

## ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS

### SUMMARY 2007-08

#### OVERVIEW

- NRC runs a 24 hour, seven day a week, freephone Environmental Hotline for people to report environmental incidents in Northland.
- Incidents reported may include a breach of resource consent, or an activity outside of the rules contained within a Regional Plan. Incidents may also be the result of a natural process.
- Due to a higher population density, the greatest number of incidents is usually reported in the Whangarei area.
- All incidents reported NRC are recorded in a central database.

#### PERFORMANCE TARGETS

To minimise adverse effects on the environment of incidents and non-compliance with the Resource Management Act and Regional Plans by:	Target Achieved:
➤ Providing a 24-hour, everyday environmental incident reporting, recording and response system.	✓
➤ 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 statutory requirements.	✓
➤ Reporting on the response to the incident reporter (as and when the follow up action is completed) and to the Council in the following month.	✓

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS 2007-08

- A total of 1037 incidents reported to NRC in 2007-08
- The majority of incidents reported in Whangarei (33%)
- The most common type of incident reported was smoke related (21% of the total)
- The majority of incidents affected air (37%) or inland waters (24%)
- 77% of reported incidents had no, or only a minor, impact on the environment

## INTRODUCTION

Northland Regional Council (NRC) operates a 24 hour, seven day environmental hotline, where people from anywhere in Northland can report environmental incidents to a freephone number (0800 504 6390). Incidents range from water pollution to spraydrift, earthworks to odour problems or construction of inappropriate structures.

During the 2007-08 financial year, there were 1037 incidents reported to NRC. All environmental incidents reported to the Council are recorded in a central database. Important information such as type, location and details of the incident, alleged offender/s, resource affected and impact on the environment are recorded, in order to meet NRC's performance targets for response to environmental incidents (refer to page 1).

For a map showing the distribution of incidents reported in 2007-08, refer to page 3 and for a tabulated breakdown of the incidents and their impact on the environment, refer to pages 4 and 5.



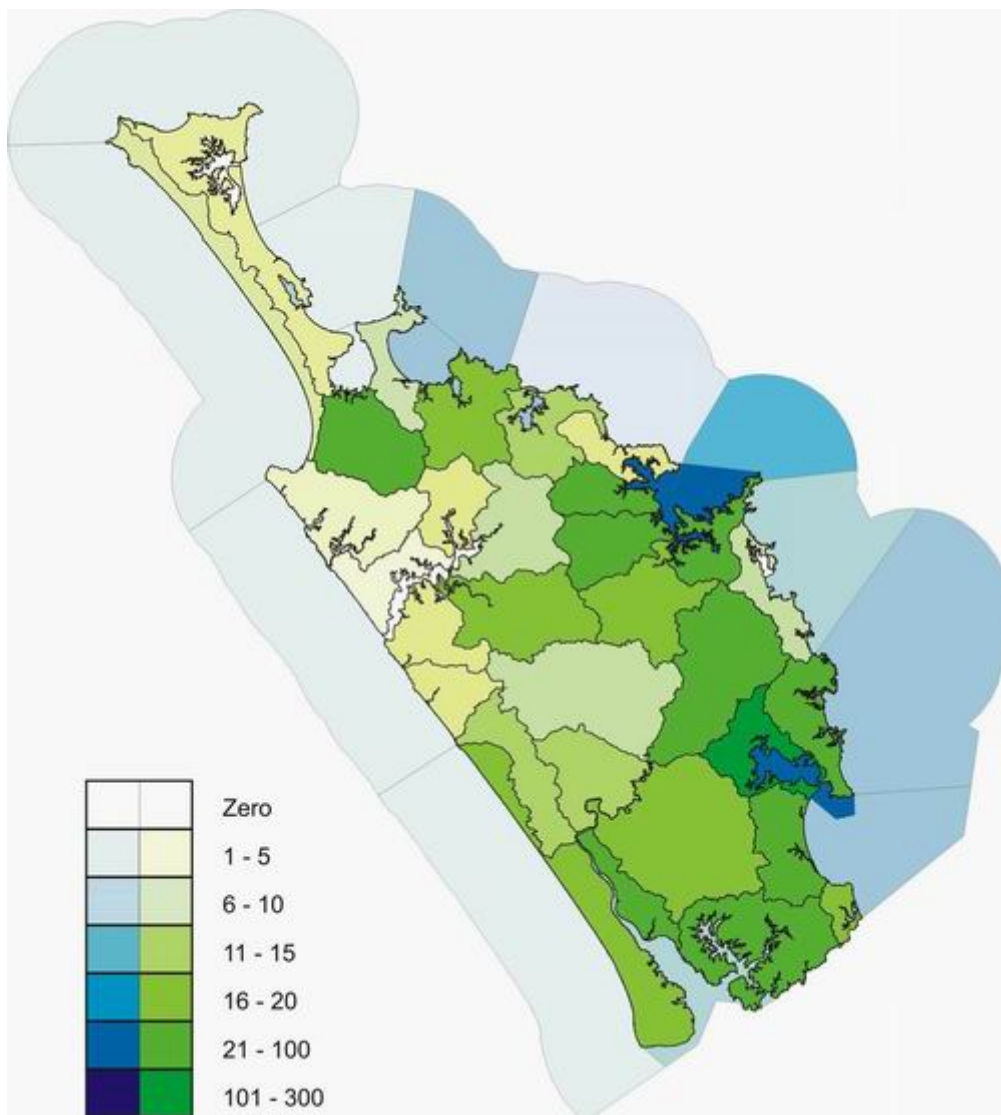
Photo: Industrial emissions in the Whangarei airshed

