

Natural Hazards

Ngā Mōrearea Taiao



What is the Natural Hazards chapter about?

Natural hazards are natural processes that can pose a risk to people, property, infrastructure, and the environment. In the Far North District, natural hazards include river flooding, coastal flooding and erosion, land instability, and wildfire risk.

The purpose of the Natural Hazards chapter is to manage development in a way that reduces risk over time, while still allowing reasonable use of land where risks can be avoided or managed.

What does the Proposed District Plan – Decisions Version (PDP-DV) do?

The PDP-DV:

- Takes a risk-based approach, focusing on both how likely a hazard is and how vulnerable an activity may be.
- Uses mapped hazard areas (such as river flood and coastal hazard areas) to identify where more stringent management and controls apply.
- Applies stricter controls in higher-risk areas, particularly for vulnerable activities like residential use.
- Allows development where risks can be avoided, reduced, or managed, rather than applying blanket prohibitions.
- Recognises that some activities, such as infrastructure and farming, may need to locate in hazard-prone areas and can often be designed to be resilient.
- Introduces a clear definition of “land susceptible to instability”, based on engineering criteria (such as slope, geology, and site modification), to identify where site-specific assessment is required.

Following submissions and hearings, a number of refinements were made to improve clarity and workability while retaining the overall approach. Key changes include:

- Minor refinements to objectives and policies to improve clarity.
- Enabling small additions and upgrades to existing buildings and infrastructure in hazard areas where risk is not increased.
- Aligning size thresholds for farming buildings with the Building Act.
- Refining wildfire rules to avoid unnecessary consenting, especially in urban areas.
- Clarifying that technical assessments apply only to the affected part of the site, not the whole property.
- Making limited corrections to mapping where clear errors were identified.

What has changed from the Operative District Plan (ODP)?

Compared with the ODP, the PDP-DV introduces a clearer and more consistent framework for managing natural hazards. Key changes include:

- A move to a district-wide, integrated approach to natural hazards rather than multiple different rules.
- Greater clarity about where hazard rules apply, based on mapped hazard areas.
- Stronger focus on managing risk over a 100-year timeframe, particularly for coastal hazards.
- More explicit distinction between vulnerable activities and other activities.
- Updated hazard mapping based on regional modelling and best available information.

When do I need a Resource Consent?

You may need a resource consent if:

- You propose new buildings, extensions, or a change of use within a mapped natural hazard area.
- Development exceeds permitted activity size thresholds.
- The activity is a vulnerable activity proposed in a higher-risk hazard area.
- The proposal cannot meet the applicable performance standards.

What do I need to know?

Before carrying out development, it is important to:

- Check whether your site is affected by mapped natural hazard areas.
- Understand whether your proposal involves a vulnerable activity.
- Identify whether a technical assessment is needed to assess and manage risk.
- Be aware that hazard maps are used as a trigger for assessment, not an automatic prohibition.
- Seek advice early if you are unsure how the Natural Hazards chapter applies to your proposal.