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Report to Environment Committee
from Craig Salmon, Resource Quality Officer

Annual Incident Report 2000/2001

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the results of the Annual Incident Report 2000/2001.

2. Background

The Wellington Regional Council provides a 24 hour incident response service. This service responds to complaints received about pollution incidents, and non-compliance with the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and regional plans. It also responds to Resource Consent non-compliance issues outside of normal working hours.

All complaints received are recorded. The Council is required under Section 35 of the RMA to have a summary of all written complaints received during the preceding five years concerning alleged breaches of the Act or a plan, and information on how we dealt with each complaint.

The Annual Incident Report provides a summary and analysis of the complaints received over the past year (1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001).

The information presented in the report is intended to:

- Inform the community of significant pollution incidents, significant sources of pollution complaints, and common pollution & resource management issues over 2000/2001.
- Identify potential pollution/resource management issues for 2001/2002.

3. Key Findings

- ***Increase in Complaints***

A total of 1594 complaints were received throughout the Wellington Region over 2000/2001. This is a 30% increase in the number of complaints received over 1999/2000.

- ***Air pollution Complaints Dominate***

Sixty-nine percent of total complaints were regarding air pollution, an 11% increase over same period last year. Odour was the most common cause of these complaints.

- ***Most Complaints Received from Within Wellington City***

Over sixty-eight percent of all complaints were received from within Wellington City. Ten percent were received from within the Eastern Region (Wairarapa). For the remainder of the Western Region, 10.3% were received from Lower Hutt, 5.1% from Porirua, 3.1% from Upper Hutt, and 2.8% from Kapiti.

- ***Significant Pollution Incidents 2000/2001***

Significant pollution incidents are one-off incidents that resulted in significant, actual or potential effects on the environment. There were five significant pollution incidents over the last year. These were:

- An unauthorised discharge of industrial wastewater from New Zealand Galvanising Ltd to Waiwhetu Stream, Lower Hutt.
- An unauthorised discharge of oil to Black Creek, Wainuiomata, Lower Hutt.
- An unauthorised discharge of toxic material to Mitchell Stream, Broken Hill, Porirua.
- An unauthorised discharge of sewage and plastic media to Owhiro Stream and Owhiro Bay from Anglian Water International (NZ) Ltd's dewatering plant in Happy Valley, Wellington.
- An unauthorised discharge of dairy shed effluent to a creek, Wairarapa.

- ***Enforcement***

Enforcement Action taken in 2000/2001 includes 12 abatement notices and 19 infringement notices. Three prosecutions were also heard before the Environment Court, all of which were successful.

- ***Response Performance***

Over ninety-five percent of 'Red' category complaints were responded to within 60 minutes, 97.8% of 'Yellow' category complaints were responded to within 24 hours, and 100% of 'Blue' category complaints were responded to within 30 days. On occasions, traffic congestion, travel distances and multiple complaints resulted in a delay in responding to some incidents.

4. **Issues**

- ***Wellington City: A few Sites Create the Majority of Complaints***

Seventy percent of complaints received in Wellington City were attributable to seven sites, five of which have Resource Consent from Wellington Regional Council. In almost all instances the complaints related to air quality. Steps have or are being taken at most sites to address the activities from which these complaints arise.

- ***Inner City Landuse Conflicts***

Inner city landuse conflicts were an issue during 2000/2001. This is a result of gentrification, where inner city buildings are developed for residential purposes. This leads to complaints about activities of neighbouring commercial operations. It is expected that this issue will continue throughout the coming year.

- ***Waiwhetu Stream***

There were twenty-six complaints regarding pollution of Waiwhetu Stream in Lower Hutt in 2000/2001. Waiwhetu has been identified as one of the most polluted streams in the Wellington Region. The pollution prevention programme is to target the Seaview industrial area in an effort to reduce the level of pollution occurring in this area.

5. **Action for 2001/2002**

It is expected that during 2001/2002 Pollution Response will again receive a high level of complaints as awareness of pollution issues increases in the community.

Resource Quality is taking a proactive approach in 2001/2002 to reduce the level of pollution complaints, particularly from sites that generate repeat complaints. This will include liaising with Consents Management Department, businesses and the residential community to minimise the risk of problems occurring.

In an effort to reduce actual and potential pollution, Council staff in the Western Region will be targeting high priority industrial areas in both Lower Hutt and Porirua with the pollution prevention programme (Take Charge).

6. Communication

Copies of this report will be distributed to territorial authorities in the Region. Copies are also available for members of the public requesting information of this nature. Findings of this report will be released publicly through a press release.

7. Recommendation

That the report be received and the contents noted.

Report prepared by:

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