

SILT RECOVERY TASKFORCE

Dust

The Silt Recovery Taskforce is working with Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand and other agencies to support the health of the Hawke's Bay community and landowners working to clean up their property as a result of Cyclone Gabrielle.

This infosheet tells you about the health precautions you can take, what wellbeing support is available to you, what landowners can do on their properties to manage silt dust, and what the Taskforce is doing to minimise dust around the region.

Regionally a dust mitigation framework is being created to set actions for each agency to support a mitigation plan for the risk of dust through the drier periods.

Gathering data through logging of air quality is important and NIWA have installed many monitors throughout the region, closely aligned with the Taskforce silt sites and identified hot spots – this information can be viewed here: <https://www.niwa.co.nz/silt-dust>

Health and wellbeing

The Taskforce's post-cyclone silt testing programme has shown that risk of contamination from heavy metals, herbicides, or pesticides is very low. This reduces the health risk from silt and dust.

However, dust generated from airborne silt can affect people's health particularly infants, young children, and the elderly, who can be more vulnerable to health effects from air pollution. It can irritate the eyes and upper airways and for those with underlying heart or lung conditions, like asthma, it can worsen symptoms.

Take a common sense approach to protect your health. If dust levels are high and you can see, smell or taste dust in the air, or visibility is reduced, it is a good idea to take precautions:

- Stay indoors and close windows and doors where possible.
- Try to minimise the amount of time outside and avoid vigorous exercise outside.
- Air conditioners are safe to use but make sure filters (HEPA are recommended) are kept clean.
- Clean indoors regularly using mops and damp cloths to remove dust.
- Avoid sweeping and dusting as it kicks dust into the air, and only use a vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter.

- If dust exposure can't be avoided wear dust masks.

Te Whatu Ora in Hawke's Bay has [more information on precautions](#) you can take and [wellbeing support you can access](#).



Minimising dust on your property

Heading into windier and warmer weather, the potential for dust is increasing. There are steps landowners can take to reduce the dust from silt on their property as well as looking after the health of their community.

- **Keep piles wet** – light and frequent water spraying around 1L/m² per hour is the best tool in the toolbox for suppressing dust. Dust can be expected after several days without rain, especially in windy conditions.

- **Compact stockpiles where possible** – compacting the surface of stockpiles will help hold it in place, as disturbed soil is more susceptible to wind. Flat and shallow stockpiles are more stable.
- **Cover** – if the pile will be left for a short time polythene covering can be used, or in the longer term consider using turf, grasses, geotextile, or hydroseeding.
- **Use natural screens** – have a look around and see if hills, trees, or other features can be used to minimise stockpile exposure to wind, particularly Hawke’s Bay westerlies.
- **Dust suppressants** – a range of commercially available products are available, but some like petroleum derivatives require consent. Suppressants can be used where significant issues exist and can be successful on stockpiles that won’t be disturbed, however water is the go to.
- **Slow vehicle speeds within silt impacted areas** – slower is better and will result in less dust. Aim for under 10km/h.
- **Limit the extent of disturbance** – while difficult during clean up, limiting the extent of the area being worked on as far as practicable – including the height of stockpiles, will help keep dust at a minimum.
- **Check the weather** – where strong winds and dry conditions persist, risks are higher. Plan your work in advance, including water supply for dust suppression.
- **Minimise drop heights** – if working in dry conditions with excavators and loaders, avoid dropping silt from height.

Landowner support

If you need some assistance, reach out. Local companies specialising in dust suppression include:

- **Instant Green** - instantgreen.co.nz, 0508 467 826
- **Geo40** - geo40.com, 021 274 7861
- **PGG Wrightson Turf** - pggwrightsonturf.com, 0800 49 8873
- **Farmlands** - farmlands.co.nz (which provides Antidust), Hastings 06 873 8180, Napier 06 833 5690, Wairoa 06 838 7209
- **BioRich** - biorich.co.nz, 027 246 7424

Most contracting companies will also have water carts available to assist in water application across large areas while undergoing earthworks.

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The Taskforce has moved over 1.4 million cubic metres of silt, and is working hard to reduce dust around the rohe when it’s moved, at our deposit sites, and on landowners’ properties.

We keep a close eye on dust and employ best-practice methods to minimise dust. Our contractors follow the guidance provided above to reduce dust, including water trucks and speed management on roads.

Grassing, seeding and sowing

Getting coverage onto silt in bare paddocks is an important step to manage dust becoming airborne and travelling, the taskforce is working hard to progress clean up to allow landowners to get some cover onto paddocks.

Included in this is seeding areas of the silt deposit sites which aren’t actively receiving and having silt managed, further working with our local contractors we are identifying known hotspots and focussing on working with those landowners to address the risk they may pose.

Further support

Working through Hawke’s Bay Regional Council, we can provide guidance and advice for landowners to manage silt on their property and reduce dust. Contact waste@hbrc.govt.nz or call 0800 108 838.

