Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Updating National Direction: Changes to National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Activities

April 2026

Recent changes have been made to national direction under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to make the resource management system work more effectively.

Amendments to the National Environmental Standard for Electricity Transmission Activities (NES-ETA) introduce new permitted activity standards for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. This update forms one part of a range of changes to the NES-ETA expected this year.

Context

Planning and consenting EV charging infrastructure under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) framework has previously been subject to district plan rules. This has created inconsistency and uncertainty, duplication of assessments, delays and disproportionate consenting costs for infrastructure that is usually small scale with minor effects. Previously, EV charging infrastructure was not included under the NES-ETA.

Changes to the NES-ETA have introduced national permitted activity standards to remove or reduce consenting barriers. Consents will only be required where permitted activity standards are not met, or where lighting and signage activities exceed those allowed through a district plan. As well as greater consistency in approach, this will speed up the rollout of EV charging infrastructure to support the Government's wider electrification, emissions reduction and energy security objectives, including the target of 10,000 public EV charging points by 2030.

Key changes

Key changes to NES-ETA

- Including and defining 'Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure' under the NES-ETA.
- New regulations to streamline the consenting of EV charging infrastructure, including specific noise, earthworks and traffic standards to manage the effects from EV charging infrastructure.

Including and defining 'electric vehicle charging infrastructure'

The NES-ETA now provides permitted activity rules for the construction, operation, maintenance, upgrade, replacement and removal of EV charging infrastructure. These are supported by existing rules that permit routine work on the electricity transmission network. Four types of EV charging infrastructure are included in the permitted activity rules:

- private EV chargers (not available for public use)
- EV chargers in the transport corridor (for example, roadside)
- EV chargers as part of other infrastructure or buildings (for example, service stations, supermarkets or parking buildings)
- standalone EV charging facilities (such as charging hubs).

EV charging infrastructure has also been defined under the NES-ETA as all buildings, structures, equipment and other facilities associated with the charging of EVs. The definition includes additional detail on what equipment or structures it covers – for example, lighting and signage are not included, and continue to be managed under district plan rules.

Streamlining the consenting of EV charging infrastructure

The amendments to the NES-ETA make it easier to build and operate EV charging infrastructure by providing national permitted activity standards. The regulations include practical conditions on how the standards will apply. District plan rules that are more lenient than the NES-ETA amendments for EV charging infrastructure, as well as matters not covered by the NES-ETA amendments, continue to apply.

EV charging infrastructure can be built, operated, maintained, upgraded or removed as a permitted activity if the standards set out in the table below are met. EV charging infrastructure that does not comply with these standards still requires a restricted discretionary resource consent.

EV charging infrastructure type	Examples	Conditions
Private EV charging (not available to the public)	Home chargers, staff-only workplace chargers	Permitted if: • the charger is not available for public use, and • it complies with relevant district planning zone rules for buildings and structures (such as height and location).
EV charging in the land transport corridor	Chargers located in road or rail corridors	Permitted if: • the charging infrastructure is located within the land transport corridor, and • it is associated with a permitted or consented vehicle parking space.

EV charging ancillary to another activity	Chargers at supermarkets, service stations or commercial carparks	Permitted if: • the charger is ancillary to a primary activity (excluding residential activities), • it is associated with a permitted or consented vehicle parking space, and • it meets height, noise, earthworks and traffic effects standards.
Stand-alone public EV charging facilities	Charging hubs where EV charging is the main activity	Permitted if: • the charging facility is the primary activity on the site, • it is not located in a residential zone, a natural area, or a historic heritage place or area, • it meets height, noise, earthworks and traffic effects standards, and • no more than 10 vehicles per hour (averaged across 24 hours) are charged at the site.

Implementation considerations

Immediate steps

When the NES-ETA comes into effect, EV charging infrastructure can be built without a resource consent if the permitted activity standards are met. Decision-makers must apply the amendments to the NES-ETA when making decisions on resource consents.

Requirements under the NES-ETA for EV charging infrastructure prevail over equivalent rules in district plans, unless the rules in the district plan are more lenient than the NES-ETA.

National environmental standards apply directly to a relevant activity, so the RMA 'plan stop' requirements (see the Ministry for the Environment website's page on Understanding Plan Stop) do not apply to the NES-ETA amendments. Councils are not required to incorporate the NES-ETA amendments into their plans.

Transition to the new planning system

All existing national direction under the RMA will be reassessed and restructured to ensure it aligns with the goals and framework of the new planning system that will be established by the Planning and Natural Environment Bills.

The policy intent of the changes to national direction under the existing RMA will be transferred to the new system as appropriate.

For more information about the transition to the new planning system see the Ministry for the Environment fact sheet The New Planning System: Transitioning into the new planning system

For further information

For more information, see the Ministry for the Environment website's page on National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission Activities

Published in April 2026 by the
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū mō te Taiao
Publication number: INFO 1380

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government