



Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake

Resilient Land Use Action Plan

2026–2030



**Natural Hazards
Commission**
Toka Tū Ake

Preface

This is the second Land Use Action Plan (Action Plan) developed by the Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC Toka Tū Ake). The first plan (2021–2026) introduced a set of actions, many of which have been delivered or become embedded in our everyday work. These foundational actions remain in this plan to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to improving land use decisions in New Zealand. This plan also introduces new actions to address gaps and opportunities. These have been identified and prioritised in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

Since the first plan was published, our organisation has undergone transformation. Changes include the introduction of the Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023, the establishment of our new identity as the Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake, the revised Resilience Strategy for Natural Hazard Risk Reduction 2024–2029 and new Risk Reduction Strategy 2025–2029. This updated plan reflects these developments.



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Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake

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Terminology

Adaptation	The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects. ¹
Built environment	Includes people and communities, land and the identified values and characteristics of land, structures, and infrastructure. ²
Climate change	A change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. ³
Natural hazard	Any atmospheric, earth, or water related occurrence – including earthquake, hydrothermal activity, landslide, tsunami, volcanic activity, flood, storm, or natural hazard fire – the action of which adversely affects or may adversely affect human life, property, or other aspects of the environment. ³
Resilience	The ability to anticipate and resist the effects of a disruptive event, minimise adverse impacts, respond effectively post-event, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving. ⁴
Risk	The potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets which could occur to a system, society, or a community in a specific period of time, determined as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity. ⁵
Risk reduction	Reducing existing natural hazard risk, avoiding or minimising future risk, and managing residual risk. ⁵

1 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018

2 Planning Bill

3 Resource Management Act 1991

4 National Disaster Resilience Strategy (2019)

5 NHC Risk Reduction Strategy 2025-2029

Executive summary

Land use planning may be the most proactive and effective way to reduce the level of natural hazard risk in New Zealand. However, it is also a challenging policy area that must balance a range of – sometimes competing – priorities.

Our primary objective is to “reduce the impact of natural hazards on people, property, and the community”. We do this by supporting research, education, and knowledge sharing, as set out in the Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023.

We partner with, collaborate with and support Māori resilience initiatives, researchers, the public and private sectors, professional institutes, and communities to better manage risk. Learning from past events nationally and internationally, valuing Mātauranga Māori, and embracing new technological advances will provide us with greater understanding of future natural hazard risks.

This Action Plan champions risk-informed land use planning that prioritises resilience and sustainability. It outlines how we will support decision-makers, communities and the private sector to make evidence-based decisions that will sustain and enhance the wellbeing of current and future generations. Hard decisions will need to be made for existing and future developments.

We can start by making smarter land use decisions and building stronger homes on better land.

This plan includes several cross-cutting actions and initiatives with our Resilient Homes and Buildings Action Plan, the Natural Hazards Intelligence Action Plan, and Climate Action Plan. Together, and through a number of cross-cutting actions, they will enhance the resilience of New Zealand communities to natural hazards.

The Action Plan has three objectives, each with associated actions, milestones and outcomes. These are summarised on the following page.

Resilient Land Use Action Plan

Reduce future exposure to natural hazard risk by influencing planning systems, professional practice, and private-sector decisions, to enable risk-informed, resilient development.



Influence national and local planning systems

Provide evidence-based submissions on national policies, planning frameworks, and district plans.

Create evidence-based, technically robust guidance and tools for risk-based planning practice.

Track and analyse planning system changes influenced by NHC input.

Partner with NZPI and central government to strengthen natural hazard policy and practice.



Natural hazard exposure is reduced through legislative reform, national policy, and local planning frameworks.



Strengthen professional competency in risk-based planning

Support NZPI so that natural hazard risk management is a mandatory element of professional accreditation and CPD expectations.

Publish Māori-led case studies on adaptation and risk reduction.

Expand university engagement on natural hazard planning.

Publish and promote accessible, risk-based planning guidance and tools to support widespread sector adoption.

Contribute and support planners at national conferences and events.



The planning profession is supported so that risk reduction becomes a core competency embedded across qualifications, continued professional development, and practice.



Inform and influence private-sector decisions

Develop targeted risk insights and tools for developers, architects, banks, and insurers.

