arriving from outside a region may possess significant technical expertise and delegated authority but have limited knowledge of local relationships, previous events or community expectations. Local practitioners may be expected to accept that officer's formal role while still forming their own judgement about the individual's capability and approach. Trust begins to develop through what happens next: whether the officer listens before making assumptions, understands the context, demonstrates competence, communicates clearly, respects existing capability and follows through on commitments.

The same principle applies to relationships between emergency management organisations and communities. Formal responsibility for an emergency does not make the formal system the sole source of legitimate leadership. Communities may already have people and organisations to whom they turn for information, assistance and decision-making. Those relationships may carry forms of legitimacy that cannot be conferred by legislation or organisational position.

This does not diminish the importance of formal emergency management authority. Complex emergencies require clear accountabilities and an understanding of who is responsible for particular decisions. Rather, it requires practitioners to recognise that **formal authority and social legitimacy can coexist**, and that effective emergency management often depends upon the ability to connect them.

The exercise of authority itself can also influence trust. Authority exercised transparently, competently and proportionately may strengthen confidence in both the individual and the institution they represent. Authority exercised dismissively, inconsistently or without sufficient regard for context may have the opposite effect. The question is therefore not only whether a practitioner has the authority to act, but how that authority is experienced by others.

This becomes particularly important when emergency management operates within communities that have historical reasons to approach institutions cautiously. In such environments, invoking formal authority more forcefully may secure short-term compliance while simultaneously damaging the relationship required for longer-term cooperation. Understanding the difference between compliance and trust is critical. People may comply because an institution possesses the power to require something of them without having confidence in that institution's competence, intentions or integrity.

For practitioners seeking to establish fast trust, it is useful to consider all three dimensions when entering a new environment. What formal authority do I carry, and what are its boundaries? To what extent have I been accepted into this environment, and what has enabled that acceptance? Where does trust already exist, and what evidence will people need before they can reasonably decide that I am trustworthy?

These questions encourage a different posture from assuming that professional role or organisational mandate is sufficient. They require practitioners to recognise the standing they genuinely possess rather than the standing they believe they should possess.

The distinction can therefore be summarised simply: **authority provides a mandate to act; acceptance can provide entry into relationship; trust influences whether people are prepared to rely upon us and act with us.** Each has value within emergency management, but none should be assumed to provide the others.

Understanding this distinction also leads to a more demanding question. If emergency management practitioners seek the trust of communities, partner organisations and colleagues, what trust are we prepared to extend in return? That question moves the framework from the acquisition of trust towards its reciprocal nature.

Reciprocal Trust

Emergency management frequently speaks about the importance of gaining, maintaining or restoring community trust. The language is understandable, but it can unintentionally frame trust as something communities are expected to provide to emergency management organisations. The institution acts, communicates or engages, and the desired outcome is that the community will trust it.

That framing is incomplete.

Trust is relational, and meaningful relationships require some degree of reciprocity. If emergency management practitioners expect communities to place confidence in our information, capability, intentions and judgement, we must also be prepared to recognise and place appropriate trust in community knowledge, leadership, capability and relationships.

This principle was present in the original Fast Trust Model and has become increasingly important in the revised framework. Trust is not simply about communities trusting emergency management professionals. It is also about those professionals having confidence in the knowledge, capabilities and perspectives that communities bring to an emergency.

Communities frequently possess forms of knowledge that formal emergency management systems cannot readily reproduce. They may understand local geography, social relationships, cultural obligations, previous events, vulnerable whānau, informal resources, community tensions and the practical consequences of proposed interventions. Iwi, hapū, marae, Pacific churches, ethnic community organisations, local businesses and neighbourhood networks may also possess established systems for mobilising people and resources long before formal response structures are activated.

Recognising this capability is different from simply engaging with it.

A formal response system can consult extensively while retaining almost complete control over how information is interpreted and decisions are made. Community representatives may attend meetings, provide information and distribute official messages without their knowledge materially influencing the response. Participation alone is therefore not sufficient evidence of reciprocal trust.

A more useful test is to consider what the formal system is genuinely prepared to entrust to others. Are we willing to rely upon community situational awareness where it is credible? Are we prepared to resource community-led activity rather than recreate it within our own structures? Can local knowledge change our assessment of the situation? Are we willing to share information early enough for others to contribute meaningfully? Can responsibility and decision-making be shared where it is appropriate to do so?

These questions do not imply that all information should be accepted without scrutiny or that statutory accountability should be transferred simply to demonstrate trust. Reciprocal trust is not blind trust. Community information, like institutional information, may need to be verified. Professional responsibilities remain, and some decisions properly sit with particular statutory roles. The point is that knowledge should be assessed because of its relevance and credibility rather than discounted because it originates outside the formal system.

Reciprocity also matters between agencies and within response teams. Multi-agency emergency management cannot function effectively if organisations expect others to rely upon their information and capability while remaining unwilling to do the same in return. Similarly, leaders cannot expect practitioners to exercise initiative while withholding the authority, information or organisational support necessary for them to do so. Trust becomes meaningful when some appropriate degree of vulnerability moves in both directions.

There is a power dimension to this. The organisation holding statutory authority, resources or access to official information often has greater capacity to determine the terms of engagement. It can invite community representatives into its structures, decide what information to release and determine which perspectives are reflected in formal decisions. A commitment to reciprocal trust therefore requires those with greater institutional power to consider how that power shapes the relationship.

This is particularly relevant when working with Māori and Indigenous communities, where contemporary emergency management structures operate alongside systems of authority, knowledge and relationship that pre-date them. Partnership cannot be reduced to asking communities to support decisions that have already been made. Nor should trusted relationships be treated simply as convenient distribution networks for official information.

The earlier experience concerning trusted messengers illustrates this distinction. Community leaders were able to carry information through relationships the formal system did not possess. It would have been easy to regard those leaders primarily as an effective means of extending the reach of official communication. Reciprocal trust requires more. The same relationships that allow information to travel from the formal system into a community must also allow knowledge to travel back and influence the formal system.

This is why trusted networks should not merely amplify the voice of emergency management. They should also change what emergency management hears. Reciprocal trust therefore involves an ongoing exchange of confidence, knowledge and responsibility rather than a one-way attempt to secure community support. It asks emergency management practitioners not only whether others are willing to listen to us, but whether we are genuinely prepared to listen to, rely upon and be influenced by them.

This does not remove professional judgement or accountability. It strengthens them by widening the knowledge and relationships available to the response.

Within the Fast Trust framework, reciprocal trust is therefore both a principle and a practical test of relationship. **If we seek the trust of others, we must be able to identify what we are prepared to trust them with in return.**

The next question is what happens when trust in an institution is limited, but an individual practitioner carries relationships and credibility that allow engagement to occur. This is where **personal collateral, reputation and integrity** become particularly significant.

Personal Collateral, Reputation, and Integrity

Institutional trust and interpersonal trust do not always align. A community may have limited confidence in an organisation while maintaining strong relationships with particular individuals who work within or alongside it. In these circumstances, the reputation and relationships of individual practitioners can create opportunities for engagement that institutional authority alone may not provide.

I describe this as **personal collateral**: the credibility, reputation and relationships an individual carries with them and, at times, is willing to place into a relationship in order to create the conditions for cooperation.

Personal collateral may have developed over many years. It can arise through previous service, demonstrated competence, cultural connection, professional reputation, established relationships, integrity, consistency or a history of doing what one has said one will do. It may also travel through relationships. An individual who is unknown to a community may be accepted initially because someone already trusted by that community is prepared to stand beside them, introduce them or vouch for their intentions.

This can be particularly important where institutional trust has been damaged. Historical grievances, previous emergency responses, unmet commitments, inequitable experiences or broader relationships with government may mean that the organisation represented by a practitioner does not begin from a position of confidence. In such circumstances, a trusted individual can sometimes create an opening through which dialogue becomes possible.

That opening should not be confused with institutional trust.

When a practitioner uses personal collateral, they are effectively placing some of their own standing into the relationship. If they assure a community that an issue will be addressed, advocate for a course of action, introduce another agency or ask people to participate in a process, their own reputation may become connected to what happens next. If commitments are repeatedly not honoured or the institution behaves inconsistently with the expectations created through that relationship, the damage may extend beyond confidence in the organisation to confidence in the individual.

Integrity therefore becomes particularly important when personal collateral is being exercised. Trusted relationships should not be used simply to overcome resistance, secure compliance or persuade communities to accept institutional decisions. Doing so may achieve a short-term operational objective while depleting the relationship that made the engagement possible in the first place.

Practitioners also need to be careful about what they personally promise. There can be a temptation, particularly when trying to resolve a difficult situation, to provide reassurance about matters that ultimately sit beyond one's control. Trustworthiness sometimes requires a more cautious response: being clear about what can be committed to, what must be escalated, what remains uncertain and when further information can reasonably be provided. The desire to maintain confidence should never require a practitioner to create certainty they do not possess.

Personal collateral also has implications for the organisations within which trusted practitioners work. There is value in recognising people who possess strong relationships and are able to bridge institutional and community environments. However, resilient emergency management systems should not become dependent upon a small number of highly trusted individuals.

Over-reliance on particular people creates vulnerability. If relationships, contextual knowledge and credibility reside almost entirely with one practitioner, those assets may disappear when that person changes role, becomes unavailable or leaves the organisation. It can also place an unreasonable burden on individuals who repeatedly become responsible for repairing relationships or navigating institutional distrust on behalf of the wider system.

Personal collateral should therefore be understood as a **bridge rather than a substitute for institutional trustworthiness**. Where an individual relationship creates an opening, the organisation has a responsibility to reinforce that opening through its own behaviour. Commitments need to be honoured beyond the individual who made the introduction. Relationships should broaden across teams and institutions. Knowledge should be retained appropriately, and communities should not be required to begin again each time personnel change.

There is a further dimension to personal collateral within emergency management deployments. Practitioners frequently arrive carrying more than their own reputation. They may carry the reputation of their home agency, their profession, previous deployments or colleagues who have worked in the affected area before them. In some circumstances this provides immediate credibility; in others it creates an additional barrier. Understanding what one represents in the eyes of others is therefore part of contextual awareness.

The concept ultimately reinforces the reciprocal nature of trust. Personal collateral is valuable precisely because something meaningful is at stake for the person offering it. The individual is not merely asking another party to accept vulnerability; they are accepting some vulnerability themselves by placing their own reputation into the relationship.

Used with integrity, this can create the conditions for dialogue where formal authority cannot. Used carelessly, it can damage both personal and institutional relationships.

Personal collateral may open the door. **What the system does once that door is open determines whether trust has the opportunity to grow.**

Trust in Team

Fast trust is not only a question of relationships between emergency management organisations and communities. It is equally important within the teams responsible for coordinating and delivering an emergency response.

