

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Stephen Yeats, Resource Advisor

Annual Incident Response Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of staff's work in the area of pollution/non-compliance incident response for the financial year 1998/99.

2. Background

- 2.1 Compliance staff are responsible for investigating and following up public reports of pollution or other non-complying incidents. Apart from the various forms of pollution dealt with, the term *non-complying incidents* refers to reported incidents such as illegal water and gravel takes, diversions, damming of water, and other un-consented works.
- 2.2 The work involves investigation of the original report, persuading the party involved to fix the problem, sometimes fixing the problem ourselves (e.g cleaning up pollution when the person responsible cannot be found), and taking formal enforcement action where appropriate.
- 2.3 Administration involves keeping a database with details of every incident, reporting back to the original complainant, taking formal enforcement action, billing some offenders for staff time and other costs, and summarising the work each year.
- 2.4 Summaries of incidents are reported in each Committee agenda as part of the Divisional Managers report.

3. The 1998/99 Year

- 3.1 This year, 92 incidents were responded to. This compares to 120 in the 1998 year and 89 in the 1997 year.
- 3.2 An analysis of incidents is given in the following tables:

Table 1 – Type of Incident by District

District	Air	Land	Coastal	Ground-water	Rivers and streams	Total
Masterton	16	4	3	3	21	47
Carterton	7	2		1	12	22
South Wairarapa	6	5	1		11	23
Total	29	11	4	4	44	92

Table 2 – Numbers of Incidents by Category and District

	Masterton District	Carterton District	Sth Wairarapa District	Total
Agricultural Effluent	1	5	2	8
Dead Stock in Water	3	1	1	5
Hazardous Substances	3		5	8
Hydrocarbons	3			3
Liquid Waste	3	1	6	10
Odour	7	1		8
Other	10	3	2	15
Particulate	2	2	1	5
Sewage	2		1	3
Smoke	5	3		8
Solid Waste	5	3	3	11
Unconsented Works	3	3	2	8
Total	47	22	23	92

4. Discussion

- 4.1 There has been a drop over the last year in the number of incidents reported. There were 23% fewer incidents reported than in the 1998 year. The number of incidents reported in 1999 was similar to 1997.
- 4.2 It is not clear whether this drop in incident numbers is a result of fewer genuine environmental problems in the community, or whether it is a result of people failing to report problems.
- 4.3 In the past, Wairarapa has had proportionately more environmental complaints than the Wellington side of the region, in terms of numbers

of incidents per population. However, this year the western region has had a similar ratio of complaints per population.

- 4.4 Rivers and streams continue to be the most significant area of complaint, with air being the second most common cause of concern.
- 4.5 A broad range of activities gives rise to public complaint. No single class of activity stands out as more significant than the others.
- 4.6 The majority of work was in the rural areas.
- 4.7 Very few of the complaints related to a repeat of previous incidents. There were few multiple complaints about a single incident.
- 4.8 Twenty three of the incidents (25 %) related to activities which held resource consent.

5. Enforcement

- 5.1 One of the public complaints has led to a prosecution being initiated. This case is currently proceeding through the courts.
- 5.2 Seven abatement notices were issued as a result of complaints to the Council. One of the abatement notices was not complied with, and this has led to further enforcement action in the form of prosecution. The other abatement notices have had successful outcomes.
- 5.2 The majority of cases which required enforcement were dealt with by either informal negotiation or correspondence.

6. Communications

This report will be made available to the media through normal agenda distribution. Highlights will be incorporated in the forthcoming annual newsletter to consent holders.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee receive the report and note its contents.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Stephen Yeats
Resource Advisor

Steve Blakemore
Manager, Planning & Resources