Engage directly with private-sector decision-makers.

Assess and publish how natural hazard information influences development and investment behaviour.

Promote best-practice examples of risk-informed development.

Collaborate with insurers, lenders, and developers to strengthen alignment between financial risk and natural hazard risk.



Market behaviour is influenced so that investment, development and design decisions shift decisively away from high-risk areas.

Introduction

Reducing disaster damage and disruption requires planning and constructing resilient buildings on suitable land, supported by robust infrastructure. For existing development, options include retrofitting or strengthening structures and limiting further subdivision or expansion.

‘Resilient land use planning’ for natural hazard risk reduction refers to making informed, risk-based decisions about where and how development occurs, with the goal of reducing exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards. It is not about stopping all development in hazard-prone areas, but about applying strategies that balance safety, sustainability, and community needs. Smarter land use that avoids the worst risks is central to our Resilience Goal.⁴ Planners and other professionals have a critical role in shaping urban, rural, and coastal communities to ensure current and future populations are not exposed to greater risk. Land use planning is key to reducing, avoiding, or eliminating risks from natural hazards.

Through the objectives, actions and milestones in this plan, we will support and contribute to resilient, risk-informed land use decisions. These decisions will help reduce exposure to natural hazards, strengthen resilience, and safeguard communities for current and future generations.

The role of land use planning in natural hazard risk management

Land use planning is one of several tools for managing natural hazard risks and is uniquely positioned to influence long-term exposure by shaping where and how development occurs.

Land use planning is a complex policy area that must balance competing priorities, such as housing demand, economic development, and hazard risk reduction. Increasingly, new housing and urban development is occurring in areas exposed to natural hazards, in some cases creating future relocation needs and, at times, requiring buyouts even before construction has started.

Managing natural hazard risk through land use planning does not mean avoiding all development in high-risk areas. Rather, it means making resilient, informed, sustainable decisions about where and how we build. In some cases, this may involve avoiding certain types of development altogether or relocating from areas where existing land uses are no longer viable.

Land use planning and building standards work together to reduce risk. Developed alongside the Resilient Homes and Buildings Action Plan, this plan recognises that effective risk reduction requires both smart land use decisions and resilient design, underpinned by high-quality data and information. While land use planning helps avoid or reduce exposure to natural hazards, strong building performance ensures developments can better withstand them.

Why are we interested in resilient land use planning?

As a public natural hazard insurer, we cover residential property damage caused by natural landslides, earthquakes, volcanic activity, hydrothermal activity, tsunamis, and fires resulting from natural disasters.

The financial exposure associated with these hazards is significant and is carried by NHC Toka Tū Ake on behalf of the Crown. Reducing natural hazard risk is therefore essential to our mandate.

Everything we invest in supports our overarching goal: to reduce the impact of natural hazards on people, property, and the community. To deliver value, it is essential that the tools and insights we develop or fund are used to inform and prioritise risk reduction actions. Achieving this will require new partnerships and effective communication with policymakers, planners, engineers, asset managers, and homeowners – ensuring the right knowledge reaches the right people, in the right format, at the right time. This Action Plan is one tool to achieve that goal.



Highlights from the previous Action Plan (2021–2026)

The first Smarter Land Use Action Plan delivered several achievements that continue to influence our work today. These project highlights – spanning policy contributions, research outputs, and capability building – form the basis of this updated plan.

Contributions to national and district policy

- We submitted on the National Adaptation Plan, and the Natural and Built Environment, Spatial Planning, Planning, and Natural Environment Bills.
- We've made 47 submissions on district plans and growth strategies, with an average submission point success rate⁶ of 66%, peaking at 83%.

Building capability

- We supported the delivery of the Planning for Non-Planners and Being an Expert Witness programmes to strengthen scientists' understanding of planning processes and their ability to communicate evidence in planning and legal settings.
- We have formally partnered with the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) to strengthen natural hazards planning. This includes developing continued professional development micro-credentialled courses that will be available to all planners.

Publications

- We published our Risk Tolerance Methodology, alongside a supporting literature review, to address a gap in our understanding of how risk tolerance can inform natural hazard risk management.
- We published the Pre-event Land Use Planning Methodology, a practical, step-by-step framework to prepare for land use recovery. It draws on lessons from past events and aligns with national disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies.