Emergency management teams frequently form rapidly. People may arrive from different organisations, regions and professional disciplines and be expected to work together almost immediately. During larger events, personnel may rotate through functions, new staff may arrive part-way through an operational period, and leaders may have limited previous experience of the

people to whom they are delegating significant responsibilities. The ability to establish sufficient confidence within these teams has direct consequences for operational performance.

The original development of this part of the framework was influenced by conversations about the importance of trusting capable practitioners to “just get on and get things done”. The phrase is informal, but the underlying principle is important. In a dynamic emergency environment, leaders cannot personally control every decision or action. Effective coordination depends upon people being able to exercise judgement within clear boundaries.

Delegation is therefore an important expression of trust.

Meaningful delegation involves more than assigning tasks. People need to understand the leader's intent, the outcome being sought, the boundaries within which they can act, the authority available to them, when escalation is required and how accountability will operate. Within those parameters, capable practitioners need sufficient room to make decisions.

This requires leaders to accept that another person's approach may not be identical to their own. A leader who delegates a responsibility but then continually intervenes because the practitioner is not completing it exactly as the leader would may have transferred the workload without genuinely transferring trust. Over time, this can reduce initiative, slow decision-making and create teams in which people wait for permission rather than exercise professional judgement.

Trust in team does not mean the absence of accountability. Emergency management decisions can have significant consequences, and appropriate oversight remains essential. The challenge is to create an environment in which accountability and autonomy reinforce rather than undermine one another. Clear expectations, appropriate reporting and agreed escalation points provide the structure within which trust can operate.

This becomes particularly important when decisions do not produce the intended outcome. Emergency management occurs under uncertainty, and not every reasonable decision will prove correct. Teams need to be able to distinguish between a good-faith decision made competently from the information available at the time, a genuine mistake from which learning can occur, and behaviour that falls below acceptable professional or ethical standards.

If every unsuccessful outcome is treated as evidence that an individual should not have been trusted, practitioners may become increasingly reluctant to exercise judgement. They may withhold concerns, defer decisions unnecessarily or escalate matters that properly sit within their own authority because the personal risk of being wrong becomes greater than the operational risk of delay.

A trusted team environment allows people to raise uncertainty and challenge assumptions without that behaviour automatically being interpreted as weakness or disloyalty. This is especially important for leaders. A team that trusts its leader should be able to say that something is not working, that information may be wrong, that capacity is becoming stretched or that the leader's preferred course of action requires reconsideration.

Leaders contribute to this environment through their response when challenged. If contrary information is routinely dismissed, mistakes are punished indiscriminately or difficult messages are met defensively, the flow of information through the team will narrow. People may continue to comply with formal direction while becoming less willing to contribute what they actually know or think. From an operational perspective, that represents a loss of information as well as a loss of trust.

Trust within teams is also reciprocal. Leaders demonstrate trust by delegating meaningful responsibility, sharing information, backing appropriate professional judgement and creating room for challenge. Team members demonstrate trustworthiness by exercising delegated authority competently, communicating material changes, escalating when required, supporting collective decisions and accepting accountability for their actions.



This reciprocity becomes particularly important as pressure increases. Fatigue, uncertainty and operational tempo can encourage leaders to centralise decisions because retaining control may feel safer. Yet excessive centralisation can create bottlenecks at precisely the point when the system needs distributed capability. Trust in team provides one mechanism through which leadership capacity can be extended across the response rather than concentrated in a few individuals.

Pre-existing relationships can accelerate this process. Practitioners who have trained, exercised or deployed together may already understand one another's capability, communication style and judgement. Where those relationships do not exist, role clarity, professional standards, transparent communication and consistent behaviour can provide an initial basis for fast trust.

The objective is not unquestioning confidence. Healthy teams retain appropriate challenge, verification and accountability. The objective is sufficient confidence that people can rely upon one another without requiring constant reassurance or supervision.

In practical terms, this means leaders should be able to ask themselves whether they have genuinely created the conditions for their people to act. Have I made the intent clear? Does this person understand the authority they hold? Have I provided the information they need? Do they know when I expect escalation? Will they tell me if they think I am wrong? Do they believe I will support a reasonable decision made in good faith?

These questions move trust in team beyond interpersonal compatibility. They position it as part of operational design.

A team in which trust is appropriately distributed can share responsibility, adapt more quickly and make better use of the capability available to it. A team in which trust remains concentrated at the top may appear controlled, but it can become fragile when tempo increases or key individuals reach the limits of their capacity.

For emergency management leaders, trusting our people is therefore not simply a leadership virtue. **It is part of creating a response system capable of operating under pressure.**

Information Integrity and Misinformation Management

Information is one of the primary resources upon which emergency management depends. Decisions are made from it, warnings are issued through it, resources are prioritised because of it, and communities use it to make choices about their own safety and wellbeing. The quality of information available during an emergency can therefore have direct consequences for both operational effectiveness and public confidence.

For this reason, the revised Fast Trust Model broadens the original focus on misinformation management to the concept of **information integrity**. Misinformation remains an important threat to trust, particularly in an environment where inaccurate information can spread rapidly through digital and social networks. However, maintaining trust in information requires more than correcting false claims. It requires attention to the way information is produced, assessed, communicated, interpreted, updated and corrected across the emergency management system.

Information integrity begins with **accuracy**. Emergency management practitioners should make reasonable efforts to ensure that the information being relied upon or communicated is credible and appropriately verified. The reality of emergency management, however, is that perfect information is rarely available. Situational awareness develops over time, observations may conflict, technical assessments may change and decisions may need to be made before all relevant information can be confirmed. Accuracy therefore needs to be considered alongside transparency about the quality and limitations of the information available.

This makes **uncertainty** an important part of information integrity. Trustworthiness does not require practitioners to present uncertain information as certain. Instead, it requires clarity about what is known, what is believed to be likely, what remains unknown and what may change as new information becomes available. This distinction is particularly important when communicating forecasts, modelling and emerging intelligence, where information may represent a range of possible outcomes rather than a definitive prediction.

Timeliness also matters. Information that is technically accurate but arrives after it can influence a decision may have little operational value. The challenge is therefore to balance the need for verification with the need to communicate while information remains useful. This may require practitioners to share an emerging assessment with appropriate caveats rather than wait for certainty that may not arrive within the decision window.

Consistency contributes to confidence, particularly where multiple organisations and functions are communicating simultaneously. Contradictory messages can create confusion and weaken trust in the wider response. Consistency does not mean that information should remain unchanged when the evidence changes. It means that material differences should be understood and, where possible, reconciled or explained. An updated assessment is not necessarily inconsistent with an earlier one if people understand why the assessment has changed.

Accessibility is equally important. Information cannot contribute effectively to community safety if the people who need it cannot access, interpret or use it. Language, disability, digital access, cultural context, communication preferences and the channels through which different communities receive information all influence accessibility. Effective communication therefore requires more than making information publicly available; it requires consideration of whether it is reaching the people for whom it is intended in a form they can understand and act upon.

Finally, information integrity is influenced by **messenger credibility**. People do not evaluate information independently of the person or institution delivering it. Previous experience, relationships, institutional reputation and cultural context all influence whether a message is considered credible. This reinforces the importance of existing trusted networks. In some circumstances, a local leader, iwi representative, community organisation or other trusted figure may be better placed to communicate particular information than the formal emergency management organisation itself.

The importance of the messenger should not, however, result in community networks being treated simply as distribution channels for official information. As discussed earlier in this paper, those networks also provide information back into the emergency management system. Maintaining information integrity requires the formal response to be capable of receiving local observations, community intelligence and alternative perspectives, assessing them appropriately and allowing them to influence situational awareness.

Communicating uncertainty

One of the more difficult tests of information integrity occurs when emergency management practitioners do not know the answer.

There can be considerable pressure during emergencies to provide certainty. Communities want to know what will happen. Leaders want clear advice. Decision-makers may seek definitive assessments from technical specialists. Media and public communication often require complex information to be translated into relatively simple messages. Under these conditions, acknowledging uncertainty can feel uncomfortable.

Yet uncertainty is inherent in emergency management. Forecasts change, models contain assumptions, intelligence may be incomplete and different sources can point towards different conclusions. Presenting uncertain information with greater confidence than the evidence supports may provide temporary reassurance, but it creates a significant trust risk if circumstances subsequently change.

Communicating uncertainty effectively requires practitioners to distinguish between what is known, what is currently assessed, what remains uncertain and what is being done to reduce that uncertainty. It should also provide people with some indication of when the information is likely to be reviewed or updated. This allows uncertainty to be communicated without creating unnecessary ambiguity about what people should do in the meantime.

This approach is consistent with the experiences described by decision-makers and information providers involved in the recurring Westport floods. Participants reported working with technical modelling, forecasts, observations and rapidly evolving information while making consequential decisions. The research identified the value of open communication and of using first-hand situational knowledge alongside modelling, particularly where previous experience influenced how emerging information was interpreted.

The implications extend beyond technical information. Leaders should be able to acknowledge when they do not yet know, when advice is being reconsidered or when a previous assumption may no longer be reliable. Such admissions can appear counter-intuitive in environments where confidence is associated with leadership. However, confidence and certainty are not the same thing. A leader can communicate uncertainty calmly while remaining clear about the actions being taken in response to it.

When information changes or proves wrong

Information integrity is tested most visibly when information previously communicated by the emergency management system changes or proves to be incorrect.

Errors will occur. Forecasts may change, initial reports may be inaccurate, assumptions may prove wrong and decisions made from the best available information may need to be revisited. The trust

question is therefore not whether an emergency management system can eliminate all error, but how it behaves when error or changed information becomes apparent.

Attempting to protect credibility by minimising, obscuring or delaying acknowledgement of an error can create a greater trust problem than the original mistake. Where information changes materially, practitioners should explain what has changed, why the assessment has changed where that is known, what the implications are and what people should now do.

Correction should not be regarded as a failure of communication. Where undertaken openly and promptly, it can demonstrate the very characteristics upon which trustworthiness depends: integrity, accountability, competence and respect for those relying upon the information.

This is particularly important because people may remember not only that information was wrong, but how the organisation responded when it discovered that it was wrong. An organisation that acknowledges uncertainty and corrects itself transparently may retain confidence even where its initial assessment was imperfect. An organisation that appears defensive or evasive may damage confidence beyond the immediate issue.

Misinformation and disinformation

Misinformation and disinformation create a different but related challenge. Misinformation involves inaccurate or misleading information regardless of intent, while disinformation involves information deliberately created or distributed to deceive. Both can affect situational awareness, public behaviour and confidence in emergency management institutions.

Digital and social media environments have increased the speed and scale at which such information can circulate. During an emergency, people are actively seeking explanations, updates and guidance. Information gaps can quickly be filled by speculation, personal observations, outdated material or deliberate falsehoods. Once inaccurate information is circulating through trusted personal or community networks, correcting it may be considerably more difficult than issuing the original official message.

