

Environmental Incidents

The 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.

All incidents reported to the Council are recorded in a central database. Important information such as type and the location of the incident, alleged offender(s), environment affected and impact are recorded.

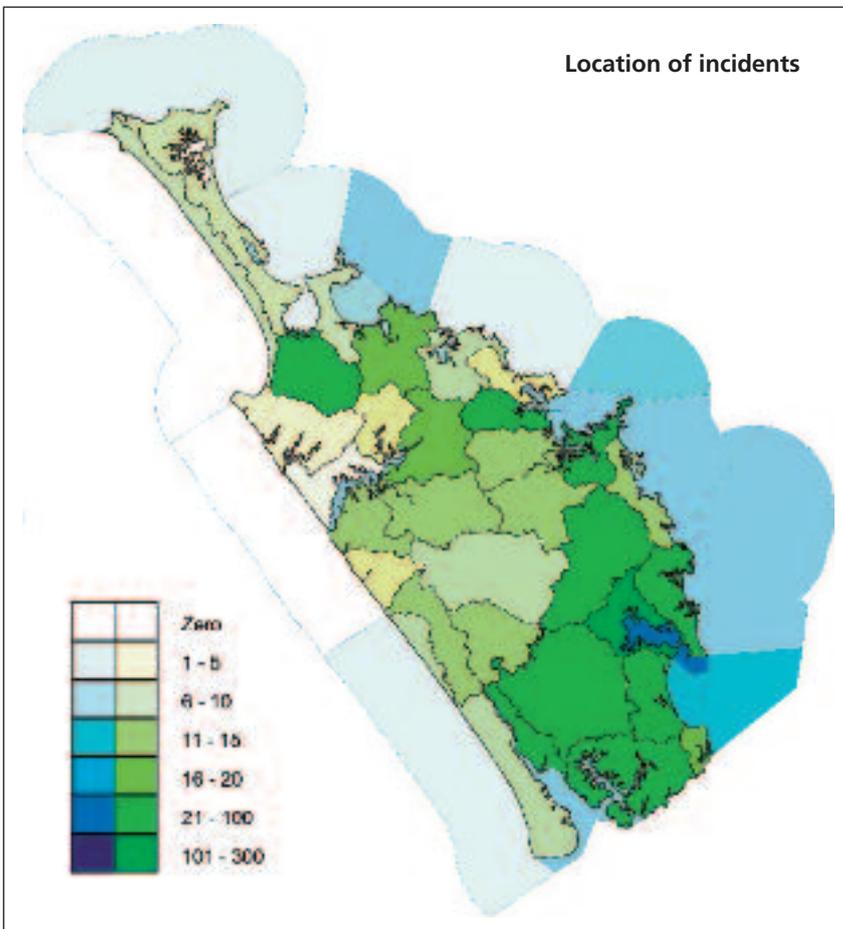
All incidents reported to the Council are investigated by specially trained staff and site inspections are undertaken, where necessary. Where an incident is having or has had a negative effect on the environment, the necessary action is taken to stop, reduce or repair the damage.



Sediment discharging into a stream.

Location of incidents

The map below shows the distribution of incidents reported to the Council during 2009-2010. The greatest number of incidents was reported in the Whāngārei area – 346 in total. This is to be expected given the number of people living in the area, and the urban nature of the catchment. No incidents were recorded along the Far North and Kaipara coasts.



Environmental Incidents performance targets

To minimise adverse effects on the environment from incidents and non-compliance with the Resource Management Act and Regional Plans by:

- Providing a 24-hour, every-day environmental incident reporting, recording and response system.
- 100% of significant incidents responded to by the Council.
- Recording, investigating and taking follow-up action on incidents reported to the Council where there are adverse effects on the environment and/or alleged non-compliance with the RMA.
- Taking appropriate enforcement action in cases of significant non-compliance with the statutory requirements (89% achieved).
- 100% of incidents that negatively impact on public health notified to Northland District Health Board within 24 hours.

Key points 2009-2010

- 979 incidents were reported to the Council in 2009-2010.
- The Council investigates all reported incidents.
- The greatest number of incidents reported was in the Whāngārei area.
- The highest number of reported incidents was for air pollution, burning or smoke-nuisance related.
- Other reported incidents were for odour nuisance, sewage in inland waters and earthworks and vegetation clearance.
- 69% of reported incidents had no or only a minor environmental impact.
- One incident had a long-term environmental impact and required restoration.



Burning and smoke nuisance.

What environmental resources are affected?

Environmental incidents can be grouped according to the environment (called 'resource') they affect. In 2009-2010, most incidents (335) related to our air resources – compared to 380 in 2008-2009. Greater public awareness of the rules prohibiting backyard burning in the Whāngārei airshed may have contributed to this drop. For more information on the rules, go to www.nrc.govt.nz/air



Removal of shipwreck from 90 Mile beach.

Incidents affecting inland waters – rivers, streams and lakes – recorded the second highest number of incidents (298), followed by incidents that affected the coastal marine area (130), land (124) and coastal waters (66). The chart (bottom right) shows the percentage of incidents recorded for each resource during 2009-2010.

Types of incident

Of the 979 incidents reported to the Council in 2009-2010, the most common type related to burning or smoke nuisance (164). Other frequently recorded incidents included sewage in inland waters (106), other coastal activities (79), earthworks and vegetation clearance (73) and odour nuisance (69).



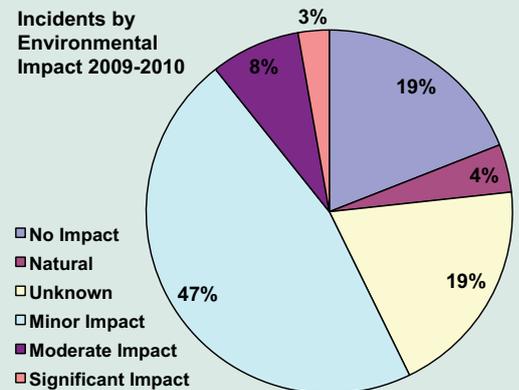
An overturned truck leaking petrol was a potential environmental incident.

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 2009-2010, 19% (187) of incidents reported to the Council had no detectable impact on the environment and 47% (458) 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, 3% (27) of the incidents reported to the Council had a significant impact on the environment – they occurred over a large area. The majority of these incidents were of a short duration and were mainly discharges to waterways. There was one significant incident which affected a significant wetland that required restoration.

Incidents by Environmental Impact 2009-2010



Rubbish dumped in a small stream.

Resource affected by Environmental Incidents 2009-2010