6 Success is measured by the number of submission points that are accepted or accepted in part.

This Action Plan is part of our strategy to reduce risks

This Action Plan is a component of our wider strategies to reduce natural hazard risks by operationalising elements of both the **Resilience Strategy for Natural Hazard Risk Reduction 2024–2029** and the **Risk Reduction Strategy 2025–2029**.

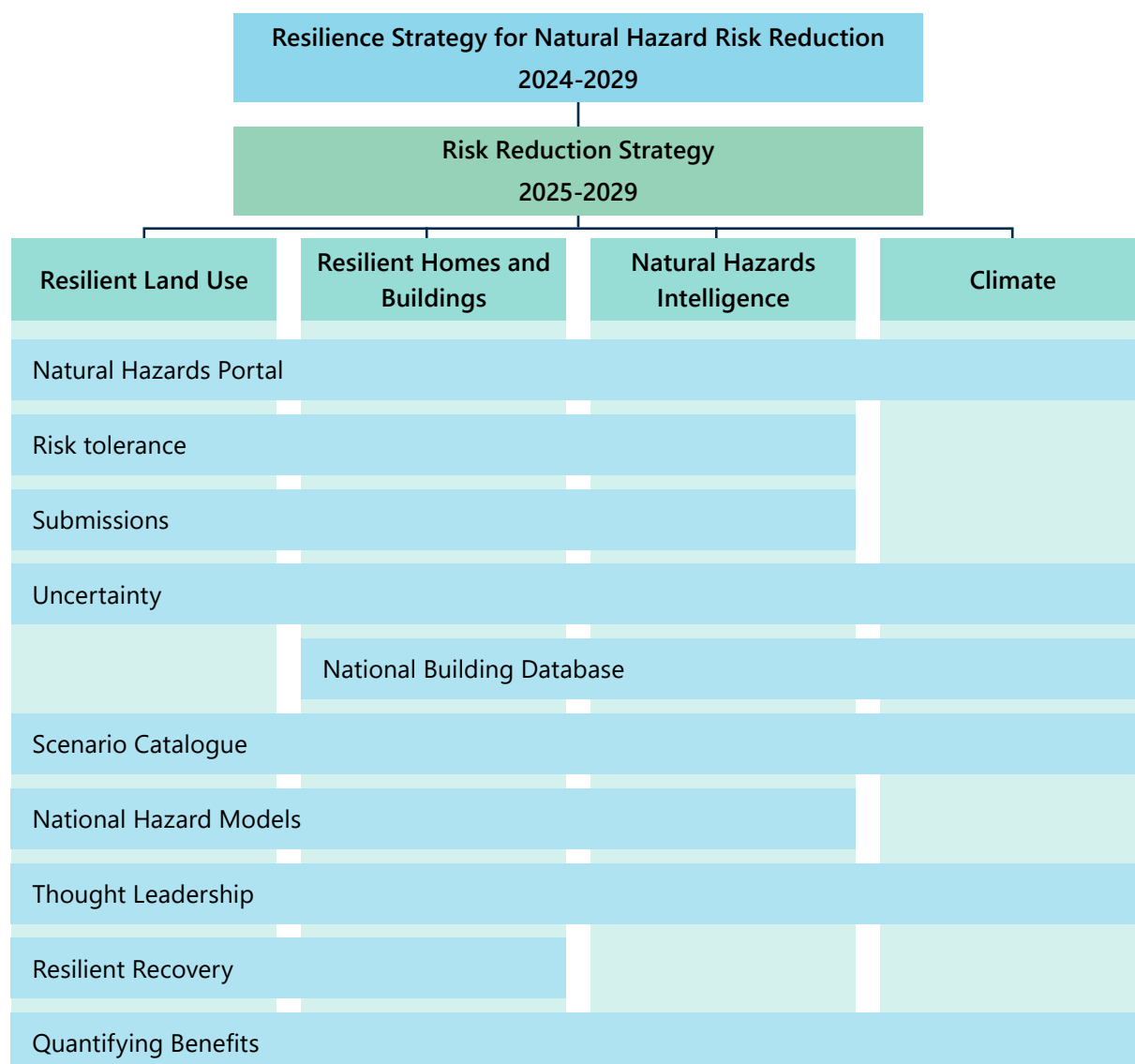
It translates the strategic goals of these documents into practical, targeted actions that strengthen resilient land use planning, reduce exposure and vulnerability, and support long-term resilience across New Zealand.



