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## Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Rural Fire

Well, this year has certainly thrown us a huge curve-ball! Who would have thought at the beginning of the year that New Zealand would close its borders, go into a nationwide lockdown, and experience such crippling effects on businesses, communities and families, let alone the widespread impact of COVID-19 across the world?



Photo Credit: Michelle Herrick

Operations for Lake Ōkāreka Rural Fire have been significantly scaled back with no training taking place since we first went into Level 2. Minimum crew numbers and strict physical distancing, personal protection and decontamination protocols have been followed for call-outs since the lockdown. Despite this, we were still kept reasonably busy delivering water to homes on tank water within the district that had almost run out. This was deemed an essential service to ensure safe and sanitary conditions for households.



On the plus-side of the lockdown, it was great to see so many families out walking and cycling around the Lake Ōkāreka village every day. Also, a special thank you to Marion Forbes and others for co-ordinating a list of our more senior and vulnerable Lake Ōkāreka residents, ensuring these people were okay during the lockdown, and providing assistance to those who needed support with shopping and other requirements.

As most of you will have seen, work on the new fire station build got underway as soon as we shifted to Level 3, with some 650 plus poles being driven into the site area. This is a requirement for a Level 4 building designed to withstand earthquakes. As this area is now a construction site, please do not enter the fenced area.

Lake Ōkāreka Rural Fire is looking forward to being able to resume our normal operations in the not too distant future. Unfortunately, the annual Sky Tower Firefighter Stair Climb due to take place in May has been deferred but this may be able to take place later in the year.

In the meantime, we wish the families within the Lake Ōkāreka and wider Rotorua community all the best as we move out of lockdown and start rebuilding our local economy. Supporting local business has never been more important.

If you have been thinking about joining and would like to see what we are about, please phone me on 3628874. You can also go to our website: [www.okarekaruralfire.com](http://www.okarekaruralfire.com).

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We wish the community all the best for a safe winter.

*Phil Muldoon*

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