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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATTENTION: CHIEF REPORTERS
CIVIC REPORTERS

People advised to check their property for earthquake damage

Invercargill residents are advised to undertake a thorough check of their house for damage following the 7.8 Richter scale earthquake that hit Southland last night.

Invercargill City Council Civil Defence Manger Bill Obers said while there was likely to be little obvious damage he advised people to carry out an inspection of their property just in case.

“After the 2003 earthquake people didn’t know to check their property for earthquake damage (unless the damage was very obvious) and subsequently may have missed their opportunity to claim from the Earthquake Commission,” Mr Obers said.

Mr Obers, in conjunction with Council’s Building and Regulation Services Manager Simon Tonkin have compiled a check list for people when inspecting their property:

- DO NOT PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER or at risk of falling objects when undertaking the inspection.
- Take photographs and notes as you walk around your property, to build up a picture of what has happened. This could be an invaluable record for future claims, or to help the builder and/or other tradesmen if you have concerns over damage to your property.

Exterior of dwelling:

1. Exterior Walls - undertake a visual check of the whole exterior. Write down all faults, and take a photo of each.
2. Exterior Cladding - check for (new) cracks. Look at the ground around the base of the cladding for any debris that might have fallen, and then try to establish where it has come from. (New cracks are clean. Any with mould or dirt in them are old cracks, and are not likely to be covered by insurance.)
3. Roof - look for roof nails sticking up more than other nails. The nails or screws should be a neat fit against the roof cladding.

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4. Parapets / Brick Chimney - check if the chimney is on a lean, or has developed any (new) cracks, or there are pieces of plaster lying on the roof or ground underneath.
5. Windows / Doors - check the operation of all windows and doors to ensure they all work correctly (open and close easily, and they can be secured). Look at the gap between the door and the door frame – it should be a consistent gap.
6. Paths against Houses and Entry Steps - look to see if the path and entry steps have moved. This will show up as a crack or gap between the dwelling and path. Check other paths for (new) damage.
7. Electrical – check for any loose wiring, or switches / plugs not working. If there are any faults, do not use and contact an electrician to rectify immediately. Take a photo of any issues.
8. Gas Connections - check to see they are all correctly attached. Contact your gas fitter to rectify immediately. Take a photo of any issues.

Interior of dwelling:

Most NZ houses use plasterboard wall linings. While there may be 'popping' of fixings, this is not generally a serious issue as the wall board can be refixed again and continue to perform as the bracing required for the dwelling.

1. Check all interior wall linings for cracks, especially above and below windows and doors.
2. Check if any fixings have 'popped'. This is noticeable as a raising on the surface of the wall board.
3. Check that all interior doors open, close and secure correctly and have a consistent gap between the door and frame.
4. Check that flue pipes from heaters are still fixed firmly into the heater.
5. Check around bath and shower to ensure fixture is still sealed and that water does not come out onto floor / wall.

If any of these conditions exist, or if you have concerns then contact a builder in the first instance.

Remember do not put yourself at risk while undertaking the inspection.

ENDS.

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