The Action Plan is also part of a suite of aligned, cross-cutting actions and initiatives – most notably the **Resilient Homes and Buildings Action Plan**, **Natural Hazards Intelligence Plan**, and **Climate Action Plan**. Together, these plans reinforce each other by ensuring land use planning, building performance, and natural hazard information work cohesively to reduce risks and support safer, more resilient communities.

Action Plan	Description
Resilient Homes and Buildings	How we work to improve the resilience of the built environment through how we design, build, and maintain our buildings.
Natural Hazards Intelligence	How we will understand, translate and use natural hazard risk and loss data to reduce risk and build resilience.
Climate	How we will strengthen internal capability to understand and respond to climate-driven natural hazard risk.

Resilience Action Plans - Cross-cutting initiatives



Te Ao Māori

Te Ao Māori represents Māori worldviews, encompassing values, knowledge systems, and relationships with the environment. In the context of land use planning for natural hazard risk reduction, Te Ao Māori provides a holistic approach that integrates cultural, environmental, and social dimensions of resilience.

This Action Plan operationalises our Te Ao Māori Strategy 2025–2028 within the land use planning context. It draws on the strategy’s four priorities – capability development; intelligence and insights; partnerships and engagement, and operational practice – to guide how we embed Māori perspectives in planning decisions.

These priorities ensure our actions build organisational capability, integrate Mātauranga Māori into planning tools, and strengthen partnerships with iwi and hapū for risk reduction land use planning solutions.

Te Ao Māori is relevant to all actions in this Action Plan. It aims to strengthen Māori resilience and support sustainable land use decisions that safeguard people, whenua, and taonga for generations to come. In addition to the Te Ao Māori targeted actions across each of the three objectives, we aim to embed Te Ao Māori values into our all actions where appropriate.



Strategic overview of Action Plan

Goal

Our goal is to **reduce future exposure to natural hazard risk by influencing planning systems, professional practice, and private-sector decisions, to enable risk-informed, resilient development.**

This contributes to our resilience objective, “Smart land use avoids the worst risks” with the aim that “the vulnerability and exposure of New Zealand’s built environment to natural hazards events is reduced”.⁴

Objectives

This plan has three objectives, each with their own actions, milestones, and intended outcomes:

1. Influence national and local planning systems to avoid or reduce exposure to natural hazard risk.
2. Strengthen professional competency in risk-based planning.
3. Inform and influence private sector decisions that shape land use and natural hazard risk.

These objectives are interconnected, and some actions contribute to more than one objective. All are designed to collectively contribute to the NHC Risk Reduction Strategy 2025–2029 goal to “inform, enable, and influence evidence-based risk reduction decision-making and action.”

Scope

The scope of this Action Plan is confined to those actions that promote improved land use planning and decision-making for existing and future development across all levels of government and the private sector. It addresses geological and weather-related hazards, recognising that climate change will increase the frequency and magnitude of many of these natural hazards. Climate change is therefore included within the broad terminology of ‘natural hazard’.

The scope includes adapting to ongoing policy changes, such as the Resource Management Act reform, and will be updated as new national planning frameworks emerge.

Actions related to public communication, insurance, engineering, and infrastructure resilience are out of scope for this plan but are covered by our other plans, and initiatives and partner agencies.

Intended outcomes

To ensure resilient land use that reduces our exposure to natural hazard risks, the outcomes of this Action Plan are:

- a planning system that consistently avoids or reduces natural hazard risk: risk-informed decisions become standard practice across national legislation, policy, and local planning decisions

- councils, central agencies, and other planning bodies routinely use natural hazard data, guidance, and scenarios to shape development choices that reduce exposure and vulnerability
- a highly competent and informed planning profession: planners – both emerging and established – have the skills, accreditation standards, tools, and knowledge they need to integrate natural hazard and climate risk into their everyday work
- a private sector that makes safer, more resilient land use and investment decisions: developers, architects, insurers, lenders, and other market actors shift their behaviour as they understand and use natural hazard risk information. Investment, pricing, siting, and design decisions move purposefully away from high-risk locations.