This makes proactive communication important. Regular, accessible and credible information can reduce the space in which speculation develops. Monitoring emerging narratives can also help practitioners identify misunderstandings or false claims before they become more deeply established. Where misinformation has gained traction, responses should be proportionate to the risk it presents rather than assuming that every inaccurate statement requires an institutional response.

The wider trust environment should also be considered before determining how to respond. Simply issuing a correction from an institution that the affected audience does not trust may have limited effect. In some circumstances, trusted community leaders or organisations may be better placed to clarify information, provided they are properly informed and willing to do so. This again demonstrates why relationships established before emergencies are operationally valuable.

The response to misinformation should also avoid unnecessarily dismissing the people who have believed or shared it. People may reach inaccurate conclusions because official information was unavailable, inaccessible, contradictory or inconsistent with what they were observing. Understanding why a particular narrative has become credible can reveal weaknesses in the formal information environment and provide insight into the trust relationships operating within the community.

Misinformation management is therefore not solely about correcting the public. It should also cause the emergency management system to examine itself. Was there an information gap? Were our messages accessible? Did different agencies provide conflicting accounts? Did we fail to explain uncertainty? Were people relying upon another source because they did not trust ours? The answers may identify operational improvements that are more valuable than simply rebutting an individual claim.

Information integrity as a shared responsibility

Maintaining information integrity is not the sole responsibility of a Public Information Management function. Information is created and interpreted throughout an emergency response. Intelligence staff, operational personnel, technical advisers, welfare teams, partner agencies, Controllers and community networks all contribute to the information environment.

This creates a collective responsibility to distinguish observation from assessment, communicate uncertainty appropriately, correct material errors and avoid allowing unverified information to acquire authority simply because it has been repeated within the system.

Leadership is important in establishing this culture. Leaders who expect certainty at all times may unintentionally encourage people to conceal uncertainty. Leaders who respond defensively to changed advice may make technical specialists less willing to revise assessments. Conversely, an environment in which people can raise concerns, challenge information and correct previous assumptions without unnecessary blame supports both information integrity and organisational learning.

The connection with fast trust is therefore direct. People need sufficient confidence not only in the information they receive, but in the processes and people through which that information has been produced. They need to know that uncertainty will not be hidden, that important changes will be communicated, that credible community information will be heard and that errors will be corrected rather than defended.

Information integrity ultimately depends upon behaviour. It requires competence in producing and interpreting information, integrity in communicating its limitations, humility about what remains unknown, and relationships through which information can move in both directions.

In an emergency, trust does not require us to know everything. It requires us to be trustworthy with **what we know, what we do not know, and what changes as we learn more.**

Trust Under Human Load

Trust models can inadvertently assume that the people operating within them remain relatively consistent throughout an emergency. In practice, the human beings making decisions, interpreting information, engaging with communities and coordinating operations are themselves being affected by the event.

Fatigue, stress, uncertainty, responsibility, fear, previous experiences and sustained exposure to consequential decision-making can influence how people communicate, interpret information, respond to challenge and relate to one another. These factors do not sit outside the Fast Trust Model. They influence the conditions within which trustworthiness is being demonstrated and interpreted.

The emotional demands of emergency management are particularly visible in research examining people who make high-consequence decisions during recurring events. The Westport study included

experienced emergency management professionals, local government personnel, elected officials and technical information providers involved in three significant floods between 2021 and 2022. Participants described complex emotional experiences that included anxiety, confidence, fear, pride, frustration, guilt and exhaustion. The study found that even highly experienced practitioners were affected by the pressure associated with making consequential decisions under uncertainty.

Repeated events added another dimension. Participants described not always having recovered from one flood before the next occurred, allowing fatigue and emotional burden to accumulate. At the same time, repeated experience also created learning. Participants reported greater confidence, improved communication, better use of external support and a stronger understanding of the importance of pacing themselves during subsequent events.

These findings matter for fast trust because human load can alter the behaviours upon which trust depends. Exhausted people may communicate less effectively. Overloaded leaders may become less receptive to challenge. Stress can narrow attention and reduce tolerance for ambiguity. Fatigued teams may find it more difficult to maintain consistency, listen carefully or adapt their approach. People who have experienced previous emergencies may also interpret the current event through those experiences, influencing both their assessment of risk and their confidence in others.

These responses should not automatically be interpreted as failures of character or capability. They may indicate that the human system is operating under significant load.

The Westport research also provides an important caution against treating this solely as an individual wellbeing issue. Participants identified structural contributors to stress, including under-resourcing and the concentration of responsibility among a relatively small number of key personnel. The research argues that individual strategies such as resilience training and self-care cannot, by themselves, address conditions created by the wider system.

For emergency management leadership, this means human capacity needs to be considered operationally. Bringing additional personnel into an event, rotating demanding roles, ensuring appropriate breaks, sharing decision-making and reducing dependence upon particular individuals are not simply wellbeing interventions. They help protect the quality of judgement, communication and relationships upon which the response depends.

This is also connected to trust in team. Leaders who trust others sufficiently to delegate can distribute load before exhaustion becomes critical. Teams in which people feel able to say that they are reaching the limits of their capacity provide leaders with information that would otherwise remain hidden. Conversely, a culture that equates endurance with competence may encourage people to continue operating after their effectiveness has begun to deteriorate.

Human capacity should therefore be considered alongside technical and organisational capacity when assessing whether a response system is functioning effectively. A structure may appear fully staffed on paper while key people within it are carrying unsustainable workloads. Similarly, a person may remain physically present in a role while fatigue has materially reduced their ability to perform it.

The implication for fast trust is that trustworthiness is affected not only by the characteristics of individuals, but also by the conditions under which people are being asked to perform. Maintaining trust therefore requires attention to the human system as well as the formal response structure.

This does not reduce individual responsibility for professional conduct. It recognises that good systems make trustworthy behaviour easier to sustain under pressure. In emergency management, protecting human capacity is consequently part of protecting operational capability.

Trust in Place: Indigenous, Cultural and Community Perspectives

Trust does not operate independently of culture, history, identity or place. Emergency management practitioners may enter environments in which relationships have been formed over generations, authority is understood differently across communities, institutional experiences have shaped confidence or distrust, and knowledge is held through systems that may not align neatly with formal emergency management structures.

Indigenous approaches to trust therefore offer more than culturally specific engagement techniques. They invite practitioners to consider whose knowledge is recognised, where authority resides, how relationships are formed, what obligations accompany those relationships, and who has legitimacy to make or influence decisions. These considerations are directly relevant to emergency management because the effectiveness of a response depends not only upon formal structures, but upon whether those structures can connect with the people, relationships and systems already operating within an affected community.

For Māori, relationships between whānau, hapū, iwi, whenua and whakapapa cannot simply be reduced to stakeholder relationships. They carry histories, responsibilities and forms of authority that existed long before contemporary emergency management institutions. Similarly, Indigenous and culturally diverse communities may organise leadership, knowledge, responsibility and collective action through structures that are not immediately visible from within formal government systems. Understanding this context is not supplementary to operational effectiveness. It is part of operational intelligence.

Omni-Culturalism

The original Fast Trust paper used the concept of omni-culturalism to consider how emergency management might operate within increasingly diverse communities. The concept remains useful, but it requires care. An omni-cultural approach should not imply that different cultural perspectives are simply incorporated into a dominant system while the assumptions of that system remain unchanged.

Within this paper, omni-culturalism describes an approach that recognises the coexistence of multiple cultural worldviews, knowledge systems, practices and identities within a shared environment. Rather than assuming that one cultural framework provides the neutral starting point into which others must be integrated, an omni-cultural approach asks what becomes possible when different worldviews encounter one another with respect and are able to influence the way problems are understood and addressed.

For emergency management, this requires systems capable of working across different understandings of leadership, community, risk, responsibility, knowledge and decision-making. It also requires practitioners to recognise that cultural capability is not simply the ability to communicate an existing emergency management approach appropriately to different audiences. Sometimes the worldview or knowledge brought by another community should cause the emergency management system itself to think or act differently.

The objective is therefore not cultural uniformity. It is the capacity to operate effectively and respectfully within plural systems of knowledge and relationship.

Self-determination and legitimate authority

Indigenous trust models demonstrate the importance of self-determination and locally legitimate systems of authority. Institutional or statutory authority does not erase existing systems of leadership, governance or community decision-making. A person may hold considerable authority within an emergency management structure while having limited standing within the community affected by the emergency. Conversely, an individual with no formal emergency management role may carry considerable influence, responsibility and trust through whakapapa, community leadership, service or established relationships.

The examples considered in the original development of this paper illustrate this distinction. Research examining Indigenous self-governance highlights the importance of community agency and authority in developing trust, while Indigenous-led governance arrangements demonstrate how approaches grounded in local values and knowledge can strengthen collective responsibility and confidence. These examples challenge the assumption that legitimate authority necessarily originates within government or formal institutions.

For emergency management practitioners, the implication is significant. Understanding an affected community requires us to identify not simply who holds a formal role, but who carries legitimacy, who holds relationships, whose voice people listen to and where decisions are actually made. These may be different people, and the answer may change according to the issue being considered.

Recognising different forms of authority does not require formal emergency management responsibilities to be displaced. Statutory roles and accountabilities remain important. Rather, effective emergency management may depend upon the ability to understand how different forms of authority coexist and to create relationships between them.

This is particularly important when operating within Māori communities. Iwi, hapū and marae should not be understood simply as community stakeholder groups within an emergency management structure. They possess their own leadership, relationships, knowledge and responsibilities. Engagement that begins from an assumption that legitimacy sits exclusively within the formal response system risks overlooking capability that already exists and weakening the very relationships required for an effective response.

Relationship before transaction

Relationship-based approaches demonstrate that trust develops through sustained connection rather than episodic engagement during crisis. The educational leadership examples considered in the original paper highlight the importance of meaningful relationships with marae and Māori communities in creating trust, belonging and culturally grounded environments. The same principle has direct relevance to emergency management.

Relationships established before an emergency provide more than goodwill. They create knowledge of people, capability, expectations, communication pathways and ways of working together. They allow organisations and communities to understand something of one another before urgency compresses the time available for establishing confidence.

In this sense, **relationships are emergency infrastructure.**

Emergency management readily recognises physical and technical infrastructure upon which response depends. Roads, telecommunications, electricity, water systems, buildings, information systems and supply chains are understood as critical to the functioning of communities and response systems. Relationships can be equally consequential. They enable information to move, resources to be mobilised, concerns to be raised, decisions to be challenged and people to coordinate when formal structures are under pressure.

This relational infrastructure is particularly valuable because it cannot always be created once an emergency is underway. A relationship established over years may allow a difficult conversation to occur in minutes. A trusted connection between an emergency management practitioner and a community leader may allow uncertainty to be discussed openly when an unfamiliar official relationship would struggle to achieve the same outcome. Existing inter-agency relationships can similarly reduce the time required to establish confidence between organisations during a response.

