



Climate change and communities

What the national adaptation plan means for you

Adapt and thrive: Building a climate-resilient New Zealand

Our first national adaptation plan sets out actions to help New Zealanders adapt to the effects of climate change now, and better protect us against changes to come.

Many impacts are already with us, with unstable and unpredictable weather, worsening floods, droughts and storms, and rising sea levels.

In July 2021, severe flooding in Buller caused damage to 826 properties. Less than six months later, a week-long state of emergency was declared in Tairāwhiti after parts of the region received 450 millimetres of rain over 48 hours. Many people had to be evacuated amidst serious damage to roads and properties.

We can expect more changes to happen. Lowering emissions can reduce the impacts of climate change but won't eliminate them all.

The national adaptation plan includes actions to support communities across Aotearoa to adapt. There are also resources available now to support hard-hit communities.

Managing risk now and for the future

In 2020, the National Climate Change Risk Assessment set out the main risks that New Zealanders face from the impacts of climate change.

These include risks to people's health and property, risks to our infrastructure like roads or water supplies, and risks to our natural environments.

The national adaptation plan is the first in a series. It will be updated every six years to respond to changing climate risks.

There are resources to support you and your communities to adapt now

Disaster readiness

The [National Disaster Resilience Strategy](#) outlines the vision and long-term goals for civil defence emergency management (CDEM) in Aotearoa. It aims to strengthen the resilience of the nation by managing risks, being ready to respond to and recover from emergencies, and by enabling, empowering and supporting individuals, organisations, and communities to act for themselves and others, for the safety and wellbeing of all.

The website [Get Ready](#), managed by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), has information on natural hazards and guidance on how to prepare for emergencies, including storms, landslides and floods – everything that is being made worse by climate change. There are resources for different communities including businesses, households and schools. Resources are available in Te Reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language and Samoan.

The [Civil Defence Marae Emergency Preparedness Plan](#) template produced in 2017 is designed to help marae prepare as much as possible for a natural disaster or emergency. It encourages whānau, hapū and iwi to think about the possible impacts of different natural disasters, and to recognise key people and skilled people who can help in an emergency.

Information and resources to support adaptation

The National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research's (NIWA) [Climate Change Adaptation Toolbox](#) helps you find out about the changing climate, what it might mean for businesses, organisations, households or communities and what you can do about it. You can assess your current climate resilience, plan for future change, and develop a risk management plan and adaptation strategy. The steps outlined in the Toolbox are similar to the 10-step framework outlined in the [New Zealand Coastal Hazards and Climate Change: Guidance for Local Government](#) by the Ministry for the Environment.

The [Deep South Challenge](#) website also has climate change tools and information to help communities adapt to climate change. This includes specific information for marae, including a tool called [Marae-opoly](#) that supports hapū to make 100-year adaptation plans, on a set budget. It is a prototype game designed to help whānau navigate complex climate adaptation challenges in a way that everyone – whether or not you're an expert in climate change – can understand.

Funding

The [CDEM Resilience Fund](#) enhances hazard risk-resilience through the development of local and regional capability and practices. Funding can be provided to specific projects that improve emergency management capability and contribute to resilience. Community groups and local authorities can work together on proposals that could be supported by this fund.

The [On-Farm Support service](#) is focused on supporting farmers and growers to take an integrated approach to farm planning, tackling environmental challenges, adapting to change, and connecting farmers and growers to existing services. Support includes assistance with preparing for and responding to adverse events, help with improving on-farm biosecurity resilience, and help with how best to integrate riparian and tree planting.

How actions in the plan will help communities

The plan outlines a programme of work to support communities to better understand the climate impacts that affect them and adapt to build their resilience.

Enabling better risk-informed decisions

The plan provides key information, guidance, tools and methodologies that can help communities understand and assess their climate risk, and develop suitable adaptation strategies, policies and solutions. Some of these actions include:

- Action 3.2: Design and develop risk, resilience and climate adaptation information portals: These will address gaps in our ability to use, translate and make hazard risk data, including climate data. This will enable New Zealanders to make risk-informed decisions and improve current and long-term natural hazard risk management and climate adaptation.
- Action 3.4: Raise awareness of climate-related hazards and how to prepare: This will help communities, including rural communities, understand climate hazards, know what to do before and during an emergency event, and make emergency preparedness a part of everyday life. This programme will involve more public education campaigns and tailored resources.
- Action 3.6: Improve natural hazard information on Land Information Memoranda (LIM): This will help communities to make better-informed decisions about natural hazard risk when buying a property.
- Action 3.8: Develop guidance for assessing risk and impact on physical assets and the services they provide: This will ensure that when a physical piece of infrastructure is damaged in a climate event, the assessment of the damage and its effects is well understood and managed.

Adaptation options including managed retreat

The plan will support communities and individuals to consider and understand the range of adaptation options available in their area, which will include building resilience at a local property level as well as considering managed retreat, where appropriate.

- Action 5.13: Connect communities to wider response and recovery support: This will continue work with communities, including rural communities, iwi, organisations and others to support effective and integrated disaster response and recovery. This allows for communities to be assisted through disaster events by networks that are locally led, regionally co-ordinated and nationally supported.

The plan also includes actions to:

- modernise the emergency management system
- develop the Health National Adaptation Plan to prepare the health sector to meet the needs of communities in a changing climate
- partner with Māori landowners to increase the resilience of Māori-owned land, homes and cultural sites
- support kaitiaki communities to adapt and conserve taonga / cultural assets.

Future engagement during implementation

As the plan is implemented, more targeted engagement with different stakeholders, including Māori, will take place.

Inclusive engagement, particularly with those disproportionately affected by climate change, will help ensure actions lead to equitable climate resilience.

We are taking the same approach with the implementation of the emissions reduction plan and encouraging engaged and active public participation.

Find out more

Read [Aotearoa New Zealand's first national adaptation plan](#).

