

Bay of Plenty District Health Board is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Bay of Plenty district.

Position Statement – Hazardous Substances

A hazardous substance is any solid, liquid, chemical or gas that can harm people, other living organisms, property, or the environment.

Bay of Plenty District Health Board supports and advocates for effective management of hazardous substances throughout their lifecycle to avoid adverse health effects from either direct exposure or environmental contamination.

“Hazardous substance” is the legal term for substances regulated by New Zealand’s [Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996](#) (HSNO Act).

A hazardous substance is a defined mixture of elements or compounds either naturally occurring or produced synthetically. Such substances can readily explode, burn, oxidise, (accelerate the combustion of other material) or corrode (metals or biological tissue), and/or be toxic to people and ecosystems. Infectious substances and materials containing hazardous substances are excluded from the HSNO Act, but may be considered under other legislation.

Incidents usually involve the accidental release of hazardous substances, although they may be the result of a natural hazard such as a volcanic eruption.

Hazardous substances should only be used if necessary. If they are necessary, then emissions inside and outside the workplace, as well as waste generation, should be minimized, considering the whole life of the process and the products. Plans should be developed to ensure hazardous exposure is either avoided or kept to an acceptable minimum.

The role of Bay of Plenty District Health Board and its Public Health Unit, Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service is to improve preparedness for the response to an emergency or civil defence emergency, and to provide health advice to populations at risk of a hazardous substance injury. Bay of Plenty District Health Board is obliged to act “where it is necessary to protect public health”. Bay of Plenty District Health Board and its Public Health Unit, Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service will generally not be the lead agency for enforcement action, but will act in support of other enforcement agencies.



Toi Te Ora has a key role in providing advice about and managing events – both unintentional and deliberate.

Bay of Plenty District Health Board advocates and supports the following:

- Actions that protect the environment, and the health and safety of people and communities, by preventing or managing the adverse effects of hazardous substances.
- All hazardous substances are used in a way that minimises any potential adverse effects on human health and the environment. Their use must therefore be based upon an understanding of the risk they present and within any legal frameworks.
- Ongoing and effective communication procedures to ensure that organisations and the local community are informed of the risk of hazards and appropriate control measures.
- Prevention and control measures are integrated into comprehensive, well-managed and sustainable programmes, and must include public health response functions.
- Safe and specific disposal of all hazardous substances at accessible specialist facilities that protect public health and the environment.
- Safe storage, use, and disposal of hazardous substances which includes ongoing consultation with the public health service and other enforcement agencies.
- Investigation of complaints and notifications claiming adverse health impacts from any poisonings and chemical or hazardous substances injuries (chemical exposure incidents) in non-occupational settings.

References and Further Information:

Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act)

Ministry for the Environment. (2003). *Strategy for Improving the Workability of Hazardous Substances Provisions of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act*. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.

Ministry of Health. (2005). *National Health Emergency Plan: Hazardous substances incident hospital guidelines 2005*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

World Health Organisation. (1999). *Hazard prevention and control in the work environment: Airborne dust*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Waikato Regional Council . (n.d.). *Disposing of hazardous substances*. Retrieved from <http://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/Services/Regional-services/Waste-hazardous-substances-and-contaminated-sites/Hazardous-substances/Disposing-of-hazardous-substances/>

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