

Strengthening New Zealand's emergency management legislation

Consultation overview

We are seeking feedback on options to strengthen New Zealand's overarching emergency management legislation and inform the design of a new Emergency Management Bill.

As part of its response to the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events, the Government intends to pass a new Emergency Management Bill during this term of Parliament. The bill will replace the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002.

The new bill is an opportunity to make sure our legislative settings enable the improvements identified through the Government Inquiry and other reviews.

In particular, the legislative reforms aim to ensure there is a whole-of-society approach to emergency management.

Objectives for reform

The Government's proposed objectives for the Emergency Management Bill are to:

- strengthen community and iwi Māori participation in emergency management
- provide for clear responsibilities and accountabilities at the national, regional, and local levels
- enable a higher minimum standard of emergency management
- minimise disruption to essential services
- ensure agencies have the right powers available when an emergency happens.

What we are consulting on

We have identified sixteen issues and various options for addressing them.

- Issue 1: Meeting the diverse needs of people and communities
- Issue 2: Strengthening and enabling iwi Māori participation in emergency management
- Issue 3: Strengthening and enabling community participation in emergency management
- Issue 4: Protection from civil liability for responding to an emergency in good faith
- Issue 5: Clearer direction and control during an emergency
- Issue 6: Strengthening the regional tier of emergency management
- Issue 7: Keeping emergency management plans up to date
- Issue 8: Stronger national direction and assurance
- Issue 9: Strengthening local hazard risk management
- Issue 10: Strengthening consideration of taonga Māori, cultural heritage and animals and during and after emergencies
- Issue 11: Reducing disruption to the infrastructure that provides essential services
- Issue 12: Strengthening central government business continuity
- Issue 13: Managing access to restricted areas
- Issue 14: Clarifying who exercises emergency powers at the local level
- Issue 15: Modernising the process to enter a state of emergency or transition period
- Issue 16: Mayors' role in local state of emergency declarations and transition period notices

Your feedback will help inform further policy development and shape changes to New Zealand's emergency management legislation.

Discussion document

We have developed a detailed discussion document to help people make their submissions. We recommend you read this before having your say. There is also a summary version available.

The discussion document is structured around the Government's proposed objectives for the bill. It provides an overview of New Zealand's current emergency management settings and the need for reform, followed by chapters that discuss the issues and options for each objective.

Throughout the document we have asked a series of questions which you can answer as part of your submission. You don't have to answer all of them.

Making your submission

Send us your feedback by 5pm, Tuesday 13 May 2025.

Please use the submission template provided on our website. This will help us to collate submissions and ensure your views are fully considered.

www.civildefence.govt.nz/emergency-management-bill

You can also make a written submission by:

- emailing your submission to EmergencyManagementBill@nema.govt.nz
- posting your submission to:
Policy Unit
National Emergency Management Agency
PO Box 5010
Wellington 6140

Submissions are public information

NEMA may publish copies and/or summaries of submissions received on our website, www.civildefence.govt.nz. Additionally, submissions provided to NEMA, whether published or not, may be required to be disclosed in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

Let us know in the cover letter or email that goes with your submission if it contains any information that you consider should be withheld.

More information about the use and release of information is provided in the discussion document and on our website www.civildefence.govt.nz/emergency-management-bill

Next steps following this consultation

Submissions will be used to inform the policy development process for the new bill and advice to Ministers. New issues and options that are raised in submissions will also be considered.

You will have the opportunity to provide further feedback when the bill is before the Select Committee. The Select Committee will set the timetable for submissions.

How the bill fits into wider system improvements

The bill will address the legislative reform needed to strengthen the emergency management system. Alongside the development of the bill, work on wider system improvements, such as community readiness and workforce capability, is being addressed through the Emergency Management System Improvement Programme (EMSIP).

EMSIP has been set up to implement the actions agreed to in the Government Response to the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events.