Where these relationships already exist, emergency management should recognise and strengthen them. Where they do not exist, the period between emergencies provides the opportunity to develop them.

This also means relationships should not be treated transactionally. Engaging with iwi, hapū, marae, Pacific churches, ethnic community organisations or local leaders only when the formal system needs information distributed, volunteers mobilised or community cooperation risks treating trusted relationships as an operational resource to be extracted rather than a relationship to be reciprocated. The distinction matters. If communities primarily experience engagement when institutions need something from them, the relationship itself may remain shallow regardless of the number of meetings or consultation processes that occur.

Relationship-building therefore has value beyond immediate operational requirements. It creates familiarity, understanding and the possibility of reciprocal confidence that can later support collective action under pressure.

Knowledge, participation and influence

Indigenous engagement approaches considered within the original paper emphasise empowerment, respect, partnership and the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge within decision-making. They point beyond consultation towards participation in which communities have genuine influence over matters affecting them.

This distinction is particularly important in emergency management because consultation can occur without materially changing how decisions are made. Community representatives may be invited to meetings, asked for information or consulted about proposed actions while the primary assessment of the problem and the range of acceptable solutions remain largely determined by the formal system. These activities may still have value, but participation alone should not automatically be interpreted as reciprocal trust.

Reciprocal trust requires the emergency management system to accept the possibility that knowledge originating outside its formal structures may change its understanding of the situation. Local observations may challenge modelling. Mātauranga and place-based knowledge may reveal relationships between people, environment and risk that are not visible through conventional datasets. Community leaders may understand why an apparently logical intervention will not work in practice. Whānau may identify vulnerable people or emerging needs before those needs appear through formal reporting mechanisms.

This does not require practitioners to abandon technical evidence, statutory responsibilities or professional judgement. Nor does it mean that all forms of information should be treated as equally reliable in every circumstance. It requires different forms of relevant knowledge to be brought into relationship with one another and assessed appropriately.

The practical test of meaningful participation is therefore not simply whether the community was asked for its view. A more demanding question is whether what the community contributed had the capacity to influence the assessment, the options considered or the eventual decision.

Where participation can never change the outcome, engagement risks becoming procedural rather than relational.

The same principle applies to cultural capability. A culturally appropriate process is important, but tikanga, language or cultural protocol should not become a substitute for genuine influence. Respectful engagement and meaningful participation need to operate together.

Trusted networks as operational capability

Pacific and other community responses provide strong examples of the operational value of existing trusted networks. The original paper identified the role played by Pacific churches, community leaders and culturally grounded organisations during the COVID-19 response, together with examples from community-based disaster risk management in Vanuatu. These experiences demonstrate how established networks can communicate, mobilise and support communities in ways that formal institutions may struggle to replicate quickly.

Such networks matter because information and influence do not move through communities according to formal organisational charts. People seek information from those they know. They interpret warnings through previous experience. They turn to organisations and individuals that have demonstrated reliability over time. During uncertainty, those relationships may become even more important.

Trusted networks should therefore be recognised as operational capability rather than simply communications channels. They can contribute situational awareness, identify emerging needs, mobilise people, distribute resources, interpret information within local contexts and connect formal response structures with people they may otherwise struggle to reach.

This does not mean that every informal network should automatically become part of the formal emergency management structure. In some circumstances, attempting to absorb community capability into institutional arrangements may actually reduce its effectiveness. The objective should be to understand what is already working, what support is required, where coordination would add value and where the formal system should avoid unnecessarily displacing local activity.

The experience of the community-led centre described earlier in this paper illustrates this point. The operational solution was not to persuade approximately 1,000 people to leave the place they trusted and attend the official Civil Defence Centre. It was to recognise where the community had already organised and direct appropriate resources towards it. That experience changed the question.

Instead of asking only, **'How do we reach this community?'**, emergency management practitioners should also ask: **Who is already reaching this community? Who does this community already trust? What capability already exists here, and how can the formal response work alongside it?**

These questions shift the practitioner away from assuming that emergency management begins with the formal system. They acknowledge that communities possess trust architecture of their own.

Contextual understanding as operational intelligence

Taken together, these perspectives have important implications for the revised Fast Trust Model. Cultural and contextual understanding should not be treated as a discrete engagement activity that occurs alongside the operational response. It informs the quality of the response itself.

A practitioner entering an unfamiliar community needs to understand more than the hazard and formal response arrangements. They need to develop some understanding of whose place they have entered, what has happened there before, where relationships and authority sit, how people receive information, what capability already exists and where previous experiences may have strengthened or damaged institutional trust.

This requires curiosity rather than assumption. It also requires enough humility to recognise that the formal system may not initially see all of the people, relationships or knowledge relevant to the response.

For this reason, contextual understanding within the Fast Trust Model includes culture, history, relationships, authority, previous emergency experience and the distribution of trust within the affected environment. These factors influence how actions are interpreted and whether attempts to establish cooperation are likely to succeed.

The implications extend beyond culturally diverse communities. Every emergency occurs somewhere. Every place has history, relationships, existing capability and previous experiences. Culture and context may be particularly visible in some environments, but no emergency management response occurs outside them.

Fast trust therefore begins with an effort to understand the environment before assuming how the formal system should operate within it. This does not require perfect knowledge before action can begin; emergencies rarely allow that luxury. It requires practitioners to remain conscious that their initial understanding will be incomplete and to continue learning as relationships and situational awareness develop.

The purpose is not to become expert in somebody else's culture or community within the compressed timeframe of an emergency. It is to recognise that such expertise already exists and to know enough to seek it, respect it and allow it to inform the response.

In this sense, context is not an additional consideration after operational decisions have been made. It is part of the information from which good operational decisions are made.

The revised Fast Trust Model therefore moves away from the original framing of cultural and contextual sensitivity towards **contextual understanding**: an active effort to understand the people, place, relationships and systems within which trust is operating.

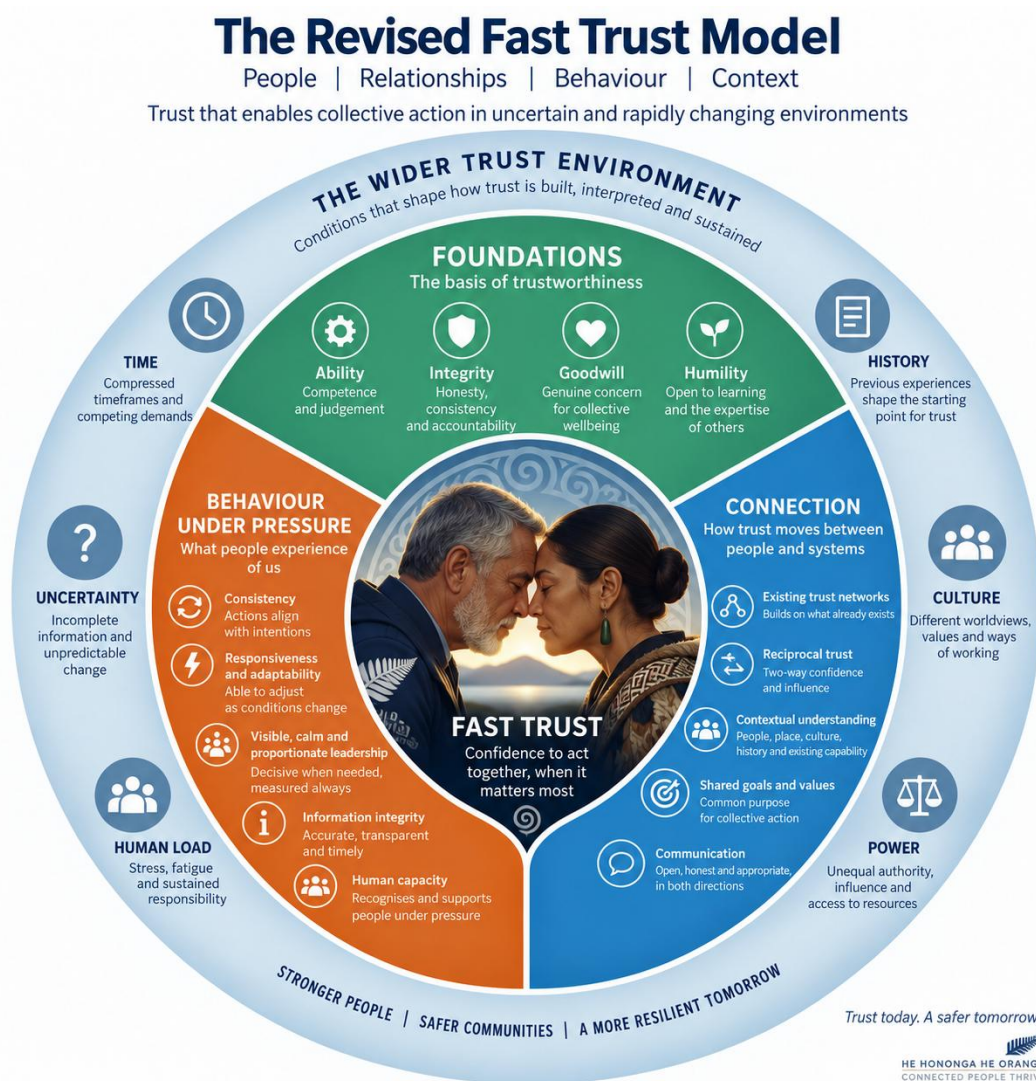
This brings the paper to the revised model itself. The original Fast Trust Model identified a series of individual components associated with developing trust quickly. Continued practice and reflection suggest that those components remain relevant, but they do not all operate in the same way. The revised model therefore reorganises them around the foundations of trustworthiness, the relationships through which trust moves, the behaviours people experience under pressure, and the wider conditions influencing all three.

Fast Trust Model

The original Fast Trust Model was developed by bringing together established trust frameworks, emergency management literature and practitioner experience. It identified a range of factors that appeared particularly important when people were required to establish trust quickly: ability, goodwill, integrity, immediate communication, existing networks, contextual understanding, consistency, responsiveness and adaptability, shared goals and values, decisive leadership, misinformation management and futures thinking.

Those components remain relevant. Continued application and reflection, however, suggest that they do not all operate in the same way. Some describe the characteristics through which a person or organisation demonstrates trustworthiness. Others concern the relationships through which trust is established and exercised. Others describe behaviours that become particularly visible when people and systems are operating under pressure. Surrounding all of these are wider conditions that influence how trust is interpreted, strengthened or damaged.

The revised Fast Trust Model therefore does not simply add further elements to the original framework. It reorganises the thinking into **three interacting domains: Foundations, Connection, and Behaviour Under Pressure**. These domains operate within a wider trust environment shaped by **time, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load**.



The domains are not sequential. A practitioner does not complete one before moving to the next, nor should they be interpreted as a checklist. They operate simultaneously and influence one another throughout an emergency. The model is intended to help practitioners notice what may be influencing trust within a particular environment and identify where attention may be required.

