

Incident Response & Enforcement

2016/2017

Environmental Regulation

greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao

Key points

- » The number of environmental incidents investigated this year has increased from 1,197 in 2015/16 to 1,270 in 2016/17.
- » Over two-thirds of enforcement actions taken use non-statutory tools.
- » One prosecution was taken during the year for unauthorised stream works. The outcome is still to be determined.

Environmental incident response

Last year Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) responded to 1,270 environmental incidents as shown in Figure 1, mainly reported through our Environment Hotline.

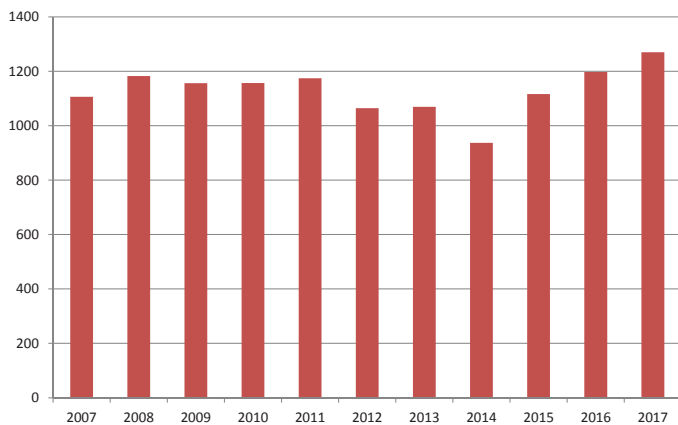


Figure 1: Environmental incidents responded to 2007 to 2017

Since 2014 there has been a gradual increase in the number of incidents reported and responded to. Last year was the highest year for incidents in the past 10 years.

Figure 2 shows the proportions of incidents affecting different receiving environments particularly, land (which includes the stormwater networks), air, the coastal marine area, and freshwater environments.

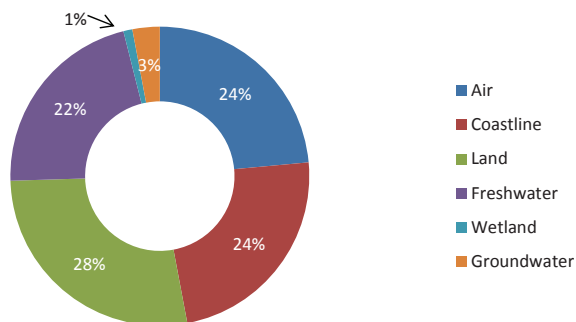
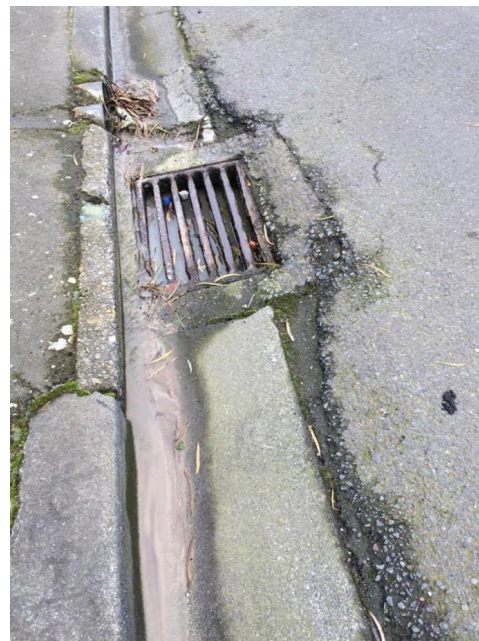


Figure 2: Receiving environments for incidents in 2016-2017

The types of incidents responded are wide and varied. Below are a few examples of incidents attended in the past year.



Unconsented discharge from an industrial site in South Wairarapa



Asphalt slurry and wash water discharge to stormwater network in Wellington



Disposal of tyres to land in Wairarapa

Enforcement

When required, Environmental Regulation staff use a range of tools to ensure compliance with the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) rules and resource consents. This includes a mix of statutory tools and informal non-statutory tools.

As shown in Figure 3 below, the majority of tools used are non-statutory. This includes:

Warning letters – Where an individual and/or company is given a written warning for the breaches they are responsible for.

Advisory notices – Which outlines what actions a recipient is required to do and by when to achieve compliance with a rule or resource consent.

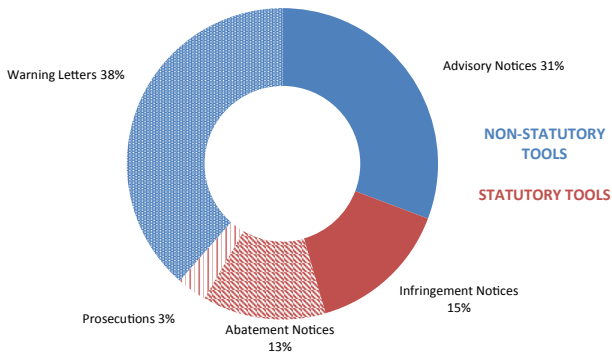


Figure 3: Non-statutory and statutory tools used in 2016-2017

Statutory tools used account for less than a third of actions taken. These include:

Infringement notices – Where there has been a minor breach of the RMA, a rule, or abatement notice a set fee ranging from \$300 to \$1,000 can be issued. This year 38 infringement notices were issued for various activities

Abatement notices – Formal instructions requiring a recipient to cease an activity or take certain actions to address environmental effects. This year 33 abatement notices were issued. This is a slightly greater number than the previous year.

Prosecutions – the most serious breaches of the RMA can result in a prosecution, with a maximum fine of \$600,000 for a company or \$300,000 or two years' imprisonment for an individual. This year 18 charges were laid in relation to unauthorised stream works in the Waitohu Stream. These charges were laid against three separate parties. Two of those parties pleaded guilty and have been sentenced. One of the parties has pleaded not guilty and a trial is yet to take place.

Overall, the use of both non-statutory and statutory tools is similar to that seen in the past five years shown in Figure 4:

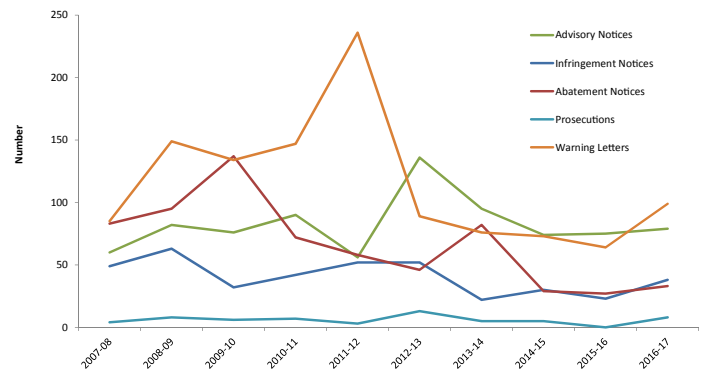


Figure 4: Enforcement tools used between 2007-2017

What can you do?

If you notice an environmental incident or an activity that you think may have an adverse environmental effect, please call GWRC's Environmental Incidents Hotline on **0800 496 734**. This is a 24-hour service.

If you want more information about how to avoid, reduce or respond to pollution, please call the Environment Helpdesk on 0800 496 734.

For more information on GWRC's environmental regulation activities please visit our website at www.gw.govt.nz.