

23 August 2022

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6160

Tena koe Minister Parker,

Application under National Environmental Standards for Air Quality – Exceptional Circumstances

Northland Regional Council (NRC) is applying for exceptional circumstances under the National Environmental Standards (NES) for Air Quality to exclude one PM₁₀ exceedance recorded on 24 May 2022 in Mairtown, Whangārei. The exceedance was caused by illegal outdoor burning within the Whangārei Airshed.

The exceedance on 25 May was attributed to a large vegetation fire at Paranui Valley Road. The incident was investigated, and the offender was served an abatement notice and infringement notice for breaching rules of the Proposed Regional Plan for Northland.

The fire was lit on 24 May and PM₁₀ concentration started to increase that evening. On 25 May PM₁₀ concentrations exceeded the national standard (50 ug/m³), peaking at 81 ug/m³ (24-hour average). Whangārei's Robert Street monitoring station also recorded elevated concentrations, but these readings were within the national standard.

The 2011 amendment of the NES for Air Quality inserted a new regulation(16A) to explicitly provide for exceedances of the ambient air quality standards under exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are not defined in the regulation and can be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Minister for the Environment upon written application by the relevant regional council.

While the Whangārei Airshed is not currently considered a polluted airshed, any further exceedances of the PM₁₀ standard within 12 months would trigger the 'polluted airshed' classification. It is therefore important that this exceedance is exempted based on exceptional circumstances.

The completed application and supporting technical information are attached. If further information is required, please contact Michael Payne, Policy Specialist at Northland Regional Council.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.



Malcolm Nicolson
Chief Executive Officer