Foundations: the basis of trustworthiness

The first domain concerns the foundations upon which judgements of trustworthiness are made. Within the revised model these are **ability, integrity, goodwill and humility**.

Ability refers to the competence required to perform a role effectively. Emergency management practitioners need appropriate technical knowledge, professional capability and judgement. People are unlikely to place sustained confidence in an individual or organisation that repeatedly demonstrates an inability to perform what is required. Ability is therefore fundamental to fast trust, particularly where there is little previous experience upon which others can base their judgement.

The revised model broadens the meaning of ability beyond technical expertise. Competence also involves recognising what the situation requires and knowing when the expertise of others is needed. An individual may be highly capable within their professional discipline while possessing limited understanding of the community, organisation or context into which they have entered. The ability to identify those boundaries and seek relevant knowledge is itself an important professional capability.

Integrity concerns the extent to which actions align with stated commitments, ethical responsibilities and expected standards of behaviour. It becomes visible through honesty, consistency, accountability and the way people respond when circumstances become difficult. Integrity is particularly important during emergencies because people may be required to rely upon one another before they have accumulated extensive evidence about previous behaviour. What a practitioner says they will do, and whether they subsequently do it, can quickly influence confidence.

Integrity is also tested when information changes, commitments cannot be met or decisions prove incorrect. Trustworthiness does not require perfection. It does require practitioners and organisations to respond honestly when expectations cannot be fulfilled and to accept appropriate responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Goodwill reflects the perceived intention to contribute positively to the wellbeing of others and to collective outcomes. In emergency management, people assess not only whether someone is capable, but what they believe that person or organisation is trying to achieve. Practitioners who demonstrate genuine concern for affected communities, colleagues and partner organisations create different conditions for trust than those perceived to be primarily protecting organisational interests, status or reputation.

Goodwill does not require agreement on every issue. Difficult decisions may still need to be made and competing interests may remain. Its importance lies in whether people believe that their interests and wellbeing have been genuinely considered within those decisions.

Humility is added explicitly within the revised model. It reflects the ability to recognise the limits of one's own knowledge, authority and perspective. Humility is not an absence of confidence. It allows competence to operate without assuming that professional expertise provides a complete understanding of the situation.

In practice, humility may involve asking for local knowledge, acknowledging uncertainty, changing an assessment when better evidence becomes available or recognising that another person is better

placed to lead a particular aspect of the response. It also involves entering communities and organisations without assuming that formal emergency management structures contain all of the capability or knowledge required.

Together, ability, integrity, goodwill and humility provide the foundations upon which others may judge whether a practitioner, team or institution is worthy of trust. They do not guarantee trust, because that decision remains with the other party. They provide evidence upon which that decision can reasonably be made.

Connection: how trust moves between people and systems

The second domain concerns the relational environment through which trust operates. It includes **existing trust networks, reciprocal trust, contextual understanding, shared goals and values, and communication.**

Existing trust networks recognise that emergency management rarely begins with a blank relational landscape. Communities and organisations already contain relationships through which information, confidence and influence move. These networks may be formal or informal and may include iwi, hapū, marae, community organisations, neighbourhood groups, churches, businesses, professional relationships, agency partnerships and individual connections.

Recognising these networks allows emergency management practitioners to understand where trust already resides and where existing capability can be supported. It also helps identify relationships in which trust has previously been damaged. The objective is not simply to use trusted networks to extend the reach of the formal response, but to connect with them in ways that allow information, knowledge and influence to move in both directions.

Reciprocal trust makes that two-way relationship explicit. Fast trust cannot be understood solely as the process through which emergency management gains the confidence of communities or partner organisations. Practitioners must also be prepared to place appropriate trust in the knowledge, capability and judgement of others.

Reciprocity becomes visible through behaviour. It may involve relying upon credible community situational awareness, sharing information, resourcing community-led activity, delegating meaningful authority or allowing another perspective to alter an assessment. Appropriate verification and accountability remain necessary, but they should not become reasons for assuming that legitimate knowledge or capability exists only within formal institutions.

Contextual understanding concerns the people, place, culture, history, relationships and systems within which an emergency is occurring. It requires practitioners to understand that actions are interpreted through existing experience. The same behaviour may be received differently in different environments because the starting conditions for trust are not the same.

Contextual understanding therefore includes recognising local leadership and authority, previous experiences of emergencies and institutions, cultural expectations, community capability and the relationships through which people organise. It does not require deployed practitioners to become experts in an unfamiliar community. It requires them to recognise that such expertise exists and to know enough to seek and respect it.

Shared goals and values can provide an important basis for cooperation where deeper relationships have not yet developed. During emergencies, people and organisations may be able to work together because they share an immediate objective even when their organisational cultures, interests or

perspectives differ. Protecting life, supporting affected communities, restoring essential services or reducing further harm can create sufficient common purpose for collaboration to begin.

Shared purpose should not be assumed simply because organisations are participating in the same response. Different mandates and priorities can produce genuine tension. Making goals explicit, identifying areas of alignment and acknowledging where interests differ can provide a more credible foundation for trust than presenting artificial consensus.

Communication connects the other elements of this domain. Early, open and appropriate communication can reduce uncertainty, clarify expectations and make intentions visible. Communication also provides the mechanism through which people listen, challenge, share knowledge and adapt their understanding of one another.

Within the revised model, communication is deliberately broader than the immediate transmission of information. It includes listening, the acknowledgement of uncertainty, the selection of appropriate messengers and the ability for information to travel in both directions. Communication contributes to fast trust when it enables understanding rather than simply increasing the volume of information being distributed.

These elements collectively describe how trust moves. The foundations of trustworthiness may reside within individuals and institutions, but trust becomes operational through relationships.

Behaviour Under Pressure: what people experience of us

The third domain concerns what happens to trust when the emergency places people and systems under pressure. It includes **consistency, responsiveness and adaptability, visible, calm and proportionate leadership, information integrity, and human capacity**.

Consistency provides people with a degree of predictability in an otherwise uncertain environment. Consistency is demonstrated when actions align with stated intentions, similar situations are approached according to understandable principles and commitments are followed through. This does not mean rigidly repeating an approach when circumstances have changed. Rather, people should be able to understand the basis upon which decisions and behaviours are occurring.

Inconsistency without explanation can rapidly weaken confidence. Where a decision or position changes because new information has emerged, explaining the reason for that change can preserve integrity while allowing the response to adapt.

Responsiveness and adaptability recognise that emergency conditions evolve. Information changes, community needs shift, assumptions prove incorrect and operational priorities move. Trustworthy practitioners and systems need to respond to these changes rather than remaining committed to an approach simply because it was the original plan.

Adaptability also requires an ability to receive feedback. A system that appears responsive to changing hazard information while remaining resistant to community or practitioner feedback is only partially adaptive. The willingness to reconsider an approach when credible information emerges from elsewhere in the system is an important demonstration of both competence and humility.

Visible, calm and proportionate leadership develops the original model's emphasis on decisive leadership. Decisiveness remains necessary where delay creates risk, but leadership under uncertainty also requires judgement about when immediate action is needed and when further information or consultation will produce a better decision.

Visibility allows people to understand who is providing leadership and creates opportunities for communication and confidence. Calmness can provide stability when others are operating under pressure. Proportionality recognises that not every problem requires the strongest exercise of authority or the fastest possible decision. Effective leadership adjusts its response to the circumstances rather than equating leadership with constant intervention.

Information integrity replaces the narrower original focus on misinformation management. Trust depends upon the quality of the information environment as a whole: how information is produced, verified, communicated, updated and corrected. Practitioners need to communicate uncertainty honestly, address material misinformation where necessary and ensure that credible information from community and operational sources can move into the response system.

Information integrity is particularly tested when previous information proves wrong. The willingness to acknowledge error, correct information and explain what has changed can preserve trust more effectively than attempts to protect institutional credibility through defensiveness or silence.

Human capacity recognises that trust is exercised by people whose ability to perform may change during an emergency. Fatigue, stress, repeated exposure to events, sustained responsibility and excessive workload can influence judgement, communication, adaptability and relationships.

Attention to human capacity therefore forms part of operational leadership. Role rotation, external support, appropriate delegation and the ability for people to acknowledge that they are reaching their limits help protect both individual wellbeing and system performance. Human capacity also reinforces the importance of trust in team: leaders who can distribute responsibility across capable people reduce the dependence of the response upon individual endurance.

Behaviour under pressure provides some of the strongest evidence upon which people judge trustworthiness. Values and intentions may be articulated before an emergency, but pressure reveals how consistently they are translated into action.

The wider trust environment

The three domains do not operate in isolation. They exist within a wider environment shaped by **time, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load**. These conditions influence both the opportunities for fast trust and the difficulty of establishing it.

Time is central to the concept of fast trust because emergencies compress the period available for relationships to become operational. Decisions may be required before conventional trust has had time to develop, creating greater reliance upon professional roles, reputation, existing networks and observable behaviour.

Uncertainty increases vulnerability. People may need to rely upon others without knowing whether the information available is complete or whether the decisions being made will produce the intended result. Trust enables action under these conditions, but uncertainty also places greater demands upon honesty, communication and adaptability.

History influences the starting point. Communities, organisations and individuals bring previous experiences into the current event. Trust may already be strong because of earlier relationships, or confidence may have been damaged long before the present emergency. Practitioners need to recognise that they may inherit both trust and distrust they did not personally create.

Culture shapes understandings of relationship, authority, knowledge, responsibility and appropriate behaviour. It influences how trust is expressed and how actions are interpreted. Cultural context therefore affects the operation of every domain within the model rather than sitting as a separate consideration alongside them.

Power influences whose knowledge is heard, who controls resources, who can make decisions and who is expected to accept vulnerability. Trust relationships are not always relationships between parties with equal institutional power. Practitioners and organisations holding greater authority or resources need to remain conscious of how that imbalance shapes engagement and whether participation genuinely allows others to influence outcomes.

Human load reflects the cumulative effect of stress, fatigue, responsibility and repeated exposure to demanding events. It differs from human capacity within the third domain in an important way. Human load describes a condition being placed upon people; human capacity describes the system's ability to recognise and manage its effects. The distinction allows the model to acknowledge both the pressure and the response to it.

These conditions interact. Historical distrust may become more significant when uncertainty is high. Cultural misunderstanding may be amplified by time pressure. Human load may reduce people's capacity to communicate effectively. Power may influence whose interpretation of uncertain information is given greatest weight. The model therefore encourages practitioners to consider not only individual components of trust, but the environment in which those components are operating.

The model as a whole

The revised Fast Trust Model is intended to make visible the interaction between **who we are, how we connect, what people experience of us under pressure, and the environment in which those relationships are occurring**.

