

Frequently asked Questions for: Drinking water network environmental performance measures

Q: How will the new measures affect communities?

This change is about protecting the health of our people and environment. The state of Aotearoa New Zealand's water infrastructure directly impacts the environment and public health.

Q: Why do you need this information and what will you do with the information I provide?

This information will help us perform our functions as the drinking water regulator. Our role is to improve the environmental and health outcomes of our drinking water systems. We need to know the state of drinking water networks to do this.

For this reason, environmental performance reporting was built into the Water Services Act 2021 (the Act) as a statutory requirement for network operators. The data we receive will be summarised in a public-facing Annual Report, containing examples of best practice and comparisons between different networks.

Q: Who do these changes apply to?

The new requirements only apply to networks and network operators. These terms have very specific definitions under the Act which means that only drinking water, wastewater and stormwater networks owned by, or operated on behalf of councils or government departments are captured. For drinking water, this is only a subset of drinking water suppliers.

Q: Is my supply considered a drinking water network?

Only a small subset of drinking water supplies are considered drinking water networks.

Network operators are limited to local authorities and council-controlled organisations, government departments (i.e., Department of Conservation or the Ministry of Education) and the New Zealand Defence Force.

Q: When will new measures be introduced?

We're staggering the introduction of these measures across a period of three years to allow network operators time to adjust and develop capability. We'll start with measures that are easy to report on and build from there.

Network operators will need to start collecting data from 1 July 2022 and will be required to report the first year of this data to Taumata Arowai towards the end of 2023.

FAQs



Q: What are the benefits of collecting this information?

The data collected will help network operators with decision making, for example, investment decisions. It will also provide evidence to support resource consent applications.

Q: What is Te Mana o Te Wai and how does it relate to the new measures?

Te Mana o te Wai is a fundamental concept, focused on restoring and preserving the balance between water (wai), the wider environment (taiao) and people (tangata), now and in the future. It was first introduced in a government context as part of the Ministry for Environment's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management. Under the Water Services Act 2021, Taumata Arowai is required, to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai. To do this, we first need to establish a clear picture of what is happening. Environmental performance monitoring will provide key data to build a holistic, whole-of-system view to protecting wai.

Q: What if network operators lack the capability to collect the data required?

We will work with network operators to ensure they are well-placed to fulfil their obligations. The staged commencement approach will allow additional time for measures that are more difficult to collect.

Q: What happens if I don't provide the data by the date provided?

We will work with network operators to ensure they are well-placed to meet their obligations.

Environmental performance reporting is a statutory requirement for network operators and consequently there will be penalties for not providing the data required. We will provide more details about penalties following public consultation.

Q: Should I continue to work with Water New Zealand on National Performance Review Process?

Continuing to engage with the National Performance Review for all three waters will provide you with valuable ongoing information on how your assets are performing. It will also put network operators in a good position to comply when our reporting becomes mandatory.

Q: Why isn't wastewater and stormwater being dealt with now?

Measures for wastewater and stormwater will be introduced on a longer timeframe, to reflect the staged commencement of those provisions in the Water Services Act.

Q: Why are government departments being treated differently to councils?

We are undertaking separate ongoing engagement with the New Zealand Defence Force and the government departments that will be required to monitor environmental performance. It's likely that we'll need to take a tailored approach to reflect the scale, complexity, and unique characteristics of their networks.

FAQs



At this stage we consider networks operated by universities and hospitals will not be captured because while they are publicly operated networks, they are not operated by a government department.