



Mercury thermometers and waste mercury which form part of the hazardous waste collection.

## 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 the safe handling and lawful storage of hazardous substances and management of waste hazardous substances – **ACHIEVED.**
- Operate facilities throughout Northland for storage of hazardous substances and have facilities open 100 percent of working hours – **ACHIEVED.**
- 100 percent of hazardous substances are collected, transported and disposed of within 18 months – **ACHIEVED.**
- 80 hours a month spent undertaking workplace inspections and reporting to the Department of Labour – **NOT ACHIEVED (1200 hours completed, not evenly distributed each month).**
- Provide a 24 hour phone service for hazardous substance incidents and maintain a 100 percent response rate to calls received – **ACHIEVED.**
- Maintain a database of potentially contaminated sites and provide to relevant district councils by 31 December each year – **ACHIEVED.**



A typical bag of hazardous agricultural waste dropped off for disposal.

Waste is any material – solid, liquid or gas – that is unwanted and disposed of by its owner. Hazardous waste has one or more properties that make it harmful to the environment and/or people.

The Northland Regional Council offers a service to Northland ratepayers to collect, store and dispose of hazardous waste substances from around the region. Council staff also monitor contaminated sites and closed and operational landfills in the region, to check that they are not having a significant negative effect on the surrounding environment.

The council also works with industry and the local community to try and reduce the amount of waste produced in the region.

## Waste hazardous substances

### Collection and operational depots

The Northland Regional Council operates a waste chemical disposal service, designed to assist homeowners in the disposal of household quantities of unwanted hazardous chemicals. The collection programme ensures waste hazardous substances are disposed of responsibly, rather than being dumped in the natural environment.

The council – in conjunction with PGG Wrightson Ltd. – operates four collection depots in Northland. These were initially intended for agricultural chemicals and large, empty plastic and metal agricultural containers, which could not otherwise have been disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. In the past, the majority of these containers were simply buried on farms or burned.

When the service was introduced, there were a lot of legacy chemicals – i.e. chemicals that were banned for use in New Zealand – in storage on farms. These substances formed the main target of the collection programme.

The service is still operating, although there are now commercial services for primary sector users in Northland. These services are paid for by the users, but are subsidised in many cases by the schemes' supporting brands and by the Ministry for the Environment. To find out more about these facilities, go to [www.nrc.govt.nz/agriculturalcollection](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/agriculturalcollection)

The council's mobile chemical collection service – for leaking chemicals or those in broken containers – from individual properties, remains active, with requests to assist in the disposal of waste being received on a regular basis. Household hazardous waste drop-off points around the region are also busy.

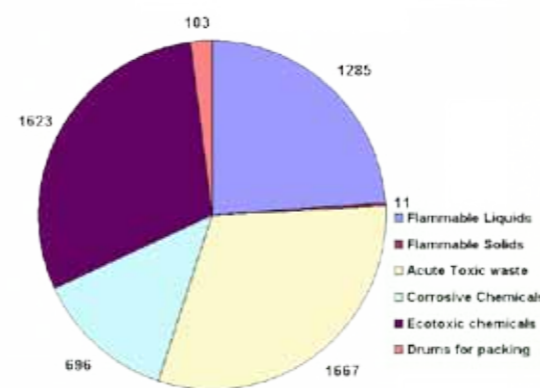
Fourteen collections of chemicals were made during 2010–2011, where the chemicals or containers were not in a suitable condition to transport to a drop-off point.

The total amount of hazardous waste collected in 2010–2011 was 4401kg. Of this, 732.4kg was exported, 180.4kg of this being persistent organic pollutants, which do not readily break down in the environment, including DDT, Dieldrin and pentachlorophenol (PCP).

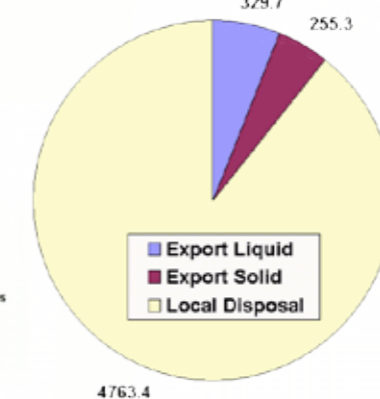
The charts show the various categories of chemicals disposed of, as classified by their hazards and their final fate. The packaging included in the charts refers to the weight of the steel drums that the waste must be packed in.

Council staff also disposed of about a ton of plastic containers to landfill. This is currently the subject of investigation, to ascertain whether there is a more environmentally sound way of recycling this resource.

Amount of chemicals disposed in 2010-2011 (all values in kilograms)



Chemical totals for 2010-2011 (all values in kilograms)



## Workplace inspections and emergency response

The council is contracted to audit workplaces throughout Northland for compliance with the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO), under contract to the Department of Labour. More than 170 sites were inspected by the council's warranted HSNO Enforcement Officers in the past year, with over 70 follow-up visits.

Sites vary greatly in their level of compliance, but sites which exhibited poor compliance initially showed a great improvement once they had been through the inspection process.

The Hazardous Substances Workplace Inspection Programme will not continue from August 2011 due to cost-cutting measures by the Department of Labour.

The council provides a 24-hour, seven day a week incident response capability for emergency incidents involving hazardous substances, as well as liaising closely with other emergency management services as part of the Regional Hazardous Substances Technical Liaison Committee.

During 2010–2011, council staff assisted in the successful resolution of 21 emergency incidents involving hazardous substances, including a major warehouse fire, ammonia leaks, house fires involving LPG cylinders and a leaking container of nitric acid in a retail premises.

## Potentially contaminated sites

The council manages a database of sites in the region that are, or could be, contaminated, based on the Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL), which is available at [www.nrc.govt.nz/hail](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/hail)

## Landfills

The management of waste in Northland has entered into a new era with the opening of the new regional landfill at Puwera in November 2010. A large proportion of Northland's waste is no longer sent to Redvale landfill for disposal as a result. Approximately 5000 tonnes of solid waste is disposed of each month at the Puwera landfill.

## Solid waste management

Every year New Zealanders send around 2.5 million tonnes of waste to landfill – that's over a tonne of rubbish per household. The majority of this waste is not reprocessed or recycled, and doesn't break down over time. Disposing of waste at landfills is a sign that we're not using our resources efficiently, and are contributing directly to pollution.

## CASE STUDY: Waste Management

A Bay of Islands business has been ordered to clean up tonnes of oil-contaminated soil by authorities investigating a spill which polluted a stream that feeds into the river supplying Paihia's drinking water.

Ōpua-based regional council staff responded and boomed-off the area to contain the spill. The Far North District Council was also alerted as the tributary feeds into the Waiaruha River, which in turn feeds in to the Waitangi River, near where the district council draws water for Paihia's town supply.

The regional council arranged for the oil to be removed with special sucker trucks and diggers.

Subsequent inquiries revealed oil appeared to have been discharging for some time from a waste oil storage area at a local business.

Fortunately, at this stage it appears any environmental damage to the tributary will be short-term. The situation with the business owner's property is less clear at this stage and it's likely they will need to remove quite a few tonnes of oil-contaminated soil.

This incident serves as a warning to businesses dealing with waste materials or hazardous compounds to ensure they are properly contained and disposed of.

Waste oil must be disposed of properly and a number of firms in Northland offer free collection and disposal.



Oil spill into a stream.