Objective 1

Influence national and local planning systems to avoid or reduce exposure to natural hazard risk

Champion risk-based land use planning by shaping legislation, national policy, and local planning frameworks.

Actions

Provide evidence-based submissions on national policies, planning frameworks, and district plans

To influence legislation, national direction, and local planning provisions, we will use our hazard and risk data, research, and scenarios to support stronger reductions in exposure and vulnerability.

Create evidence-based, technically robust guidance and tools for risk-based planning practice

To support consistent risk-based planning practice, we will co-develop and update methodologies (e.g. pre-event planning, managing uncertainty, risk tolerances) and scenario packages that councils and central agencies can directly apply in plan development and implementation.

Track and analyse planning system changes influenced by NHC input

To understand where progress is being made, we will undertake annual analysis of district plan decisions, national framework updates, and plan change outcomes to identify where our recommendations have been adopted and where system gaps remain. We will publish a bi-annual public State of Risk-based Planning scorecard highlighting progress and gaps.

Partner with NZPI and central government to strengthen natural hazard policy and practice

Through partnerships with NZPI and central government, we will advance joint initiatives to embed risk-reduction principles into planning assessments, guidance, and capability programmes.

Objective 2

Strengthen professional competency in risk-informed planning

Build and support the planning profession so that risk reduction becomes a core competency embedded across qualifications, continued professional development (CPD), and practice.

Actions

Support NZPI to ensure natural hazard risk management is a mandatory element of professional accreditation and CPD expectations

In partnership with NZPI, we will co-develop and assist the implementation of micro-credentials and other training that build planners' ability to assess and integrate natural hazard and climate risk into planning decisions.

Publish Māori-led case studies on adaptation and risk reduction

To strengthen culturally informed practice, we will publish and share practical, Māori-led case studies that demonstrate the application of Mātauranga Māori in planning and risk assessment.

Expand university engagement on natural hazard planning

Through collaboration with tertiary institutions, we will support the integration of hazard risk reduction into planning curriculums, including guest lectures, planning studios, and applied exercises.

Publish and promote accessible risk-based planning guidance and tools to support widespread sector adoption

We will produce resources to champion consistent, best-practice approaches to natural hazard assessment and risk-based planning. The resources will be easy to find, understand, and use through targeted communication, training, outreach and support.

Contribute and support planners at national conferences and events

By regularly contributing to the NZPI conference and other sector events, we will reinforce core natural hazard planning messages, tools, and emerging insights across the profession.

Objective 3

Inform and influence private-sector decisions that shape land use and natural hazard risk

Provide evidence to influence market behaviour so investment, development and design decisions shift decisively away from high-risk areas.

Actions

Develop targeted risk insights and tools for developers, architects, banks, and insurers

We will create products, such as spatial insights, scenarios, resilience indicators, and planning-aligned hazard guidance, that support improved awareness, investment, design, and development decisions.

Engage directly with private-sector decision-makers

Partnerships will be established with major insurers, banks, and developers to promote the understanding and use of natural hazard risk information into lending, pricing, and design practices and standards. We will host briefings, workshops, and roundtables with developers, valuers, lenders, insurers, and design professionals to ensure they understand the implications of natural hazard exposure and long-term financial risk.

Assess and publish how natural hazard information influences development and investment behaviour

We will analyse market responses, development patterns, and financial sector decision trends to understand how risk information is being used and where barriers remain. We will also publish transparent insights on how market behaviour is shifting (or failing to shift) in response to risk information.

Promote best-practice examples of risk-based development

We will identify, document, and share cases where hazard information has resulted in safer siting, more resilient building design, or shifts away from high-risk areas.

Collaborate with insurers, lenders and developers to strengthen alignment between financial risk and natural hazard risk

Working with financial sector partners and developers, we will explore how hazard information can inform lending criteria, insurance pricing, and long-term risk exposure strategies. We will co-develop industry-wide development principles or commitments aligning financial investment and insurance availability with long-term hazard risk.

Delivery of actions

Progress on the Action Plan will be monitored against the delivery of the following milestones.

