

**MEDIA RELEASE**



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**Fines for environmental breaches rising from Sept – ORC**

Companies or individuals being fined for environmental breaches can expect to pay more shortly – with fine increases nationally ranging anywhere from 100% to 900%.

These changes have been made by the Government and apply across New Zealand.

The fines now distinguish between what can be imposed on an individual, and a company.

ORC’s Manager Compliance, Simon Wilson, highlighted that the Regulations had not been amended since being introduced in 1999.

“The changes have been introduced nationally and the levels had not kept pace with inflation over the years. They now separate out the infringement fees to distinguish between individuals and companies,” Mr Wilson says.

In the 2024/25 financial year ORC issued 62 infringements.

Parliament amended the Resource Management (Infringement Offences) Regulations 1999 in mid-August, with the new fines coming into effect from next week, 4 September.

In March 2023, the issue was under review and defined by the Ministry for the Environment as there being evidence that the existing set of infringement fees were now too low to be an effective deterrent against non-compliance.

“In many cases, the fee is less than the cost of complying or becoming authorised, meaning it can be cheaper to just pay an infringement notice if caught, rather than follow the rules in the first place. This discourages compliant behaviour,” the ministry noted.

At that time, there were 14 prescribed infringement offences and the associated infringement fees ranged from $300 to $1000: for any offence.

Now, there is 15 prescribed infringement offences and the associated infringement fees for each single offence which (for an individual) can range from $600-$2000 to $1200-$4000 (for a company).

One fine, for companies, on a breach of ‘restrictions of land use’ rises 900% - from the original $300 to $3000.

There are three contraventions which could attract the maximum $4000 fines for a company; for releasing contaminants into the environment from industrial or trade premises; contravention of an abatement [desist] notice and contravention of a water shortage direction.

The amended legislation also notes that if an individual or company defends a fine in court and is found guilty of an offence, the court could potentially impose a penalty higher than the infringement fee and costs could also be imposed, in addition to any penalty

The mid-2023 review suggested that infringement fees should be higher for companies to provide a more effective deterrent for entities earning profit through their private use of public resources.

The Ministry for the Environment said earlier this month the updates to the 1999 infringement offences regulations will increase infringement fees to ensure they are high enough to act as an effective deterrent.

The changes include:

* Increases to infringement fees for individuals.
* The introduction of higher infringement fees for companies.
* The separation of the land use infringement offence into two different land use offences with different fees.
* Widening the scope of activities that are subject to infringement notices for dumping waste in coastal marine areas.
* Changes to the summary of rights in the standard form for infringement and reminder notices to more clearly state the potential outcomes of seeking a court hearing to contest an infringement notice.

Further details are here: [Infringement offences regulations | Ministry for the Environment](https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/regulations/infringement-offences-regulations/)

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