



NO CONNECTION: Residents in Marokopa are frustrated by shortcomings with their phone systems.

Phone outages “unacceptable”

FRUSTRATION levels rose in Marokopa when residents lost telephone service during Easter.

The Marokopa community was left with telephone coverage for five days from March 24 -29.

For local resident Rick Willmore, the loss of telephone communication was “unacceptable”. And he says it’s not the first time it has occurred.

In a letter to the *Waitomo News* published last Thursday he said: “We regularly lose phones for days at a time and last year, the phones were out for more than two weeks. Over Easter weekend the population swelled by hundreds of extra people who came for events like the trail bike ride, the annual poukai and general holidaymakers making the most of the last long weekend before winter sets in.”

Speaking to the *Waitomo News* on Tuesday, he says: “We have elderly people with medical alarms who were left with no access to emergency services plus farmers, retailers and others trying to run their businesses without a reliable landline or cell phone reception.

“It’s just unacceptable.”

POWER OUTAGE

Communications spokesman for Chorus Ltd which maintains the telephone lines at Marokopa, Nathan Beaumont says: “Chorus is a wholesale lines company and provides a service to retail telecommunications providers like Vodafone, Farmside and Spark.

“The Marokopa outage during Easter was initially caused by a power outage on March 24 which affected our network,” says Mr Beaumont.

“When the power was restored the following day it blew fuses on some of the electronics on our network.

“On March 26, a technician investigated the problem and found a four-

wheel drive vehicle was required to access a number of sites.”

Mr Beaumont says a combination of factors affected the “timely resolution of this fault including vehicle access, high winds and as it was Easter weekend we had reduced resources”.

“A four-wheel drive vehicle was provided on the first working day after Easter (March 29), which is when the fault was resolved.”

He says as residents connected to the Marokopa network live in a very remote area telecommunications are connected by a radio link.

“While I can understand their frustration, if you consider that weather, atmosphere and even a tree moving, could all affect the stability of the service you can understand how difficult it is to provide a continuous, uninterrupted service.”

Because of this he stresses the need for customers to realise that connectivity cannot always be guaranteed.

CELLULAR COVERAGE

Mr Willmore says landline communication in the Marokopa area is essential because there is no cellular service for 25kms.

“This is an issue which needs to be addressed by the wholesalers and retailers of cellular services.”

Chorus does not provide mobile services.

Taranaki-King Country MP Barbara Kuriger says she’s a strong advocate that accessibility to reliable broadband and mobile coverage should not be determined by where people live.

“Just recently I have welcomed the news of new cell towers at Te Uku, Benneydale and Maihihi.

“I am aware of, and actively working with, residents and service providers to gain an insight and understanding into the issues at Marokopa.”

IN BRIEF

Local winners

ONE lucky player won a Lotto second division prize of \$10,731 in the March 30 draw after buying their ticket at Countdown Otorohanga. As the punter purchased a Powerball ticket, their total prize was \$15,095. And the winning outlets locally don’t stop there. In Saturday night’s Powerball draw, a ticket bought at New World Te Kuiti won a second division prize of \$13,344.

Blood collection

BLOOD donors are needed at St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church Hall in Te Kuiti on April 21 when the NZ Blood Service will be collecting from 9am-1pm. If you wish to make an appointment call 0800 GIVE BLOOD (448 325).

Outdoor spots wanted

SCHOOL children are encouraged to snap photos, draw pictures and share creative descriptions of their favourite outdoor places in the 2016 Top Outdoor Spot competition. Prizes are awarded for first, second and third place in the ‘best photo’, ‘best drawing’ and ‘best description’ categories. In 2015 more than 180 entries were received. For competition details visit the website - bothsidesofthefence.org.nz. Entries close on May 8.

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