## RESULTS OVERVIEW

During the 2007-08 financial year, a total of 1037 incidents were reported to NRC.

### Distribution of Incidents

The map below shows the distribution of incidents throughout Northland during 2007-08. The darker colours represent the greatest number of incidents reported. Whangarei had the highest occurrence of incidents, with 342 being reported to NRC. The Hokianga Coast, Kaipara Coast, Rangaunu Harbour & Whangaruru Harbour areas all had one incident recorded each. The high number of incidents in the Whangarei area is related to the urban nature of the catchment and greater population density.



### Incident Types

The table below shows the different types of incidents reported in terms of numbers and percentage of the total 1037 incidents.

Burning and smoke nuisance incidents were by far the most common incidents in Northland, however this may be related to the fact that people are more likely to notice and/or be affected by a smoke nuisance than other incident types. Odour, sewage and

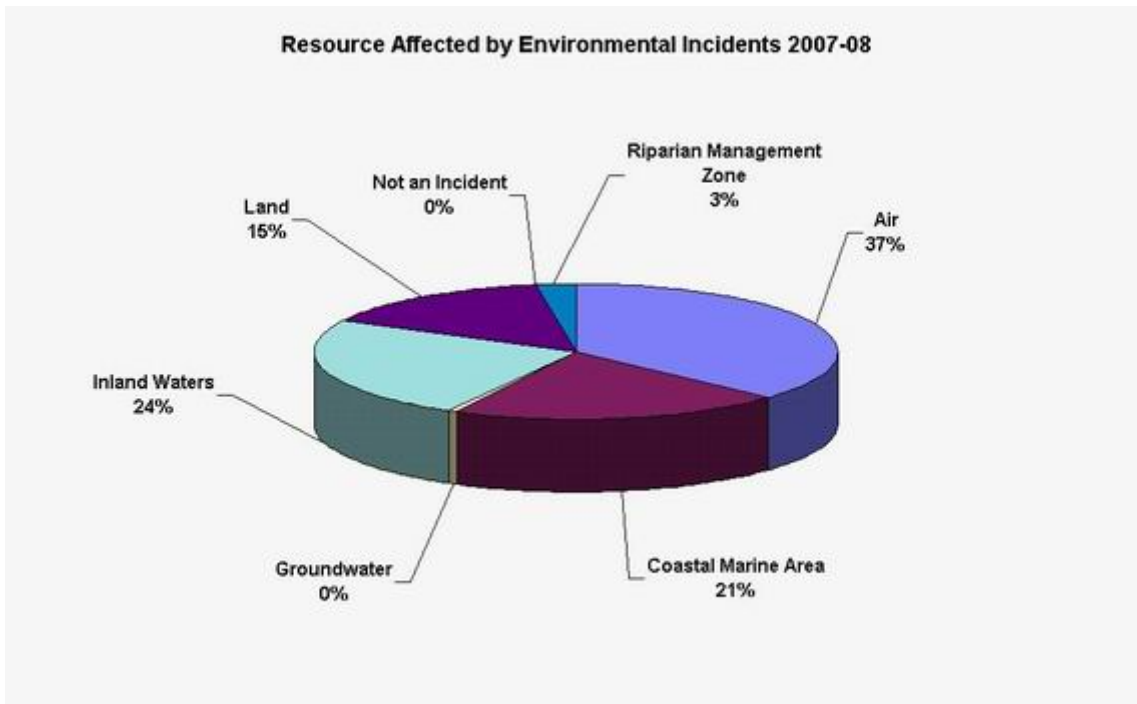
earthworks/vegetation clearance incidents were the next most common incidents reported in 2007-08.

