



Case Study

Virtual Reality Training in Public Safety & Awareness

Tauranga City Council: Building Community
Resilience with Skills^{VR}

2025



Tauranga City



About the Client

Tauranga City Council (TCC) Emergency Management is responsible for responding to many hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis, and other extreme events. TCC focuses not only on response but also on building community resilience, **ensuring residents are informed, prepared, and able to act effectively when disaster strikes.**



[Mount Maunganui, or Mauao – Tauranga City Council](#)

The Challenge

TCC faced critical gaps in **community disaster preparedness**:

- **Complacency in the community** – Many residents exhibited a “she’ll be right” attitude, underestimating the risks of major events.
- **Overreliance on sirens and warnings** – Surveys showed that people expected formal alerts, even in locally generated tsunamis where warning systems might fail.
- **Unsafe evacuation choices** – Many planned to gather belongings or drive vehicles during evacuation, risking delays and congestion.
- **Cultural accessibility** – With **35 iwi, 260 hapū, and 224 marae**, training needed to be culturally inclusive, including full **Te Reo Māori translations**.

“If the quake is long or strong, get gone. Walk, don’t drive.” – Emergency Management Team, Tauranga City Council



Solution

Tauranga City Council partnered with Skills^{VR} to develop a 10-minute interactive VR module that replicates the Mount Maunganui coastline and simulates earthquake and tsunami scenarios. The aim was to give the community an engaging, memorable way to learn how to respond to natural hazards.

Key features included:

- **Hyper-realistic environments** – Fully immersive 3D renderings of local landmarks and coastal areas.
- **Natural disaster simulation** – Earthquake shaking, falling debris, and tsunami waves shown from multiple perspectives.
- **Interactive decision-making** – Learners choose how to respond: Drop, Cover, Hold; evacuate to high ground; or assist others.
- **Cultural inclusivity** – Full Te Reo Māori translation ensures accessibility for the Bay of Plenty's diverse population.
- **Community-centered rollout** – VR headsets deployed at Emergency Management stalls on local beaches for direct, targeted outreach.

[Click to watch module trailer](#)



"The ability to experience an earthquake or tsunami in VR creates a sense of urgency and emotional impact you just can't achieve with a pamphlet."

– Isaac Orchard, Community Resilience Advisor, TCC



Case in Action: Earthquake & Tsunami Preparedness Module

- **Earthquake response** – Residents practiced Drop, Cover, Hold during simulated shaking.
- **Tsunami evacuation** – Learners identified natural warning signs and made life-saving decisions.
- **Interactive characters** – Sarah and Aria guided participants and reinforced safe behavior under stress.
- **Post-experience reflection** – Families created household plans, discussed preparedness, and explored official resources.





Impact in Action

Community Engagement & Measurable Outcomes

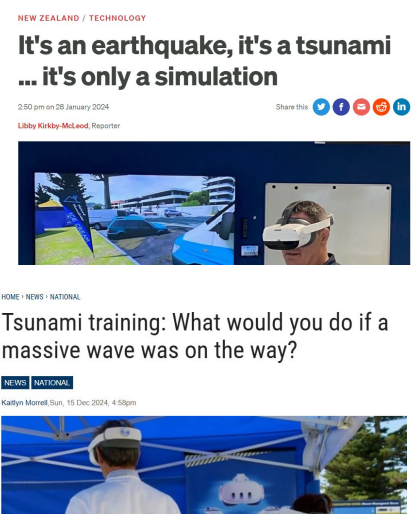
Over **2,000 residents** experienced the module across the first summer, turning community events into practical learning moments. **67% reported improved knowledge of tsunami safety**, leaving more confident about what steps to take in an emergency. **70% reported stronger understanding of earthquake procedures**, saying the VR practice helped the instructions “stick.”

Many became advocates, sharing preparedness knowledge with family and neighbors, showing how the impact extended beyond the headset.

Human & Emotional Impact

The experience created an immediate “wow factor”, with first-time users describing the **urgency and chaos as unforgettable and eye-opening**. Residents left with practical readiness, remembering the clear message: “Long or strong, get gone” – and feeling prepared to act on it.

Māori communities responded positively to the full Te Reo Māori translation, appreciating that the programme reflected and respected their culture.





Results That Matter

The programme's success comes from a **practical blend of immersion, accessibility, and cultural relevance**. Experiencing disasters in VR makes the training real and memorable. Portable, easy-to-use setups take training **straight to at-risk communities**. Fast scenario development allows testing and improvement on the go, while cultural translations ensure **every resident can connect with and benefit from the experience**.

The partnership between Tauranga City Council and Skills^{VR} has set a new standard for community disaster preparedness in New Zealand. Transforming traditional safety education into an engaging, hands-on experience is helping residents move from awareness to confident action, learning how to stay calm, think clearly, and respond effectively when it matters most.

The success of the Mount Maunganui module has inspired interest from other regions across New Zealand, with councils exploring how similar VR-based training can strengthen their own community resilience efforts. The programme has also gained international recognition, earning media attention and industry awards for its innovative approach to public safety education.

What began as a local pilot is now a model for how immersive learning can bring communities together, empower individuals, and build a safer, more prepared New Zealand.





Build a Safer, More Prepared Community with Skills^{VR}

Contact us today to schedule a demo, explore your community's VR solutions, and start building a resilient, disaster-ready population.

contact@skillsvr.com