

New research to help businesses increase seismic resilience

May 27 2021



University of Canterbury (UC) Adjunct Fellow Dr Tracey Hatton, right, and co-researcher UC Master of Disaster Risk and Resilience graduate Sophie Horsfall. Credit: University of Canterbury

New research has revealed that many New Zealand businesses are left in

the dark around how to make their workplaces earthquake safe.

"Our larger businesses are doing very well, but our smaller and medium-sized businesses could do with more support," says lead researcher University of Canterbury (UC) Adjunct Fellow Dr. Tracy Hatton.

Dr. Hatton and co-researchers, UC Master of Disaster Risk and Resilience graduate Sophie Horsfall from Resilient Organizations and Senior Lecturer Dr. Toni Collins from UC School of Law, were funded by the Earthquake Commission (EQC) to evaluate what [safety measures](#) different organizations were using to reduce risks and find out whether seismic safety is a priority for New Zealand businesses.

"It is clear that seismic safety is a priority for New Zealand [business](#), but a lack of information on what they should be doing is impeding businesses from becoming more resilient to earthquakes," says Dr. Hatton.

"Most businesses were unclear on how [earthquake](#) responsibility is managed between landlords and tenants. They know that the building structure itself sits with landlords, but there are gray areas around ceiling tiles, light fittings, falling cabinets and heavy items like air conditioning units.

Hatton says that businesses need easy-to-use guidance, but currently that is hard to find for our smaller and medium organizations.

"There is no clear place for businesses to go to get guidance, which leaves them in a bit of a hole" she says.

To plug that hole, Hatton and her colleagues have created an [earthquake preparedness checklist](#) to help organizations keep their staff and customers safe in an earthquake.

"What we learnt from the Canterbury earthquakes was that there were significant impacts on the community when a building or business was deemed unsafe and closed. We want to ensure the safety of employees, but also want to minimize the impact on the community," says Dr. Hatton.

EQC's Chief Research and Resilience Officer Dr. Jo Horrocks says that this new research is a positive step in ensuring all New Zealanders, whether at home or at their workplaces are as safe as possible.

"If we can minimize the impact on our communities by ensuring our businesses and landlords are well prepared, that's a win for all New Zealanders."

The [full research report](#) and [Earthquake preparedness checklist](#) are available on the website of Resilient Organizations website.

Provided by University of Canterbury

Citation: New research to help businesses increase seismic resilience (2021, May 27) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-05-businesses-seismic-resilience.html>

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