Common abbreviations:

- MCERT – Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport
- NZPI – New Zealand Planning Institute

Objective 1 – Influence national and local planning systems to avoid or reduce exposure to natural hazard risk			
Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Provide evidence-based submissions on national policies, planning frameworks, and district plans			
1-5	Deliver submissions on all nationally significant policies and major district plan changes.	Our evidence meaningfully influences planning legislation and district plan provisions.	MCERT; councils
2	Review the effectiveness of previous submissions (tracking adoption of recommendations).	Evidence that risk-informed principles are being more consistently embedded in national and local planning systems due to our submissions.	Councils
3	Analysis of submissions (common issues, policies, etc).	Systemic challenges are identified, enabling more strategic and proactive responses.	MCERT; councils
Create evidence-based, technically robust guidance and tools for risk-based planning practice			
1	Identify and prioritise guidance and tools that are required.	Councils and central agencies apply consistent, technically robust methods for risk-based planning.	Councils
2	Publish scenarios that can be used for spatial planning purposes.		
3-4	Publish updated methodologies.		
4	Develop case studies of successful uptake of guidance and tools.	Councils have examples of how guidance and tools are being implemented, prompting further use.	
5	Evaluate uptake and effectiveness of our guidance and tools.	Uptake and impact of our guidance and tools are clearly understood and inform future improvements and directions.	

Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Track and analyse planning system changes influenced by NHC input			
1	Establish a tracking framework for the implementation of the new planning system.	Analysis informs our future interventions, targeted submissions, and capability-building initiatives.	NZPI; MCERT
2	Publish State of Risk-based Planning scorecard.	Evidence is provided of where risk-informed practice is improving and where gaps persist.	MCERT; councils
4	Publish updated scorecard with trends over time.		
5	Publish five-year analysis of system shifts and our influence.	We become a recognised authority on the state of natural hazard planning practice in New Zealand.	NZPI
Partner with NZPI and central government to strengthen natural hazard policy and practice			
2	Review, update and renew our partnership agreement with NZPI (expires 2027).	Continued partnership with NZPI improves planning for natural hazard risk.	NZPI
1-5	Quarterly meetings with NZPI to progress natural hazard planning initiatives.	Ongoing collaboration strengthens alignment and momentum on natural hazard planning initiatives.	
2	A Natural Hazards Special Interest Group is formally established.	A safe place is established for planners to discuss natural hazard issues, run seminars etc.	

Objective 2 – Strengthen professional competency in risk-informed planning			
Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Support NZPI to ensure natural hazard risk management is a mandatory element of professional accreditation and CPD expectations			
1-2	Co-develop micro-credentials and other training that build planners' ability to assess and integrate natural hazard and climate risk into planning decisions.	CPD framework is in place to improve competencies in natural hazard risk management.	NZPI
3-5	Assist in the implementation of training for planners.	Planners have access to an NZPI-endorsed and accredited professional development programme that improves the application of risk-informed natural hazard planning.	NZPI; MCERT

Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Publish Māori-led case studies on adaptation and risk reduction			
3	Produce and publish the initial set of Māori-led case studies demonstrating the application of Mātauranga Māori in planning and risk assessment.	Māori-led approaches to adaptation and risk reduction are better understood and increasingly incorporated into planning practice.	Planners
4	Hold seminars on published case studies.		NZPI
Expand university engagement on natural hazard planning			
1-5	Guest lecture at two universities every year.	Graduates develop a stronger understanding of natural hazard risks and how good policy can reduce exposure and vulnerability.	Universities
2-5	Initiate annual student challenge or practical studio on risk-informed planning.		
Publish and promote accessible, risk-based planning guidance and tools to support widespread sector adoption			
1-2	Assess how the new planning direction is being implemented, and where guidance is needed.	Implementation challenges are identified to inform future guidance and tools.	Planners
3-5	Produce guidance and tools that meet the needs of the profession in the new planning framework.	New guidance and tools are developed that assist the planning profession to understand and implement new approaches to natural hazard risk management.	
Contribute and support planners at national conferences and events			
1-5	Attend annual NZPI conference.	Raised awareness of our role and how we contribute to reducing risks through land use planning.	NZPI

