

## Can locals have a say about where telecommunication equipment is installed?

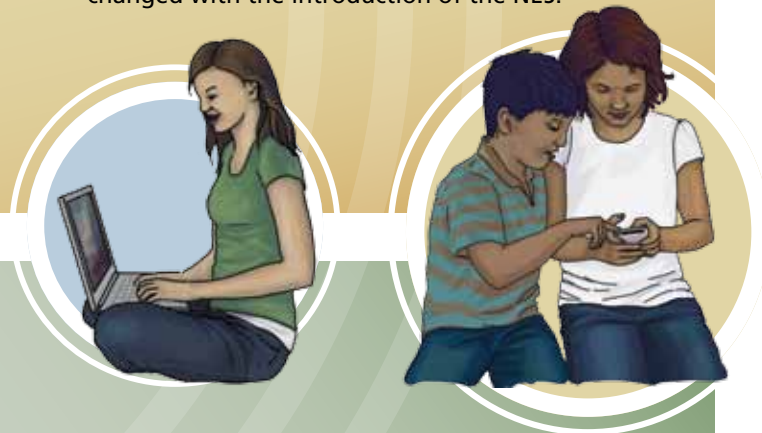
Through the district plan process, you can have your say about your local environment and what it's used for. If a district plan identifies special areas or values the community wants to protect or manage, telecommunication companies have to comply. For example, your district plan might require telecommunication operators to apply for resource consent if they want to locate cabinets and antennas in or near landscape, coastal marine, or heritage areas.

In fact, even though the NES permit some types of low-impact roadside facilities, resource consent is still required for most activities. For example, new free-standing cell towers are not covered by the NES; instead, they are regulated through councils' district plans. The rules in the district plan will state whether resource consent is required (note, though, that radiofrequency fields are covered by the NES).

## Is there a consultation process?

The telecommunication activities allowed under the NES are considered low impact; therefore, consultation is not required. For those activities that do require a resource consent, sometimes the written approval from neighbouring property owners may be required or consultation may be required with affected parties (in the resource consent process, it's described as 'notification').

Remember that, before the NES was introduced, your local district plan may already have allowed some low-impact activities to go ahead without consultation (such as installing mobile phone antennas on existing street lights or building new cellphone towers). In these cases, nothing has changed with the introduction of the NES.



## How do I know that the radiofrequency fields generated from telecommunication masts/antennas will not harm me or my family?

The radiofrequency fields generated by antennas must comply with the New Zealand standard (NZS 2772.1:1999 Radio-frequency Fields Part 1: Maximum Exposure Levels 3kHz to 300GHz). The standard sets exposure limits based on international guidelines that, in order to protect people's health, are very conservative. These guidelines are published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNRP) and endorsed by the World Health Organization; they were reaffirmed in late 2009 by the ICNRP in light of recent research findings.

To comply with the New Zealand standard all sources of radiofrequency fields in an area – not just the fields generated from a new antenna need to be assessed. This ensures that the cumulative effect of all antennas is considered.

The Ministry of Health has measured exposure levels around several hundred cell sites across New Zealand. The maximum exposures in public areas were found to be typically less than one-hundredth (1 per cent) of the limit allowed in the New Zealand standard. Measurements continue to be carried out on approximately 10 cell sites per year.

## Further information

National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities: Users' Guide  
[www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/telecommunication-standards.html](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/telecommunication-standards.html)

### Cellsites

Information about cell sites and health is available at:  
[www.nrl.moh.govt.nz/faq/cellphonesandcellsites.asp](http://www.nrl.moh.govt.nz/faq/cellphonesandcellsites.asp)

### Cellphones

Information about the safety of cellphones is available at:

<http://www.nrl.moh.govt.nz/publications/is21.asp>

For more information on resource consent notification see the Ministry for the Environment's booklet, Your Rights as an Affected Person, available at:

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/everyday/affected/>

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Telecommunication facilities like cellphone towers, antennas and roadside equipment cabinets are common sights in nearly all New Zealand communities. National environmental standards have been introduced that allow some low-impact telecommunication facilities to be located in certain places without a resource consent from the local council. This guide explains the national environmental standards: what they do, why they have been introduced, and how they affect you in your daily life.

### What are national environmental standards?

National environmental standards (NES) are regulations made under the Resource Management Act 1991. They set standards for managing aspects of the environment, such as ensuring clean air and good drinking water or for managing the way some activities are allowed to occur such as maintenance of electricity transmission lines. The standards are administered and enforced by city, district or regional councils in the same way as rules in their own district or regional plans. Because all councils are enforcing the same environmental standards, consistent approaches and decision-making processes apply across the whole country.

