



Water Services Authority - Taumata Arowai update April 2026

Good morning

I hope you had a relaxing few days over the Easter break. This newsletter provides updates from across the Water Services Authority, and helpful tips for water suppliers.

Preparing for extreme weather events

With Tropical Cyclone Vaianu expected to hit New Zealand on Sunday, we remind those managing drinking water supplies to prepare for the impacts on your water supply. Your drinking water safety plan should consider how you will let people know when the safety and reliability of their drinking water is impacted.

You can find information on our website on [drinking water safety in an emergency](#). For smaller community supplies, we have prepared guidance on [how to support drinking water safety following a flood event](#). We also have a dedicated emergency number – **0800 454 717** – if you need to contact us at any time.

Check with your local Civil Defence Group for updates as this weather event plays out.

Council transitions to water organisations

It's a busy time for many of us, with just two and a half months before the first of the new water organisations stand up. We aim to support councils in this transition by making our regulatory obligations as clear, straightforward and practical as possible.

There is now a dedicated space on our website – at www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/for-water-organisations – providing information for councils on regulatory responsibilities as you transfer water services to new organisations.

If you're involved in the transition, please keep an eye on this page as we will add resources to it over time. For instance, we are preparing a checklist of things to do

and timeframes for providing information to us. We will also directly contact those transitioning at the start of July.

You can also email us at Operations.Support@taumataarowai.govt.nz if you have detailed questions.

Potential fuel disruptions and water services

The Authority is coordinating with Water New Zealand, Department of Internal Affairs and other partners to contribute to the Government's Fuel Response Plan 2026 to prepare for potential fuel disruptions and anticipate any impact on water services. We encourage suppliers to undertake contingency planning and keep us informed (through your usual Water Services contact) of any significant supply chain concerns that might arise.

Level 3 Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules review progress

Thank you to everyone who made a submission on the [proposed changes to the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules](#) during our public consultation in December and January. We received 79 detailed submissions.

In response to some of this feedback we have sought further technical input from our panel of experts. We anticipate we will complete the review and release the updated Rules by the end of June 2026. The new Rules will come into effect from 1 July 2027.

While the consultation focused on changes to Level 3 Rules relating to supplies serving 501 or more people, it also included a question on changes to the reporting timeframe for all supplies serving 26 or more people. As a result, the reporting date for all supply types required to report will be 1 July (from 2027).

We will communicate a more detailed transition timeline and hold webinars to highlight changes to the level 3 Rules from 1 July 2026.

Wastewater standards and NEDS

New Zealand's first wastewater environmental performance standards, announced in November 2025, set national requirements for planning and consenting arrangements for wastewater treatment plants and networks. Since they were published, we've identified some technical/drafting issues in the regulations. We have been working with councils and others to address the issues in a targeted amendment to the wastewater standards that we expect will be in place mid this year.

Meanwhile, we are progressing two further wastewater standards, targeting discharges to air (both from treatment plants and land schemes) and discharges of heavy metals to water, in response to sector interest in standards for these areas of discharge.

We are also preparing initial proposals for consultation with the sector related to national engineering design standards (NEDS) and codes of practice to standardise the construction, maintenance or upgrading of network infrastructure. We know that many of you are keen to see this work progress as quickly as possible. We are currently working to identify key groups who can provide technical input into the standards and the associated codes of practice, in addition to public consultation.

You can expect to hear from us on both tranche 2 of the wastewater standards and on the NEDS later this year.

Connecting water safety and rural health

Rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to drinking water. Many homes, marae, schools and health facilities rely on rainwater tanks or small, locally managed systems. These supplies can be more vulnerable to contamination, particularly after heavy rain, long dry periods or when maintenance is difficult or inconsistent. Poor water quality can lead to preventable illness and rural clinicians often see the impacts first-hand.

Authority staff recently hosted a stand at the Rural Health Practitioners Conference. By sharing information with the rural health delegates, listening to local experience, and strengthening relationships, we can better tailor our approach to regulation and support.

Let us know how we are doing

We've had a pleasing response to our annual stakeholder survey so far – but we'd love to hear from more of you. Our survey will remain open until **Tuesday 14 April**. The survey allows you to share your views on working with us as the water services regulator for New Zealand.

- If you are a drinking water supplier or operator, please complete the survey at this link www.surveymonkey.com/r/BV68H85
- If you do not fall into the category above, please complete the survey at this link www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q3VRQHQ

Yours sincerely



Allan Prangnell

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