Incident Type	Number	Percentage
Abrasive Blasting	4	0
Burning & Smoke Nuisance	217	21
Contaminated Stormwater	35	3
Dead Stock	28	3
Dead or Dying Organisms	13	1
Discolouration & Foams/Scums in Water	33	3
Diversion & Drainage Works	18	2
Dust Nuisance	36	3
Earthworks & Vegetation Clearance	90	9
Farm Dairy Effluent (FDE)	13	1
Flooding Hazards & Erosion	34	3
Hazardous Substances	15	1
Industrial Emissions	20	2
Miscellaneous	18	2
Natural Phenomena	4	0
Odour	70	7
Oil, Diesel & Other Fuel Spills - non ma	21	2
Other Agency Responsible	4	0
Other Coastal Activities	52	5
Other Contaminant Discharges	44	4
Other Water Pollution	26	3
Refuse & Other Dumping	34	3
Sewage	95	9
Spraydrift	30	3
Structures in Water bodies/CMA	65	6
Vehicles on Beaches	12	1
Water Abstractions	6	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1037</b>	<b>100</b>

### Resource Affected

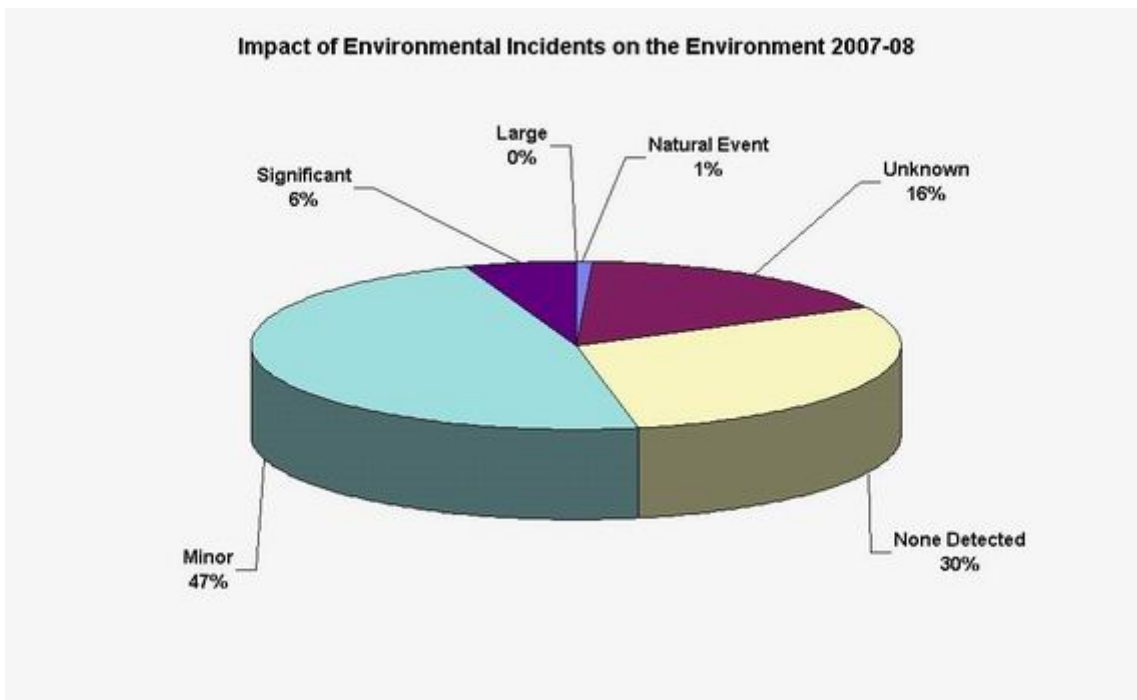
Of the 1037 incidents reported in 2007-08, 37% (384 incidents) were air related. Other incidents were recorded as affecting inland waters (254 incidents), the Coastal Marine Area (CMA) (213 incidents), land (155 incidents), groundwater (4 incidents) or the riparian management zone (RMZ) (26 incidents) (as shown below). One incident was reported to NRC but responded to by another agency.

