

ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS



Blue-green algae being discharged to land to prevent pollution of rivers.

Northland Regional Council operates a 24 hour, seven day a week environmental hotline for people to report environmental incidents in Northland. The incidents reported range from substances in water, dust nuisance and odour, to accidents that may have an impact on the environment, or activities that are posing a threat to the environment.

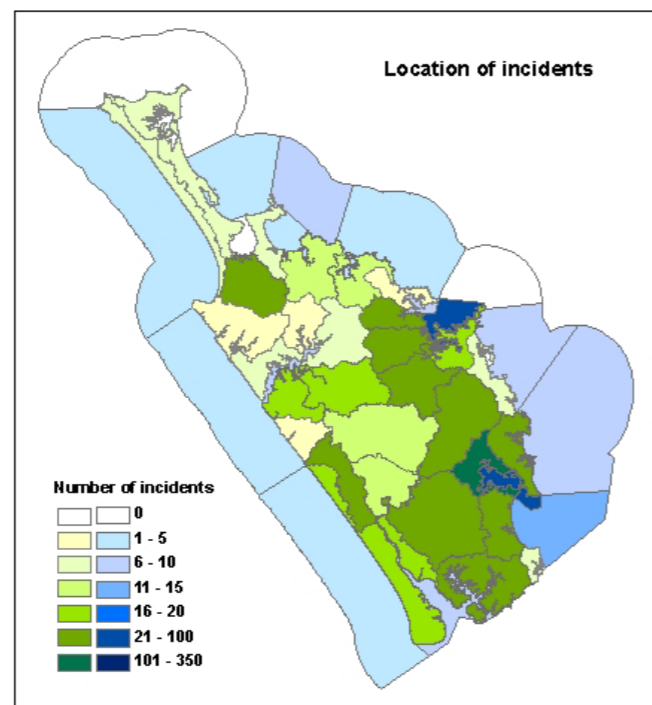


Oil spill into a stream.

All incidents reported to the council are recorded in a central database to keep track of investigations and the outcomes of the reported incident.

All incidents reported to the council are investigated by specially trained staff and site inspections are undertaken, where necessary. Where an incident is having or has had a negative effect on the environment, the necessary action is taken to stop, reduce or repair the damage.

Location of incidents



The adjacent map shows the distribution of incidents reported to the council during 2010-2011. The greatest number of incidents was reported in the Whāngārei area – 341 in total. This is to be expected given the number of people living in the area, and the urban nature of the catchment.

What environmental resources are affected?

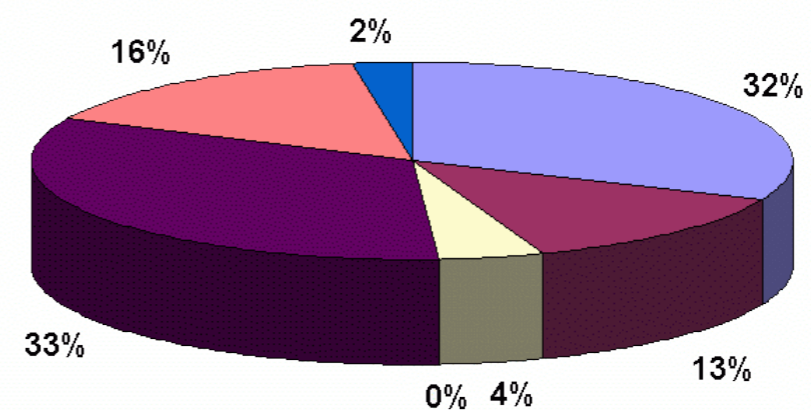
Environmental incidents can be grouped according to the environment (called 'resource') they affect. In 2010-2011, most incidents (349) related to our inland waters – rivers, streams and lakes.

Incidents affecting air recorded the second highest number of incidents (333), followed by incidents that affected land (166), the coastal marine area (136) and coastal waters (47). The chart below shows the percentage of incidents recorded for each resource during 2010-2011.



Burning of rubbish causes smoke nuisance.

Resource Affected by Environmental Incidents 2010-2011



■ Air
■ Coastal Waters
■ Inland Waters
■ Riparian Management Zone
■ Coastal Marine Area
■ Groundwater
■ Land

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Impact on the environment

Every incident reported to the council is graded according to the impact it has on the receiving environment, that is, where it ends up. In 2010-2011, 18 percent of the incidents reported to the council had no detectable impact on the environment and 47 percent had only a minor impact – they were short-lived and/or affected only a small area and caused no significant damage to the environment.

On the other hand, two percent of the incidents reported to the council had a significant impact on the environment – they were long-lived and/or occurred over a large area. The majority of these incidents were of a short duration and were mainly discharges to waterways.

Of the completed incidents during 2010-2011:

- 51 percent did not require follow-up action or were a result of natural events;
- 31 percent were compliant with the Resource Management Act or rules in relevant regional plans;
- 12 percent were referred to other agencies for action; and
- Seven percent resulted in formal enforcement action.



Sulphuric acid spill.