Objective 3 – Inform and influence private-sector decisions that shape land use and natural hazard risk			
Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Develop targeted risk insights and tools for developers, architects, banks, and insurers			
1-2	Engage with developers, architects, banks, and insurers to understand decision-making needs, and produce prototype risk insights and tools, such as draft spatial layers, scenarios, and resilience indicators, for initial testing.	Banks and insurers have access to, and increasingly integrate natural hazard risk insights into lending, underwriting, and pricing, supporting a market shift away from high-risk areas and toward more resilient and sustainable development.	Developers; Architects; Banks; Insurers
3	Release the first set of sector-specific products – including spatial insights, scenarios, resilience indicators, and planning-aligned hazard guidance – and deliver supporting engagement, such as briefings, workshops, and technical explanations.		
Engage directly with private sector decision-makers			
1	Identify private-sector partners and establish an annual engagement programme.	Ongoing relationships with private-sector decision-makers that raise awareness of, and support, resilience initiatives.	Insurers; Lenders; Developers
2-5	Host an annual briefing.	Private-sector partners are regularly updated on natural hazard risk insights, strengthening awareness and alignment with our priorities.	
5	Publish a consolidated summary of five years of private-sector engagement and lessons learned.	Insights on private-sector needs, behaviours, challenges and opportunities inform our future priorities and engagement approaches.	
Assess and publish how natural hazard information influences development and investment behaviour			
1	Develop a monitoring framework for market behaviour and data collection.	A robust and transparent framework that can deliver results that are trusted.	Insurers; Lenders; Developers
2	Publish first analysis of market responses to hazard information.	Initial insights reveal how hazard information is influencing market behaviour, providing a baseline for future trend analysis.	
3	Produce annual report on trends in property prices, insurance, and development in hazard areas.	Clear visibility of how risk information shapes investment and development behaviour.	

Year	Milestone	Outcome	Partners
Promote best-practice examples of risk-based development			
2	Engage with insurers, lenders, and developers to understand how natural hazard information could influence lending criteria, pricing, underwriting, and development decisions, and agree on priority areas for joint work.	Insurers, lenders, and developers increasingly incorporate hazard information into pricing, lending criteria, investment strategies, and development choices.	Insurers; Lenders; Developers
3-4	Work with sector partners to draft and test industry-wide development principles or commitments that embed natural hazard exposure and long-term risk considerations into lending, insurance pricing, and development assessment processes.	Shared industry principles support more transparent, predictable expectations around where and how development occurs, helping reduce long-term exposure to natural hazard risk.	
4-5	Release the agreed principles or commitments, supported by example applications, and document initial uptake by insurers, lenders, or developers through case studies, pilots, or changes to financial decision-making practices.	Better integration of hazard information into financial decisions encourages investment in safer locations and drives more resilient development and design practices.	
Collaborate with insurers, lenders and developers to strengthen alignment between financial risk and natural hazard risk			
2	Engage with insurers, lenders, and developers to understand how natural hazard information could influence lending criteria, pricing, underwriting, and development decisions, and agree on priority areas for joint work.	Insurers, lenders, and developers increasingly incorporate hazard information into pricing, lending criteria, investment strategies, and development choices.	Insurers; Lenders; Developers
3-4	Work with sector partners to draft and test industry-wide development principles or commitments that embed natural hazard exposure and long-term risk considerations into lending, insurance pricing, and development assessment processes.	Shared industry principles support more transparent, predictable expectations around where and how development occurs, helping reduce long-term exposure to natural hazard risk.	
4-5	Release the agreed principles or commitments, supported by example applications, and document initial uptake by insurers, lenders, or developers through case studies, pilots, or changes to financial decision-making practices.	Better integration of hazard information into financial decisions encourages investment in safer locations and drives more resilient development and design practices.	

Partnerships and stakeholders

Each objective involves various partners and stakeholders. Partners have clear roles and responsibilities and work to collaborate on shared goals. Stakeholders are those who are impacted by the work or outcomes of this plan but may not directly engage with us.

Partnerships

We have partnered with NZPI to strengthen natural hazard risk reduction through planning. NZPI advocates for planners, giving them a collective voice. Together, we and NZPI work to build capability in and strengthen natural hazard planning, as outlined in this Action Plan.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are classified as primary (directly involved) or secondary (kept informed).