Due to the small percentage of incidents reported as affecting groundwater (4 out of 1037) and the small number of reports that were responded to by another agency (1 out of 1037), these show as 0% on the graph below.



**Impact on the Environment**

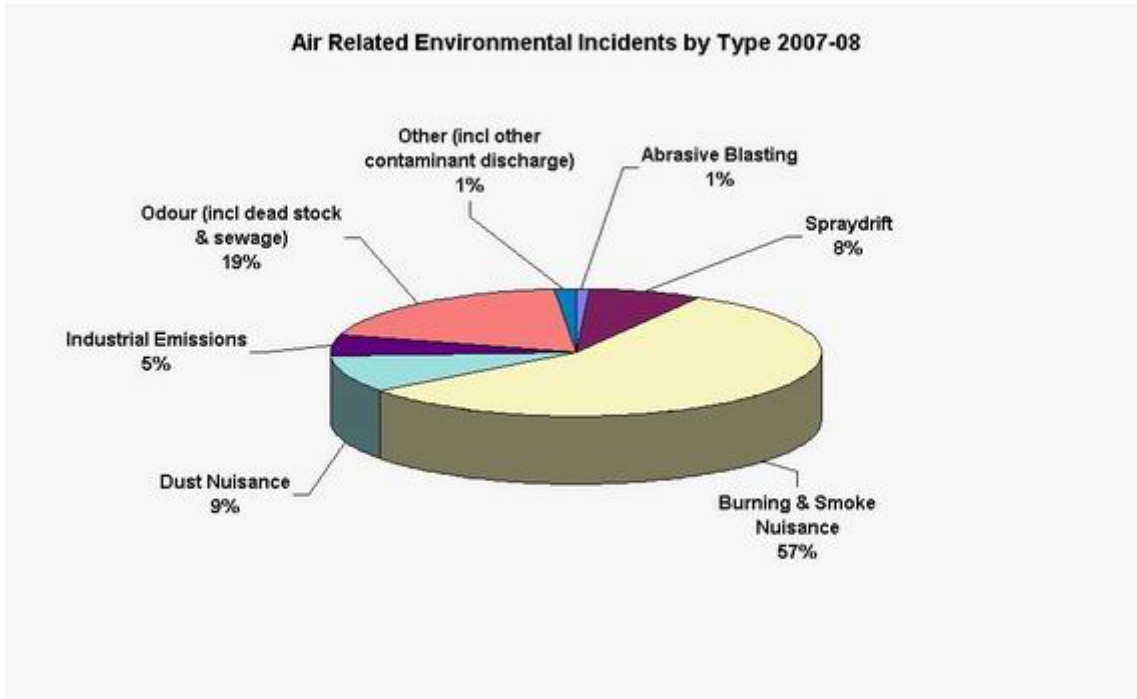
The impact of every incident on the environment is categorised and reported to Council on a monthly basis. Of the 1037 incidents reported to NRC in 2007-08, the majority of incidents (77%) were recorded as having no, or only a minor, impact on the environment. A minor impact means that effects were localised and/or short-lived with non-significant deterioration of the environment. On the other hand 57 incidents (6%) had a significant impact on the environment. For 16% of the incidents reported, it was not possible to determine their impact on the environment.



**BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS**

**Air Related Incidents**

The graph below shows that the most common air related incidents in 2007-08 were those related to burning and smoke nuisance. These were followed by odour, dust nuisance and spraydrift incidents. In addition, there were a total of 3 abrasive blasting incidents reported and several “other” incidents affecting air, including the discharge of farm dairy effluent (FDE), sewage or other hazardous substances in a manner by which it impacted upon air quality.



The number of air related incidents reported to NRC in 2007-08 was 384, in comparison to 454 in 2006-07.

