



Waste management

Introduction

Waste is any material – solid, liquid or gas – that is unwanted and disposed of by its owner. Commonly-produced waste includes paper, plastic, glass, metals, organic waste and commercial wastes, such as construction and demolition materials. Hazardous waste has one or more properties that make it harmful to the environment and/or people.

The Regional Council is responsible for the collection, storage and disposal of hazardous waste substances in Northland. Council staff also monitor contaminated sites and closed and operational landfills in the region, to check they are not having a negative effect on the environment. In addition, the Council works with industry and the local community to try to reduce the amount of waste produced in the region.

Waste Hazardous Substances

Collection and operational depots



Unused waste hazardous substances collected through the joint project.

The Council, in conjunction with PGG Wrightson Ltd, operates four collection depots in Northland for unused waste hazardous substances. To find out more about these facilities, go to www.nrc.govt.nz/agrichemicalcollection.

The Council also operates a mobile collection service for the collection of chemicals that may be leaking or in broken containers, from individual

properties. To learn more about disposing of hazardous household waste, go to www.nrc.govt.nz/homehazwaste.

Once collected, the waste is transported to the Council offices in Whangarei, where it is repackaged, labelled and placed in temporary storage before being taken to Auckland for long-term storage and disposal. The collection programme allows people to dispose of waste hazardous substances responsibly, at no extra cost, rather than dumping them in the natural environment.

Workplace inspections and emergency response

Regional Council staff also carry out inspections of workplaces in the region that store and/or use hazardous substances, to check they comply with the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) 1996. In 2008-09, Council staff spent 608 hours on workplace inspections for hazardous substances compliance in Northland.

The Council also provides a 24-hour, seven day a week incident response team for incidents involving hazardous substances. In 2008-09, this team attended 16 incidents involving hazardous substances, including a tanker of sulphuric acid that overturned at Tokatoka, south of Dargaville. The Council coordinated the clean-up of the site and helped to ensure the incident ended positively.

Waste management performance targets

To reduce the quantities of hazardous substances and hazardous wastes entering Northland's environment and minimise the adverse effects of these by:

◆ Facilitating safe and lawful storage of hazardous substances and management of waste hazardous substances:

- Providing a collection, transport, storage and disposal service for waste hazardous substances.
- Exporting for safe destruction, the intractable waste hazardous substances that the Council has collected.
- Providing a hazardous substance storage compliance monitoring and incident response service.
- Producing an annual report to the Department of Labour and the Council on the performance of these services.

◆ Facilitating the management of contaminated sites in Northland:

- Maintaining and updating a database of potentially contaminated sites, site assessments and remediation.
- Promoting the assessment and remediation of significant contaminated sites.
- Promoting the availability of contaminated site data



Hazardous substances collections turn up a wide range of old chemicals. The Council operates a free collection service to reduce the number of potentially hazardous substances throughout Northland.

www.nrc.govt.nz/agrichemicalcollection



Contaminated Sites

The Council manages a list of sites in the region that are, or could be, contaminated, called the Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL). Each year, Regional Council staff visit and inspect a selection of these sites to check the information that is held for them and to verify whether or not they pose any significant threat to the environment and/or people.

In 2009, the Council set about making this information available to the public and has now released the HAIL data for Northland, covering land that has been used for activities that involved the use of hazardous substances. This list is available on the Council's website at www.nrc.govt.nz/hail. The Council will continue to update and develop this database, including new sites as they are identified.

Regional Council staff also monitor Northland's two operational landfills every three to six months, and all closed landfills annually. Surface water, groundwater and sediment samples are collected from sites adjacent to operational landfills. These samples are analysed for contaminants, such as heavy metals. All landfills monitored in 2008-09 complied with their consent limits and there was no evidence of any significant contamination to nearby land or waterways.

Solid Waste Management

The Council has a Waste Minimisation Strategy and takes part in events such as eDay, with the aim of encouraging industry, business and households to reduce their waste production for the benefit of the environment. To find out how you can reduce rubbish in your home, go to www.reducerubbish.govt.nz.

eDay is a national event in which the public can drop-off computer waste and cellphones for recycling at designated collection points on a specified day each year. An estimated 95 percent of the equipment collected is recyclable or reusable. The waste is shipped to purpose-designed facilities that can remove reusable materials from the waste in an environmentally sustainable way. This means that waste is not dumped on third world markets that may not have the facilities to dispose of the waste safely.

In 2008, 40 tonnes of obsolete computer equipment and unwanted mobile phones were collected from depots in Kaitiāia, Kaikohe, Kerikeri and Whāngārei. More than 16,550 cars dropped off 87,056 items nationally. The total amount of waste collected across the country was 946 tonnes, waste which would otherwise have ended up in landfill.



A sulphuric acid spill at Tokatoka in November 2008 saw the Regional Council hazardous waste team swing into action.



Regional Council CEO, Ken Paterson, helping out during eDay.



Photograph courtesy Alexander Turnbull Library.

Potentially contaminated sites, like the old sheep dip shown above, are listed on the Council's website.