The Foundations domain asks whether there are reasonable grounds to regard us as trustworthy. Connection asks how trust and knowledge move between people and systems. Behaviour Under Pressure asks what happens to that trust when the emergency tests individuals, relationships and institutions. The wider trust environment reminds us that none of these judgements occurs independently of context.

The model also makes explicit a principle that was less developed in its original form: fast trust is not controlled by the emergency management practitioner. We can identify existing trust, establish relationships, demonstrate competence, behave with integrity, communicate openly and create conditions conducive to cooperation. We cannot require another person to trust us.

For that reason, the model is best used as a framework for **reflection and diagnosis rather than prescription**. When collaboration is working well, it can help practitioners understand why. When trust appears weak or begins to deteriorate, it provides a way of examining whether the issue sits within trustworthiness, relationships, behaviour under pressure or the wider conditions surrounding the response.

It can also be used prospectively. Before deployment or engagement, practitioners can consider what they know about the trust environment they are entering, where existing relationships may assist, what assumptions they are carrying and what they will need to demonstrate through their behaviour.

The central question remains deliberately focused on the practitioner and the system rather than the person from whom trust is sought: **what are we doing that gives others reasonable grounds to trust us, and what are we doing that may be making trust more difficult?**

That question allows the model to remain useful even where trust is not immediately achieved. It keeps attention on the behaviours, relationships and conditions emergency management can influence, while respecting that trust ultimately remains relational and voluntary.

Applying Futures and Systems Thinking to Fast Trust

Emergency management is necessarily concerned with the immediate. During response, attention is directed towards what is happening now, what may happen next, what decisions are required and what actions will reduce harm. This operational focus is essential, but it can also narrow the timeframe through which decisions and their consequences are considered.

Futures and systems thinking provide useful disciplines for widening that perspective. They are not, in themselves, components of trust. Rather, they provide ways of examining the environment in which trust operates and considering how decisions made during one phase of an emergency may influence relationships, capability, vulnerability and confidence in the future.

This distinction is important because emergency management decisions do not end when the immediate operational objective has been achieved. The way an organisation engages with a community during response may influence whether that community is willing to engage with it during recovery or a future event. The way information is communicated may affect confidence in later warnings. Decisions about resourcing community-led activity may strengthen existing capability or unintentionally displace it. The way agencies work together during one emergency may either deepen the relationships available for the next event or create barriers that persist long afterwards.

A futures perspective therefore asks practitioners to consider not only whether an intervention is effective now, but what it may create over time. This does not require emergency managers to predict the future. Rather, it requires an awareness that today's actions become part of the context within which future trust will operate.

Anticipating changes in the trust environment

Futures thinking encourages practitioners to consider how the conditions surrounding trust may change. Communities, technologies, information environments, climate pressures, institutional arrangements and public expectations continue to evolve, and the trust environment of future emergencies will not necessarily resemble that of the present.

Scenario thinking can help explore these possibilities. Practitioners might consider how emergency communication would function in an environment where confidence in official information has declined, where synthetic media makes verification more difficult, where critical digital infrastructure is unavailable, or where communities increasingly organise through networks that sit outside traditional institutional structures. Similarly, demographic change, repeated emergencies and changing expectations of government may alter which organisations and individuals carry trust within a community.

The purpose of considering such scenarios is not to identify a single most likely future. It is to test assumptions. If an emergency management system depends upon particular institutions, communication channels, individuals or community relationships remaining stable, futures thinking can help identify where that dependence creates vulnerability.

This has direct relevance to fast trust. Existing trust networks are valuable precisely because they reduce the relational work required once an emergency occurs. Understanding how those networks

may evolve allows emergency management organisations to invest in relationships and capability before they are urgently required.

Seeing the wider system

Systems thinking adds another dimension by asking practitioners to look beyond individual organisations, functions or interventions and consider the relationships between them.

Emergency management is inherently systemic. Communities depend upon interconnected infrastructure, services, institutions, businesses, social networks and people. Response organisations similarly depend upon one another for information, resources, authority, specialist expertise and operational capability. Actions within one part of this system can therefore produce consequences elsewhere, including consequences that were neither intended nor immediately visible.

This matters for trust because apparently efficient operational decisions can sometimes create relational costs elsewhere in the system. Centralising a function may improve consistency while weakening local autonomy. Establishing a new official information channel may appear to improve communication while unintentionally bypassing trusted community networks. Deploying external personnel may increase immediate capability while marginalising local practitioners who hold critical contextual knowledge. Creating additional approval processes may reduce one form of risk while signalling to capable staff that their judgement is not trusted.

Systems thinking encourages practitioners to ask what else changes when an intervention is made.

The question is particularly useful because trust itself operates systemically. Confidence in one individual can influence confidence in an organisation. The behaviour of one agency can affect perceptions of the wider response. A commitment made in one part of the system may create expectations elsewhere. Similarly, damaged trust can travel through relationships well beyond the original interaction.

Understanding these interdependencies makes it less useful to ask only whether an individual decision was technically correct. Emergency management practitioners should also consider what that decision did to the relationships and capability upon which the wider system depends.

Broadening the perspectives used to understand the future

Both futures and systems thinking are strengthened by the inclusion of multiple perspectives. No individual, profession, organisation or community can see the entire system, and the assumptions that appear obvious from one position may look very different from another.

This aligns closely with the emphasis on contextual understanding and reciprocal trust within the revised Fast Trust Model. Community knowledge, mātauranga Māori, Indigenous knowledge, operational experience, technical expertise and institutional knowledge provide different ways of seeing the same environment. Bringing these perspectives together can reveal dependencies, risks and opportunities that would remain invisible if the system were examined from only one position.

The value of diverse perspectives is therefore not simply representational. It improves the quality of anticipation and decision-making.

This is particularly important when considering the longer-term consequences of emergency management interventions. Communities may identify social or cultural consequences that are not apparent within an operational assessment. Infrastructure providers may identify dependencies that community organisations cannot see. Frontline practitioners may understand practical

implementation issues that are not visible at governance level. Rangatahi may hold different expectations about technology, communication and institutional relationships than those designing present-day systems.

A futures-oriented emergency management system should therefore be capable of asking not only who is currently represented in a discussion, but whose perspective might reveal something the current group cannot see.

This again requires humility. The objective is not to gather multiple perspectives and then automatically return to the original institutional interpretation. The value lies in allowing those perspectives to challenge assumptions and, where appropriate, change the way the problem is understood.

Learning, adaptation and institutional memory

Futures thinking also requires an ability to learn. Every emergency creates information about how systems, relationships and people behave under pressure. If that knowledge is captured, examined and carried forward, each event can strengthen future capability. If it remains largely within the memories of individual practitioners, much of that learning may disappear as people move roles or leave organisations.

Emergency management already uses debriefs, reviews and lessons processes to support organisational learning. The Fast Trust framework suggests that these processes should examine relationships and trust alongside conventional operational performance.

A response may achieve its immediate objectives while damaging relationships required for recovery. Conversely, an operational difficulty may reveal relationships or community capability that become valuable assets for future events. Both are important lessons.

After-action processes might therefore examine where trust enabled the response to move more effectively, where lack of trust created delay or duplication, which relationships proved particularly valuable, where community capability was recognised or overlooked, how authority was exercised, whether information moved effectively in both directions, and where confidence was strengthened or damaged.

This creates a broader measure of performance. The question is no longer only whether the response achieved what it intended to achieve, but what the response left behind.

Institutional memory is important here. Relationships should not disappear from organisational awareness when the individuals who hold them leave. Lessons about community capability, previous commitments and trust should inform readiness activity and future deployment. This needs to be done appropriately, particularly where information is culturally sensitive or relational rather than organisationally owned, but the principle remains important: learning should become part of capability rather than remaining solely personal experience.

Trust as an intergenerational consideration

A futures perspective also extends the timeframe beyond the next emergency. Emergency management decisions contribute to the relationships between communities and institutions that future practitioners and future generations will inherit.

This is particularly significant where emergencies recur. Communities affected repeatedly by flooding, wildfire, severe weather or other hazards accumulate experiences of both the event and

the institutions responding to it. Each response becomes part of the history through which the next response will be interpreted.

The same is true of positive experiences. Communities that have been listened to, supported to lead, provided with credible information and treated with integrity carry those experiences forward. Relationships developed through one event may become the relational infrastructure that enables faster and more effective action during another.

Trust therefore has an intergenerational dimension. The emergency management practitioner is not working only with the trust available today; through their actions they are contributing to the trust environment that others will inherit tomorrow.

This reinforces the importance of stewardship within emergency management. Practitioners and leaders are temporary custodians of relationships, institutions and systems that extend beyond their own tenure. The decisions they make should therefore consider not only immediate operational effectiveness but the condition in which those relationships and systems are left for those who come after them.

Applying futures and systems thinking in practice

Futures and systems thinking do not require a complex analytical process during every operational decision. Their value can begin with a small number of questions that widen the frame through which a situation is being considered.

Practitioners can ask what assumptions are shaping the current approach and what might happen if those assumptions are wrong. They can consider who or what sits outside the current picture, what other parts of the system may be affected by a proposed decision, whose knowledge is missing and whether an immediate solution creates a future vulnerability.

They can also consider what the decision may do to trust.

That question is particularly valuable because it does not suggest that maintaining trust should override safety, statutory responsibility or difficult decision-making. There will be circumstances in which emergency management must take action that some people strongly disagree with. The purpose is to understand the relational consequences of those actions and consider whether they can be mitigated through explanation, participation, transparency or subsequent repair.

Futures and systems thinking therefore extend the Fast Trust Model beyond the immediate relationship. They encourage practitioners to see trust as part of a wider human and institutional system that changes over time.

A useful question for planning, decision-making and post-event learning is consequently:

What did what we did do to trust?

The answer may reveal consequences that conventional measures of operational performance do not.

Applying the Fast Trust Model

The Fast Trust Model is intended to support judgement rather than prescribe a fixed sequence of actions. Emergency environments differ too greatly for a universal trust-building checklist to be appropriate. The relationships present in an established Emergency Coordination Centre will differ from those encountered during a deployment into an unfamiliar community, and both will differ

again from a multi-agency response in which organisations have a long history of working together. The value of the model lies in helping practitioners identify what is shaping trust in the environment they are operating within and where their attention may be required.

Application begins with orientation. When entering an unfamiliar environment, there is a natural tendency to focus first on the operational problem: what has happened, what is required, what resources are available and what decisions need to be made. Those questions remain essential, but the Fast Trust Model adds another layer of situational awareness. Practitioners should also seek to understand the relational environment they have entered. This includes identifying where trust already exists, which relationships are carrying information and influence, where confidence may be weak or damaged, and what previous experiences may be shaping the way the current response is being interpreted.

This is particularly important for deployed personnel. Arrival does not create a blank operating environment. Local practitioners may already have been working for many hours or days. Community organisations may already be responding. Relationships between agencies may already be functioning well or experiencing tension. Decisions may have been made before the deployed practitioner arrived, and people may be carrying the consequences of those decisions. Taking time to understand this context can prevent a new arrival from unintentionally disrupting relationships or capability that are already working.