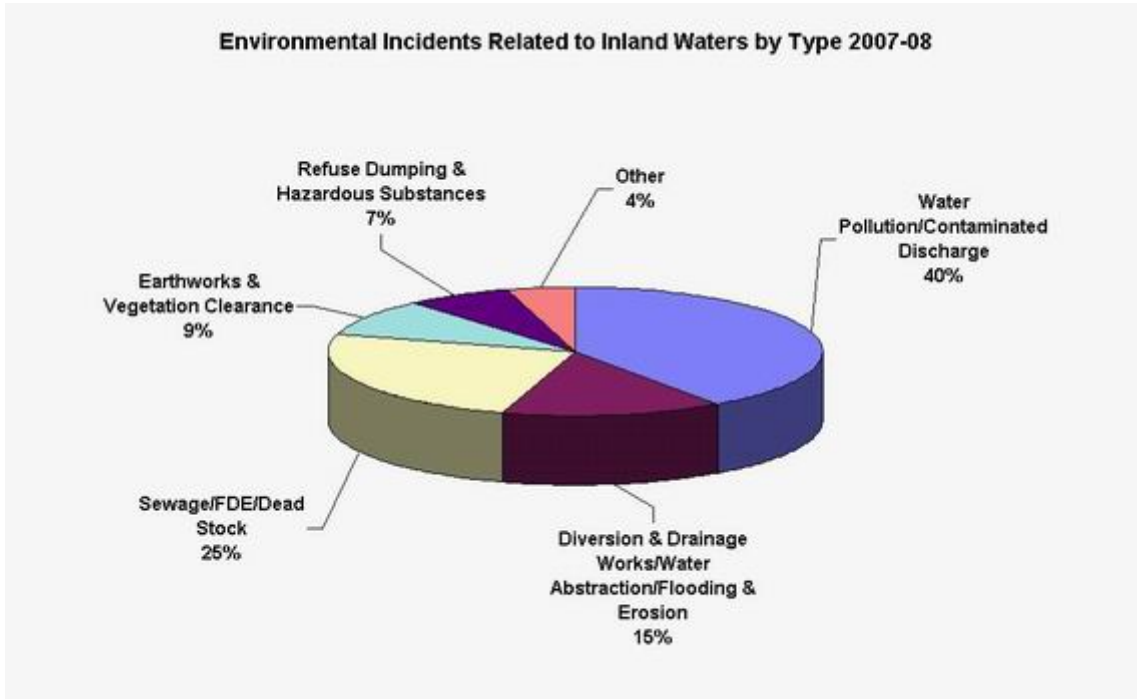


Photo: Smoke nuisance from burning tyres & plastic wrap



**Incidents Affecting Inland Waters**

The different incident types affecting inland waters have been grouped into logical categories as shown below. The water pollution/contaminated discharge group includes incidents such as contaminated stormwater, discolouration/foam or scums and oil and diesel spills. Diversion and drainage work, water abstraction, flooding hazard and erosion incidents have been grouped together as they are all related to water quantity and/or flow rates. Incident types where one of the main concerns is bacteriological contamination and the associated human health risks have been grouped, including sewage, dead stock and discharge of FDE.



