

When to apply for resource consent

Your business will probably be in a community where people live, play, shop and work. The things your business does can affect those around you, just as their activities can affect you. These can be positive, eg added vitality in the community, or negative, eg more noise, pollution or poor water quality.

Whether you are setting up shop for the first time, buying an existing company, or expanding your business, the Resource Management Act says you must think about how your business affects the environment, eg building design, car parking, earthworks, noise levels, air and water quality.

Sometimes this involves applying for council permission — known as resource consent — for your business activities.

The Resource Management Act (RMA) is the main law that sets out how we manage New Zealand's environment.

[Read about the Resource Management Act\(external link\) \(https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/rma/\)](https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/rma/) - Ministry for the Environment

The RMA's goal is to promote the sustainable management of our natural and physical resources. It encourages business owners and communities to plan for the long-term future of our built and natural environment through council plans. These plans also contain the rules that regulate business and other activities.

In the most basic sense, the RMA oversees:

- where businesses can be based
- the extent of business activities you can undertake without needing resource consent
- when you need resource consent for business activities.

Generally speaking, district and city councils are responsible for activities involving use of land. Regional councils are responsible for water quality, air quality and the coastal environment. Some district and city councils — called unitary authorities — have responsibilities, duties and powers of regional councils. These are Auckland, Gisborne, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman and Chatham Islands.

[How to be environmentally sustainable \(/getting-started/business-planning-tools-and-tips/how-to-be-environmentally-sustainable/\)](/getting-started/business-planning-tools-and-tips/how-to-be-environmentally-sustainable/)

Business use of natural resources

If you want to use a natural resource such as gravel, or water directly from a river or stream, or discharge something into the air, water or onto land, you must check what the regional plan provides for. You will probably also need to have equipment or processes in place to treat any discharges so they meet the regional plan standard.

Check your regional or unitary council's website for details of their regional plans.

How to get resource consent

Resource consents are obtained from regional, district and city councils. A resource consent gives you permission to undertake an activity that doesn't comply with a council's plan. Council staff can help you look through the relevant plans and work out if you'll need resource consent.

Applying for resource consent can be simple or complex. It depends on what your business is and what the environment is like where you want to be based. Resource consents are considered case by case — there's no one-size-fits-all process. For more complex projects, it may be worth getting a planning consultant to prepare a resource consent application for you.

If you can meet the majority of standards in the council's plan, it may be easier to get consent than if you can't meet any of the standards. If you have the support of your neighbours, it may be easier to obtain consent.

Councils normally charge an administration fee for each application, and may also charge for any ongoing monitoring required. Check your council's website for a list of fees, or ask for their fees brochure. Talk to council staff, as the application fee may not cover all the costs involved.

[Applying for resource consent\(external link\) \(http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/rma-processes-and-how-get-involved/making-application-resource-consent\)](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/rma-processes-and-how-get-involved/making-application-resource-consent) — Ministry for the Environment

How to speed up the process

As a guide, allow one to four months for your application to be processed. To help this run smoothly — and potentially keep fees down — it's a good idea to:

- Contact council staff early about what you want to do.
- Talk to people you or the council thinks might be affected by your proposed activities.
- Give the council a well-prepared assessment of the impact on the environment.
- Respond quickly to requests for more information — councils can decline an application if there is insufficient information to process it.

[Where to get advice about RMA applications and submissions\(external link\) \(http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/rma-processes-and-how-get-involved/where-get-advice-about-rma-applications-and-submissions\)](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/rma-processes-and-how-get-involved/where-get-advice-about-rma-applications-and-submissions) — Ministry for the Environment

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