The first practical application of the model is therefore to **map the existing trust environment**. This does not require a formal mapping exercise in every situation. It requires curiosity about who people are relying upon, where information is moving, who carries credibility and what relationships are enabling the response. In a community context, this may involve identifying trusted local leaders, iwi, hapū, marae, community organisations, businesses, churches or informal networks. Within an operational structure, it may involve understanding established working relationships between functions, agencies and individuals.

Mapping should also include areas where trust is weak. Friction between organisations, reluctance to share information, repeated escalation of relatively minor decisions, duplication of activity or resistance to official communication may all indicate a trust issue. These behaviours should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that another party is difficult or uncooperative. They may reflect previous experience, unclear authority, competing objectives, uncertainty about capability or a belief that information and influence are moving in only one direction.

Once the environment is better understood, practitioners can consider what they themselves are bringing into it. The Foundations domain provides a useful lens. Ability, integrity, goodwill and humility are not qualities that can simply be declared; they become visible through behaviour. Practitioners can therefore consider what evidence others currently have of their competence, whether their actions are consistent with what they have said, whether their intentions are understood, and whether they are demonstrating an appropriate willingness to listen and learn.

This is especially important when professional reputation or formal authority creates an expectation of immediate competence. Seniority may mean that people initially assume a practitioner knows what they are doing, but that confidence remains provisional. The way a person behaves in the first interactions of a deployment can quickly strengthen or weaken it. Listening before redesigning existing arrangements, asking informed questions, acknowledging what is not yet understood and following through on early commitments can provide important evidence of trustworthiness.

The Connection domain can then be used to consider whether the relationships required for effective action are actually present. Practitioners should examine whether they are connecting with existing trust networks rather than creating unnecessary parallel structures, whether trust is operating reciprocally, whether sufficient contextual understanding has been developed and whether the people involved have a genuinely shared understanding of the outcome being sought.

Communication is particularly important at this stage, but the question is not simply whether communication is occurring. The practitioner should consider whether information is moving in both directions, whether important voices are absent, whether uncertainty is being communicated openly and whether the people receiving information regard the messenger as credible. A response can be producing large volumes of information while still experiencing significant failures of connection.

The Behaviour Under Pressure domain becomes particularly useful once an event has been operating for some time or when relationships begin to deteriorate. Practitioners can examine whether actions remain consistent with stated intentions, whether the system is adapting as new information emerges, whether leadership is proportionate to the situation, whether information integrity is being maintained and whether human capacity is beginning to affect performance.

This creates a different way of interpreting operational friction. For example, a team that has become less communicative may not suddenly have become less trustworthy; its members may be exhausted. A community that appears resistant to a proposed intervention may be responding to a history that the deployed team has not yet understood. An agency reluctant to share information may have experienced previous situations in which information was used without appropriate acknowledgement or context. A leader who has become increasingly controlling may be responding to uncertainty by centralising decisions.

The model does not provide the answer to these situations. It provides a way of asking better questions about them.

The wider trust environment should also be considered. Time, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load can change the meaning of behaviour. Under significant time pressure, for example, there may be less opportunity to establish relationships before action is required. This increases the importance of existing networks and observable trustworthiness. Where uncertainty is high, information integrity and transparent communication become more important. Where there is a significant imbalance of institutional power, practitioners should consider whether engagement is genuinely reciprocal or whether one party is effectively being asked to accept the decisions of another.

The model can therefore be used at different points during an emergency. At the beginning of an engagement it can support orientation. During operations it can help diagnose friction or identify relationships requiring attention. When a significant decision is being considered, it can widen the assessment beyond the immediate operational outcome. During handovers it can help practitioners communicate important relational context that may not appear in conventional situation reports. During recovery and post-event review it can support examination of how the response affected trust over time.

Handovers deserve particular attention because trust is often held personally. A practitioner may spend days establishing relationships with community leaders, partner agencies or colleagues, only for much of that relational knowledge to disappear when they rotate out of the response. A technically accurate handover that records tasks, decisions and outstanding actions but says nothing about relationships may therefore omit information essential to the next person's effectiveness.

Where appropriate, handovers should include relevant relational context: who has been engaged, what commitments have been made, where confidence is strong, where sensitivities exist and what relationships require continued attention.

The same principle applies when additional capability arrives. External support should increase the capacity of the response, but poorly integrated deployments can unintentionally create disruption. Incoming practitioners may repeat questions already asked, reopen decisions without understanding why they were made, bypass local relationships or assume that external experience should take precedence over local knowledge. The Fast Trust Model encourages deployed personnel to see entry into an existing response as an act of joining before it becomes an act of changing.

There are also circumstances in which the model may indicate that trust cannot be established quickly. A relationship may have experienced significant previous harm. Parties may have genuinely incompatible objectives. An individual or organisation may have demonstrated behaviour that makes caution appropriate. Fast trust should never be used to pressure people into setting aside legitimate concerns simply because the response requires speed.

In these circumstances, the model can still be useful. It can help identify what is preventing trust, what level of cooperation may realistically be possible, whether additional safeguards are required and whether another relationship or trusted intermediary could provide a pathway forward. The objective is sufficient confidence for appropriate collective action, not artificial harmony.

For practical use, the model can be reduced to five recurring areas of attention. Practitioners need to understand where trust already exists, consider how they are demonstrating trustworthiness, connect with the relationships required for action, notice what people are experiencing of the response, and adapt when the evidence indicates that something needs to change. These are not separate stages. They are activities that may need to be revisited repeatedly as the event develops.

The Fast Trust Model is therefore best understood as a **continuous diagnostic process**. Trust is observed, tested and interpreted throughout an emergency. New people enter. Information changes. Pressure increases. Decisions create consequences. Relationships strengthen or deteriorate. The practitioner task is to remain attentive to those changes rather than assuming that trust established earlier in the response will remain unchanged.

Used in this way, the model adds a relational dimension to conventional situational awareness. Emergency management practitioners already monitor hazards, consequences, resources, actions and emerging risks. Fast Trust asks them also to pay attention to the human relationships through which those systems operate.

This is particularly important because trust can be operationally significant before its absence becomes obvious. By the time an organisation is openly refusing to cooperate, a community has disengaged or a team has stopped challenging poor decisions, the underlying relationship may already have deteriorated considerably. Attention to earlier signals provides a greater opportunity to respond before the damage becomes entrenched.

Application of the Fast Trust Model ultimately rests upon a simple premise: emergency management is undertaken through people. Structures, legislation, plans, technology and technical expertise remain essential, but their effectiveness depends upon human beings being willing and able to work together under difficult conditions. Understanding the trust environment is therefore not separate from understanding the emergency. It is part of understanding how the response itself will function.

Maintaining, Repairing and Rebuilding Trust

Establishing trust quickly is only one part of the challenge. Emergency responses evolve, personnel change, information develops and decisions create consequences. Relationships that begin strongly can deteriorate under pressure, while relationships that initially appear difficult can strengthen through shared experience. Trust therefore requires continued attention throughout an emergency and beyond it.

Maintaining trust depends upon many of the same behaviours through which it was initially established. Competence, integrity, goodwill and humility must continue to be demonstrated. Communication needs to remain open as circumstances change. Commitments need to be followed through. Where expectations cannot be met, this should be explained rather than left unresolved. Relationships need attention even when operational pressures encourage people to focus almost exclusively on tasks.

Consistency is particularly important. People develop expectations from what they repeatedly experience of an individual or organisation. When behaviour broadly aligns with those expectations, confidence becomes easier to sustain. This does not mean that decisions or approaches should remain unchanged when circumstances require adaptation. Rather, the reasoning behind significant changes should be understandable. A system that changes its position because the evidence has changed can remain trustworthy; a system that appears inconsistent without explanation is more difficult to rely upon.

Trust is also maintained through continued reciprocity. Community engagement should not become less meaningful once the immediate need for community cooperation has passed. Relationships established during response should not disappear as the formal system transitions into recovery. Similarly, practitioners and partner organisations that have been trusted with responsibility during an event should not suddenly find that confidence withdrawn once operational pressure reduces. The way relationships are treated after the immediate crisis communicates whether they were valued in themselves or simply useful to the response.

This is particularly relevant to community-led activity. Emergency management organisations may rely heavily upon iwi, hapū, marae, community organisations, churches, businesses and informal networks during an emergency because those groups possess trusted relationships and local capability. Maintaining trust requires appropriate recognition of that contribution and continued engagement as recovery progresses. Communities should not experience a pattern in which their capability is urgently sought during crisis and then largely excluded from decisions about what happens next.

Personnel transitions create another point of vulnerability. Trust may have developed between particular individuals during the response, and rotation or demobilisation can unintentionally interrupt those relationships. Good handovers should therefore transfer relevant relational context alongside operational information. Commitments made, expectations established, relationships requiring attention and areas of sensitivity may be as important to continuity as outstanding tasks.

Even where these practices are strong, trust will sometimes be damaged.

When trust is damaged

Trust can deteriorate for many reasons. Information may prove wrong. A commitment may not be met. A decision may produce unintended harm. A practitioner may behave poorly under pressure. A community may feel that its knowledge was ignored. An agency may believe that information it

shared was misused. Leadership may become inconsistent or defensive. People may discover that the participation they believed was meaningful had little influence over a decision already made.

Some damage may result from unavoidable circumstances. Other damage may arise from mistakes, poor judgement or systemic failure. In some cases, the underlying issue may pre-date the current emergency entirely.

Whatever the cause, recognising that trust has been damaged is important. Organisations can be tempted to interpret withdrawal, resistance or criticism as a communications problem or a failure by others to understand the situation. Sometimes that may be true. At other times, those behaviours are evidence that confidence has been weakened for legitimate reasons.

The Fast Trust Model provides a way of examining what may have occurred. Was competence called into question? Was there a failure of integrity? Did behaviour appear inconsistent with stated intentions? Was information handled poorly? Was authority exercised without sufficient regard for context? Did one party expect trust without extending it in return? Did fatigue or excessive human load contribute to behaviour that damaged the relationship?

The purpose of asking these questions is not to assign blame reflexively. It is to understand the nature of the damage, because different trust failures require different responses.

Repair begins with acknowledgement

Where our own behaviour has contributed to the loss of trust, repair begins with acknowledgement.

This can be difficult for individuals and institutions operating in high-accountability environments. There may be concern that acknowledging a mistake will reduce confidence, create reputational risk or expose the organisation to criticism. The instinct can therefore be to explain, minimise or defend the decision before fully acknowledging its effect.

That response may protect institutional position while worsening the relationship.

Acknowledgement does not require accepting responsibility for something an organisation did not cause. Nor does it require abandoning legitimate explanations for why a decision was made. It requires being able to recognise what happened and how it was experienced before moving immediately to justification.