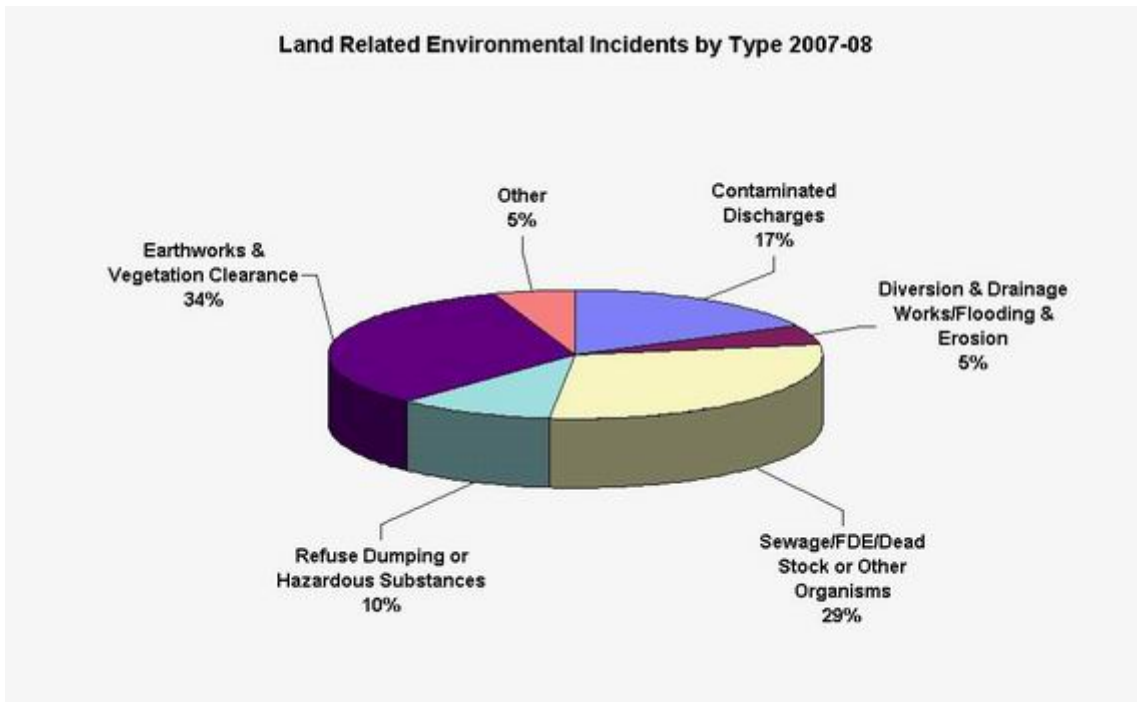
In 2007-08, the greatest number of incidents recorded as affecting inland waters were those related to contaminated discharge or incidents with the potential to cause bacteriological contamination. The total number of incidents affecting inland waters in 2007-08 was 254, compared to 284 in 2006-07.



Photo: Discharge of FDE to land causing ponding of effluent

**Land Related Incidents**

The different incident types affecting land resources in Northland have been grouped as for inland waters. For example, all incidents associated with potential bacterial contamination are grouped, including sewage, FDE and incidents involving dead stock.



The greatest number of land related incidents recorded in 2007-08 related to earthworks & vegetation clearance, followed closely by incidents involving the discharge of sewage, FDE or disposal of dead stock. The total number of land related environmental incidents reported to NRC in 2007-08 was 155, compared to 192 in 2006-07