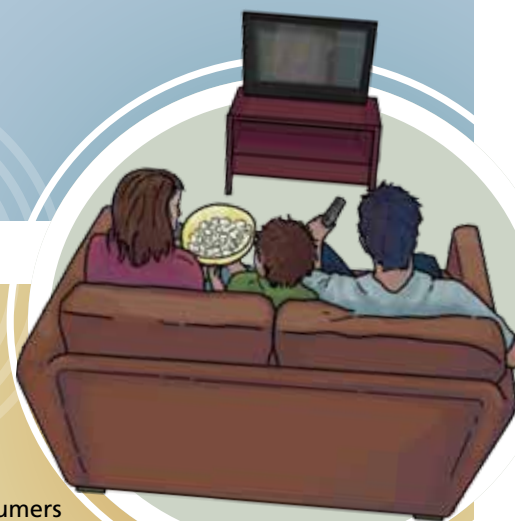
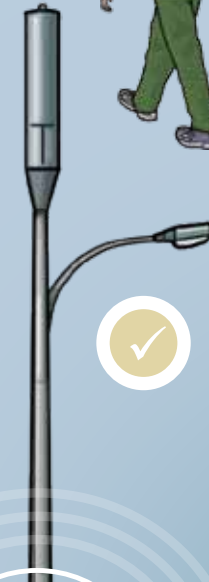
### What do the national environmental standards for telecommunication facilities allow?

The NES for telecommunication facilities came into force on 9 October 2008. They describe certain telecommunication activities that can occur without a resource consent, providing they meet specific terms and conditions. If not, the telecommunication operator must apply for resource consent to the local council. The activities allowed by the NES are:

1. Radiofrequency fields generated by all telecommunication antennas (such as cellphone towers).
2. The erection of equipment cabinets at the roadside. These can contain equipment for telephones (both landlines and mobiles), cable television and internet.
3. The addition to existing roadside structures (such as light poles) of antennas used for wireless internet connections and mobile phones (including new technologies that can transmit television, internet and radio to mobile phones and smart-phones).
4. Noise levels from roadside cabinets, up to specified noise limits.



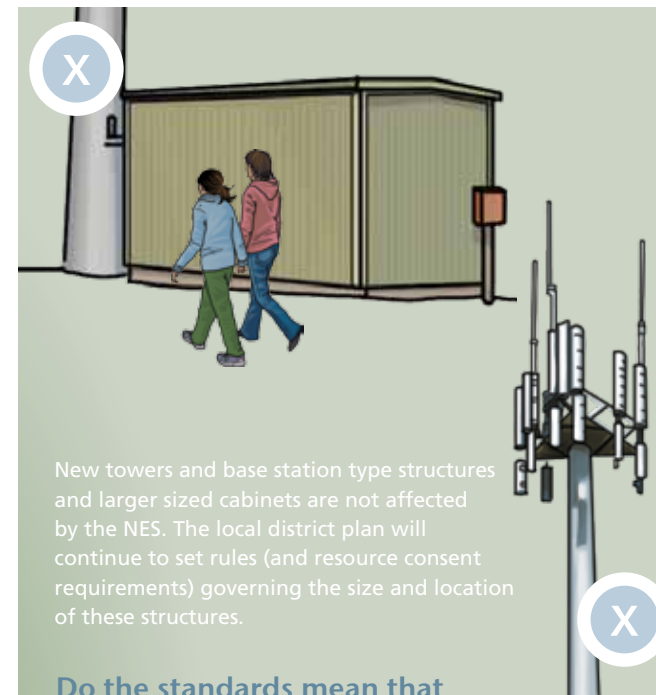
Under the NES, roadside cabinets can be up to 1.8m high in residential areas. Antennas can only increase the height of an existing pole by 30 per cent.



### Why have the national environmental standards for telecommunication facilities been introduced?

There are 73 city and district councils in New Zealand. All have different rules in their district plans affecting what can be built as of right, and what requires resource consent. For telecommunication companies wanting to provide services across more than one district, dealing with this multitude of rules means uncertainty, time delays, and increased costs.

Ultimately, consumers are affected; they face higher costs, and delays in receiving new services like high-speed broadband. The NES aims to reduce these problems by creating consistent rules across the country.



New towers and base station type structures and larger sized cabinets are not affected by the NES. The local district plan will continue to set rules (and resource consent requirements) governing the size and location of these structures.

### Do the standards mean that telecommunication companies could site masts/antennas and cabinets anywhere they choose?

No. The NES applies only to equipment cabinets and antennas located at the roadside, on legal road, and it places a limit on the number and size that are permitted. All other cabinets and antennas – including those on private land, buildings and new cellphone towers – will continue to be subject to the local district plan, and most will still require resource consent.

In addition, if a telecommunication company wants to install equipment in, on or under a road, they are required by law to notify the relevant road controlling authority (RCA). For most smaller roads, the RCA is the local council. For state highways and motorways, the RCA is the New Zealand Transport Agency. Under the Telecommunications Act, the RCA can require the telecommunication company to comply with specific conditions relating to road safety and access.