Where information was wrong, say that it was wrong. Where a commitment was not met, acknowledge that it was not met. Where a community's knowledge was not given appropriate consideration, recognise that failure. Where an individual's behaviour fell below the standard expected, address it.

Clarity matters because vague institutional language can itself undermine repair. Statements that acknowledge that people "may have felt" unheard, for example, can avoid confronting whether they were in fact unheard. If the evidence shows that something occurred, trustworthiness is better served by naming it accurately.

Explanation, accountability and action

Acknowledgement alone is unlikely to repair trust. People may reasonably want to understand why something happened, who is accountable and what will change as a result.

Explanation provides context. Emergency management decisions are often made under uncertainty and time pressure, and outcomes can look very different with hindsight. Explaining what information was available, what assumptions were made and why a particular decision appeared reasonable at the time can help others understand the circumstances in which it occurred.

Explanation should not, however, become a substitute for accountability. A decision can have been understandable in context and still have caused harm. Both things can be true.

Accountability involves taking appropriate responsibility for decisions, behaviour and consequences. At an individual level this may involve acknowledging an error, apologising, correcting behaviour or seeking additional support. At an organisational level it may require changing processes, addressing capability gaps, providing resources, honouring an outstanding commitment or reviewing how authority was exercised.

The credibility of repair ultimately depends upon what follows the acknowledgement. If an organisation repeatedly apologises for the same behaviour without changing it, the apology itself may become evidence that the organisation is not trustworthy.

Trust repair therefore requires visible action.

Apology and restoration

There are circumstances in which an apology is appropriate. A genuine apology can acknowledge harm, recognise responsibility and communicate respect for the relationship. It should not be treated as a communications technique for restoring institutional reputation.

An apology cannot require forgiveness.

The person or community affected determines whether the apology is accepted and whether trust can be restored. The role of the practitioner or institution is to take responsibility for what sits within its control and demonstrate through subsequent behaviour that the acknowledgement was meaningful.

This distinction is important because the desire to repair a relationship can itself become another form of pressure. An organisation may want the matter resolved quickly because continuing distrust is operationally uncomfortable. The affected party may require considerably more time.

Fast trust does not mean fast forgiveness.

Some relationships can recover quickly after a relatively minor failure, particularly where a strong foundation of trust already exists. Others may require repeated evidence of changed behaviour over a much longer period. Some may never return to their previous state.

Trust repair therefore needs to respect the timeframe of those whose trust has been affected, not only the timeframe of the organisation seeking to restore it.

Repairing institutional trust

Repair becomes more complex where the damage extends beyond an individual relationship to confidence in an institution or system.

An individual practitioner may behave with considerable integrity while representing an organisation that a community does not trust. Conversely, a trusted practitioner may unintentionally lend

personal credibility to an institution that subsequently fails to meet the expectations created through that relationship.

This reinforces the limits of personal collateral. Trusted individuals can create openings for dialogue, but they cannot indefinitely compensate for institutional behaviour that repeatedly damages relationships. If organisations rely upon respected individuals to repair trust without addressing the underlying causes of distrust, both the institutional relationship and the individual's personal standing may eventually be depleted.

Institutional trust therefore requires institutional action. Systems, policies, decision-making processes, resourcing or leadership behaviours may need to change. Relationships need to survive personnel changes. Commitments need to be recorded and honoured beyond the tenure of the individual who made them. Organisational learning must become visible in future behaviour.

This is particularly important where distrust has historical foundations. A single positive interaction is unlikely to erase years of negative experience. The realistic objective may initially be smaller: demonstrate reliability in the current interaction, honour the commitments within our control, and avoid adding further harm to the relationship.

Over time, repeated trustworthy behaviour can provide new evidence upon which confidence may be reconsidered.

Trust after difficult decisions

Not every loss of confidence indicates that the decision itself was wrong. Emergency management leaders sometimes need to make decisions that are unpopular, disruptive or opposed by particular groups. Evacuations, access restrictions, resource prioritisation and other protective actions may create significant disagreement even when they are justified by the available evidence.

The Fast Trust Model should not create an expectation that maintaining trust requires avoiding difficult decisions.

Instead, it asks how those decisions are made and experienced. Were the reasons explained? Was uncertainty acknowledged? Were affected people listened to where time allowed? Was relevant local knowledge considered? Was authority exercised proportionately? Were the consequences monitored? Was the organisation prepared to reconsider if the evidence changed?

People may disagree with a decision while continuing to regard the decision-maker as trustworthy. Conversely, a technically defensible decision can damage trust if the process through which it was reached appears dismissive, opaque or predetermined.

Trust should therefore not be confused with agreement.

The objective is not universal approval. It is confidence that emergency management decisions are being made competently, transparently, proportionately and with appropriate regard for those affected.

Learning from trust failure

Trust failures should form part of emergency management learning.

After-action reviews commonly examine what occurred, what worked, what did not work and what should change. The revised Fast Trust Model suggests that these reviews should also examine the condition of relationships before, during and after the event.

This includes identifying where existing trust enabled action, where confidence deteriorated, what behaviour contributed to that deterioration, whether community and partner knowledge genuinely influenced decisions, and what relationships now require attention.

It also requires organisations to look beyond individual behaviour. If multiple people experience the same trust problem, the cause may sit within the system rather than the individual. Excessive workloads, unclear authority, fragmented communication, poor information systems or organisational incentives can repeatedly produce behaviours that undermine trust despite the intentions of the people involved.

Learning should therefore consider both personal and systemic responsibility.

This connects trust repair with futures and systems thinking. Every failure provides information about vulnerabilities within the current system. The question is whether that information is used to strengthen the conditions for future trust or allowed to disappear once the immediate event has passed.

Trust as stewardship

Maintaining and repairing trust ultimately requires a stewardship mindset. Practitioners inherit relationships shaped by people and events that came before them, and through their own behaviour they contribute to the relationships that others will inherit afterwards.

This is especially significant in emergency management because communities may experience repeated events while personnel and organisational structures change around them. The practitioner who arrives today may be working within a trust environment shaped by a decision made years earlier. Equally, the way that practitioner behaves during the current event may influence how another emergency manager is received years from now.

Trust is therefore larger than the immediate interaction.

It is an asset held within relationships and carried over time. We may strengthen it, draw upon it, damage it or help repair it, but we should be cautious about treating it as something that belongs to us.

The responsibility of emergency management practitioners is to leave the trust environment, where possible, stronger than we found it. Where trust has been damaged through our actions, that responsibility includes acknowledging the damage and doing the work required to create the possibility of repair.

Fast trust is valuable because emergencies compress time. Maintaining and repairing trust reminds us that the consequences of what we do within that compressed period may endure long after the emergency itself has passed.

Conclusion

Trust sits at the heart of emergency management because emergency management is fundamentally an exercise in collective action under uncertainty. Plans, structures, legislation, technology, technical expertise and resources all matter, but each depends upon people being willing and able to work

with one another. Information must be shared, judgement relied upon, responsibility delegated, warnings considered, resources coordinated and decisions made before their consequences are fully known. Trust makes much of this possible.

The original Fast Trust Model began with a practical question: how can emergency management practitioners develop trust quickly when an emergency does not provide the luxury of time? That question remains relevant, but the development of the framework has changed the way it is answered.

The most important shift is the recognition that trust does not necessarily begin with the arrival of the formal emergency management system. Communities, organisations and teams already contain relationships, knowledge, capability and histories of trust. Some of those relationships may provide strong foundations for collective action. Others may carry distrust arising from previous experience. Practitioners therefore enter an existing trust environment rather than creating one from nothing.

This changes the first task of fast trust. Before attempting to establish new confidence, practitioners should seek to understand where trust already resides, how it moves, who carries legitimate authority and influence, and what history they have entered. Existing relationships are not peripheral to emergency management capability. In many circumstances, they are part of the infrastructure through which effective emergency management becomes possible.

The revised model also places greater emphasis on trustworthiness. Emergency management practitioners cannot require another person or community to trust them. Formal authority, professional expertise and institutional status may create expectations or provide entry into a relationship, but they do not automatically confer trust. What practitioners can influence is the evidence they provide through their own behaviour.

Ability, integrity, goodwill and humility form the foundations of that trustworthiness. Existing trust networks, reciprocal trust, contextual understanding, shared goals and communication influence how trust moves between people and systems. Consistency, adaptability, leadership, information integrity and attention to human capacity influence what people experience when those relationships are tested under pressure.

These elements operate within conditions shaped by time, uncertainty, history, culture, power and human load. Recognising these conditions prevents trust from being reduced to a set of interpersonal techniques. The same behaviour can have different consequences in different environments because people do not enter relationships without context.

Reciprocity is particularly important. If emergency management expects communities and partner organisations to trust our knowledge, capability and intentions, we must be prepared to place appropriate trust in theirs. This requires more than consultation. It requires an openness to the possibility that knowledge originating outside the formal system may change our understanding, our decisions or our actions.

The same principle applies within teams. Leaders who expect people to exercise judgement need to provide meaningful authority, information and support. Teams that are trusted appropriately can distribute responsibility and capability across the response rather than concentrating them within a small number of individuals. This becomes increasingly important as operational pressure and human load increase.

The framework also recognises that trust is not permanent. It can strengthen through shared experience and trustworthy behaviour, but it can also be damaged quickly. Information may prove

wrong, commitments may not be met, authority may be exercised poorly and communities or partners may discover that their participation had less influence than they believed.

When this occurs, trust repair becomes part of emergency management practice. Acknowledgement, explanation, accountability and changed behaviour can create the possibility of rebuilding confidence, but repair cannot be demanded. Trust ultimately remains with those choosing whether to extend it.

This is why Fast Trust should not be understood as a technique for getting people to trust emergency management faster.

It is a discipline for helping emergency management practitioners understand the relational environment in which they are operating and behave in ways that provide reasonable grounds for confidence.

The revised definition reflects that shift:

Fast trust is the disciplined practice of recognising existing trust, rapidly demonstrating trustworthiness, and creating sufficient confidence for people to work together under conditions of uncertainty.

There is no guarantee that these practices will produce trust. Nor should there be. In some circumstances, caution and distrust may be entirely reasonable.

The responsibility of the practitioner is not to control the decision of another person to trust.

It is to be worthy of consideration.

Over time, that responsibility extends beyond the immediate event. Every emergency leaves something behind. Decisions become experiences. Experiences become history. Relationships strengthened during one event may provide capability during the next, while relationships damaged through poor behaviour may create barriers long after the original operational problem has passed.

Emergency management practitioners are therefore not simply users of trust. We are temporary stewards of relationships that existed before us and will continue after us.

The measure of fast trust should consequently not be whether people came to trust us quickly.

A more enduring measure is whether our presence enabled people to work together when it mattered, whether we recognised and strengthened the capability already around us, and whether the relationships we leave behind are better able to support the people who will depend upon them next.

That is the responsibility at the centre of Fast Trust.

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