

BEFORE THE MANAWATU-WANGANUI (HORIZONS) REGIONAL COUNCIL

UNDER THE Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER OF: The Proposed Manawatu-Wanganui
(Horizons) Regional Council One
Plan

AND: Submission made by the New
Zealand Fire Service Commission

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF KERRY MALCOLM STEWART

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

1. My name is Kerry Malcolm Stewart. I am employed by the New Zealand Fire Service Commission (“the Fire Service”) as a Risk Management Coordinator for the Western Fire Region.
2. I have been a professional Firefighter for 30 years and I have held a senior operational and managerial position since 1997. In my current role I manage input into resource consent applications to local authorities and support our input into the Horizons and Taranaki regional councils.

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW ZEALAND FIRE SERVICE COMMISSION

3. The New Zealand Fire Service is under the control of the Commission, which is a crown entity that reports to the Minister of Internal Affairs.
4. In broad terms, the Commission is accountable to the minister for:
 - a. Fire safety public education;
 - b. Fire prevention and risk mitigation; and

- c. The provision of fire suppression and extinction services.
 - d. Hazardous substances emergency management
5. The Commission is also the National Rural Fire Authority for the purposes of the Forest and Rural Fires Act. The National Rural Fire Authority is responsible for co-ordinating the rural fire management of New Zealand.
 6. Miss Crack has outlined the key points of the Fire Service submission, which relates to various chapters within the Proposed One Plan, and I will provide technical supporting evidence.

CHAPTER 6: WATER

7. The Fire Service wishes to amend Policy 6-8(b)(iv) (Point source discharges to water), and seek the specific inclusion of 'fire fighting and hazardous substance emergency management' as 'other exceptional circumstances' within this Policy.

The New Zealand Fire Service responds to fires and other emergency incidents as mandated by the Fire Service Act 1975. Many of these incidents are complex in terms of their response, stabilisation, and final resolution. For instance before commencing a motor vehicle patient extrication, it may be necessary to wash spilt contaminants to waterways, or to adjacent land areas that may contaminate ground water. Firefighting runoff may similarly be discharged.

CHAPTER 8: AIR

8. The Fire Service wishes to amend Policy 8-3 (Regulation of Discharges to Air), and seek the inclusion of a policy that provides for the discharge to air, if the discharge is a fire fighting or a fire training activity.
 9. The New Zealand Fire Service responds to fires involving all manner of substances both natural and manmade. The mandate of the New Zealand Fire service under the
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Fire Service Act 1975 is the extinguishment or stabilisation of fire within urban fire districts, and outside these areas until the arrival and handover of lead agency status to the local Rural Fire Authority, Rural Fire Officer under the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977. In practice most structure related fires are extinguished, while management and extinguishment of fires relating to rural land, may be achieved by a variety of means by either extinguishment, or controlled burnout. Training activities are more fully explained in point twelve below.

10. The training of firefighters both paid and volunteer presents challenges for the New Zealand Fire Service, in that realism in training for, in particular, compartment or structure fires is difficult to simulate. The difficulty can make it hard for firefighters to effectively and efficiently deal with actual fires due to a lack of knowledge and skill maintenance in this area. The New Zealand Fire Service is occasionally gifted structures that are past economic use, for the express purpose of “live fire training burns”. In general these are rural locations where old houses have been unoccupied by people, and may have been used for a variety of rural business support activities. Small barns, sheds and a variety of other outbuildings are also occasionally presented similarly. The New Zealand Fire service has a protocol around these activities, which currently involves seeking a resource consent notice from the relevant regional council to proceed. To date we have not had an application declined. These structures frequently contain the normal range of furniture fixtures and fittings associated with houses, including halogenated plastics, and are further enhanced to make realistic live fire training possible. The aim of this live fire training is enabling and enhancing the interior offensive mode of structure firefighting generally associated with search and rescue of victims of structure fires in both domestic and commercial/industrial settings. It is vital for the New Zealand Fire Service to be able to train staff in this manner for both the victim rescue, and efficient, effective extinguishment of fire in structures. This effectiveness can lead to greatly reduced real emergency fires discharge to air. The burning and discharge to air of oil products for training enhances our ability to train for small fire extinguishment. To do this we train using hand held firefighting equipment such as hose-reels and fire extinguishers, which need careful training given the proximity of their use to fires.
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CHAPTER 14: DISCHARGES TO AIR

11. The Fire Service wishes to amend Rule 14-5(b) (Open Burning) and seeks an amendment to allow fire training to include the burning of an existing building where it has been constructed using halogenated materials.
12. See point 10 above
13. The Fire Service wishes to support Rule 14-5(c) (Open Burning)
14. The New Zealand Fire Service is mandated in the Fire service Act 1975 to declare “Urban Fire Districts”. These urban fire districts are consulted across territorial local authorities, private forest fire district owners, and the Department of Conservation. This links the Fire Service Act 1975 and the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977. These urban fire districts are delineated on maps published in the New Zealand Gazette from time to time. We support the rule, and offer these as a means of potentially delineating the areas mentioned in 14-5(c).
15. The Fire Service wishes to amend Rule 14-8 (Other burning activities), and seek the inclusion of a provision that allows for fire training activities, undertaken in accordance with an approved policy manual and management plan.
16. See point 10 above

CHAPTER 16: BEDS OF RIVERS AND LAKES

17. The Fire Service wishes to amend Rule 16-12 (Other structures including bridges, fords and other access structures), and seek an amendment that provides for the construction of structures that provide for fire fighting access to fire hazards, and access to water supply for fire fighting.
 18. The New Zealand Fire Service is charged with providing a code of practice for firefighting water supplies. As part of that code the requirements for appliances parking requirements on “hard standing” adjacent to open water sources for
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firefighting or training is described. Appliances are essentially road-based vehicles with limited ability to operate on non-hard standing, or at angles that make the management of open water activities. When building owners seek approval to build under the variety of requirements attendant on construction activities, there may be a point at which an authorised take of water from an open water source is allowed for the purposes including firefighting or other emergency management. If this consent for water takes is granted then construction of a hard standing adjacent to the water source concerned may be required to enable any effective use of the water source for that purpose.

CHAPTER 17: ACTIVITIES IN COASTAL MARINE AREAS

19. The Fire Service wishes to amend Rule 17-29 (Discharges into water from ships, boats, fire fighting and oil spills).
20. Although limited in scope the New Zealand Fire Service may be called upon to fight fires and assist with sinking prevention of ships and boats. This can occur at sea or in rivers/estuaries. These activities generally involve either the taking of water from the water source adjacent to the ship or boat for firefighting, and simultaneous pumping out of discharged water, or simply pumping out of affected vessels to prevent de-stabilisation of the ship or boat which could result in sinking or capsizing.

SUMMARY

21. I implore the Commissioners to ensure that the provisions of the Proposed One Plan recognise the importance of essential services, such as emergency services, to the safety and well being of the community. The Proposed One Plan should take into account the requirements of the Fire Service to adequately enable safe, effective and efficient training for, and response to, all emergency activities within the region.
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