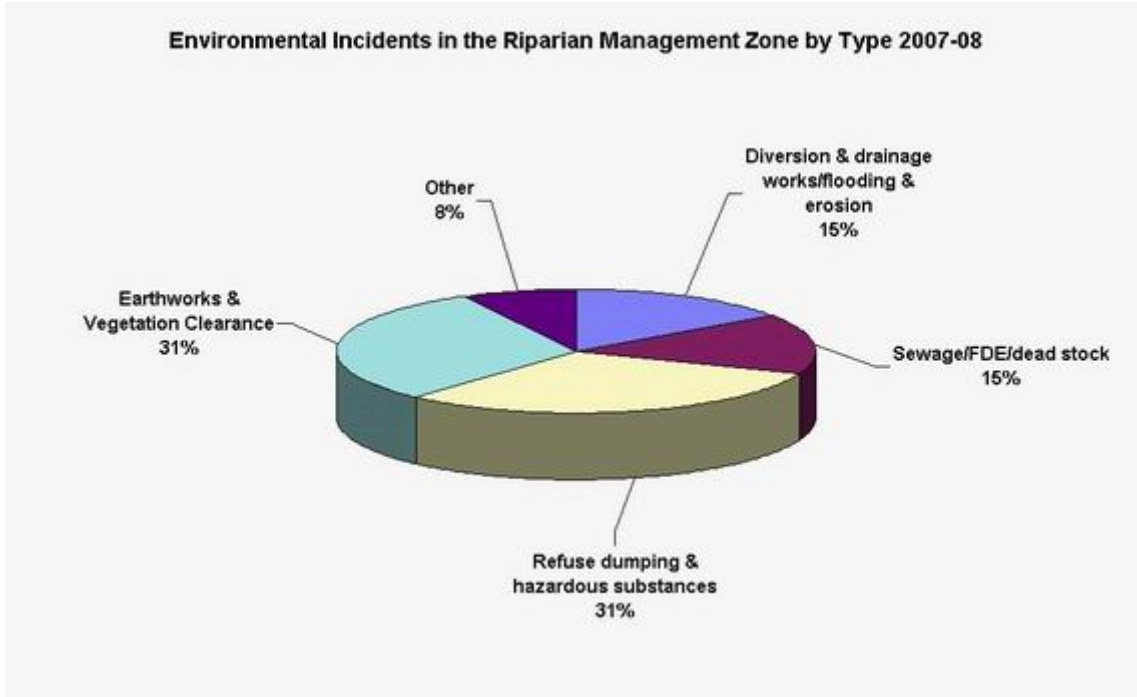


Photo: Earthworks on a slope without sediment control



**Incidents Affecting the Riparian Management Zone**

The RMZ is a zone of varying widths adjacent to the bed of a river, lake, indigenous wetland, or the CMA, which requires careful management to protect the water body from the adverse effects of land use. This “resource affected” area was introduced for incident reporting on 1 July 2005. The introduction of this additional area will therefore have had an impact on incident numbers that would previously have been logged as affecting either land or the CMA.



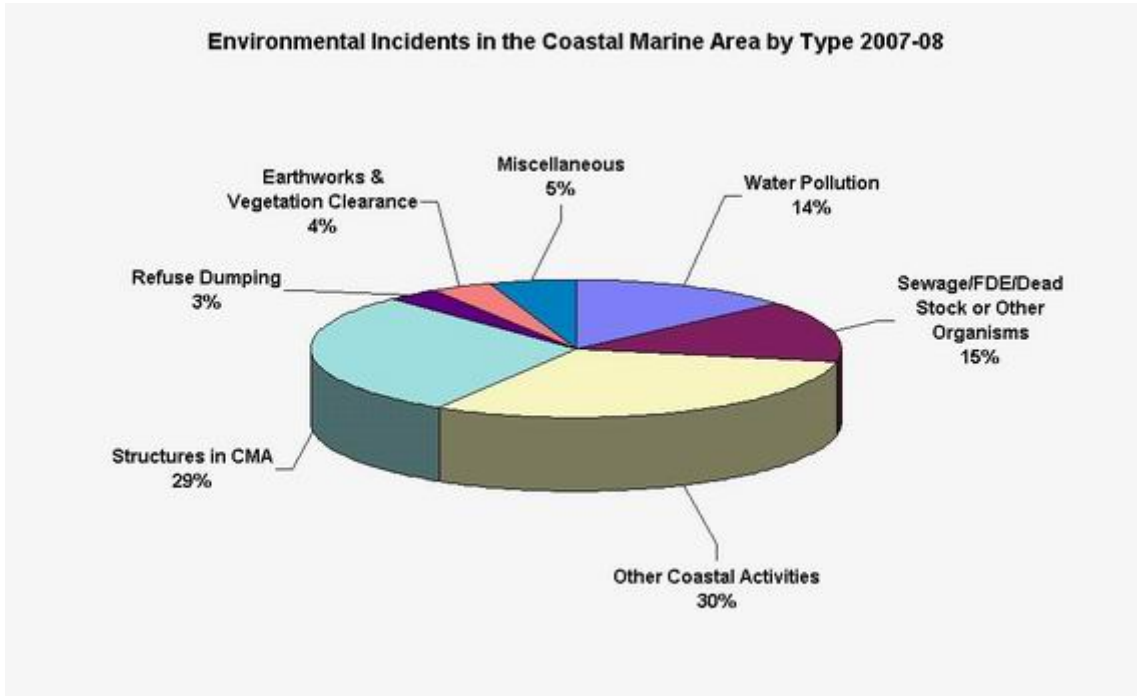
There were 26 incidents reported as affecting the RMZ during 2007-08. The majority of these incidents were earthworks and vegetation clearance or refuse dumping and hazardous substances. This compares to 24 incidents recorded in 2006-07.



Photo: Rubbish and debris pile in the RMZ

**Incidents Affecting the Coastal Marine Area**

The CMA covers harbours, beaches and estuaries and includes the foreshore, seabed, water and air space above the water. There were 213 incidents reported in 2007-08 that were recorded as affecting the CMA, of which 30% were described as “other coastal activities”. This category includes a range of incidents from livestock on beaches, to mangrove clearance or alleged sand extraction or deposition.



The number of incidents recorded as affecting the CMA has stayed reasonably stable for the last four years, with approximately 100 reported to NRC every year. However, there was an increase to 213 in 2007-08 due to a number of structures being investigated through routine coastal structure monitoring and because incidents previously recorded as affecting coastal waters have now been integrated into this category.



Photo: Recovering a beached trawler off 90 Mile Beach