Māori interests are considered and enabled at every opportunity	Category	Primary stakeholders	Secondary stakeholders
	Local government	District, regional and unitary councils	Local Government NZ
		Special interest groups	Taituarā (Local Government Professionals Aotearoa)
	Central government	Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT)	Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)
		National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
		Departments with property portfolios	
	Universities	Planning departments	Earth science departments
		Hazard-targeted programmes	
	Scientists	At universities, public research organisations, councils, research programmes	Consultants
	Professional organisations	NZPI	Engineering NZ
			NZ Society of Earthquake Engineers

Risks to successful Action Plan implementation

Risk	Mitigation
A significant event (e.g. a natural hazard event) shifts organisational, public, and political will and attention away from the delivery of this action plan.	Re-prioritise as necessary, considering the needs and status of partners and stakeholders. Communicate with stakeholders so they are aware.
Legislative changes occur at pace with little opportunity to influence the outcome.	Plan for legislative changes. Sustain good relationships with other agencies to learn of any substantive changes early.
The role of consultants in natural hazard planning is overlooked.	Consider use of consultants when procuring research. Target consultants at conferences, workshops, and other engagement opportunities.
Māori engagement is not appropriate.	Use our internal Māori advisor to assist and provide support in cultural protocols, tikanga, and engagement activities. Engage early and through different channels and approaches, as necessary.
Changes or re-prioritising of political priorities.	Adapt actions in plan as required and re-release this Action Plan as an 'update'.

Benefit test

The Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023 requires us to assess and demonstrate the benefit of any risk-reduction or resilience-focused activities, ensuring levy funds are used effectively for the Natural Hazards Insurance scheme and for insured persons. This 'benefit test' ensures all proposed activities align with our statutory objectives and functions (sections 128 and 129), and that they have a reasonable potential to benefit insured persons or reduce the future cost of natural hazard cover. Any activity that cannot demonstrate alignment or benefit will not proceed, and all assessments are documented for monitoring and governance purposes.

Assessment of this Action Plan confirms that it meets the Act's benefit requirements by contributing to improved natural hazard knowledge, reduced exposure and vulnerability, stronger built environment resilience, and more-informed risk-management practices. Evidence from domestic and international studies shows that reducing natural hazard risk – through planning, resilient construction, engineering interventions, and adaptation – lowers long-term impacts and costs, supporting the affordability and sustainability of natural hazard insurance. These benefits, alongside alignment with section 129(e) information-sharing functions, demonstrate the Action Plan's relevance and value. The full assessment is provided in Appendix A.



Looking ahead

This Action Plan is a living document. As legislation evolves, new knowledge emerges, and communities face changing natural hazard profiles, we will adapt and refine our actions to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Our commitment is enduring to champion resilient land use, foster collaboration, and build resilience so that New Zealanders can thrive in the face of natural hazards.

Resilient land use starts today. Every decision about where and how we build shapes the safety and wellbeing of future generations. Together, we can create communities that are safer, stronger, and better prepared for the challenges ahead.



Appendix A – Benefit test assessment

The Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023 requires the Natural Hazards Commission to assess and demonstrate the benefit of any risk reduction and resilience-focussed activities we undertake. This includes whether the activity has the potential to a) provide a benefit to insured persons, or b) reduce the future cost of providing natural hazard cover.

This requirement is to ensure the funds that the Natural Hazards Commission receives through levy contributions are used in a way that achieves benefit for the scheme and for levy payers. The requirement supports the financial governance elements of the Act. This Action Plan is designed to align with the objectives of the Natural Hazards Commission as outlined in section 128 and the functions of the Natural Hazards Commission as outlined in section 129(e).

Any new risk reduction activities or expenditures we will be assessed by documenting answers to the following questions:

- Does the activity align with the Commission's objectives (section 128) and functions (section 129) of the Natural Hazards Insurance Act?
- Does the Natural Hazards Commission believe, on reasonable grounds, there is potential that insured persons will benefit from funding the activity?

- Does the Natural Hazards Commission believe, on reasonable grounds, that there is the potential to reduce the future cost of natural hazard cover?
- What is the evidence of the potential benefit or reduced cost to the Scheme?

If the activity or expenditure cannot adequately answer or address the above, it will not be completed. This assessment along with the outcomes will be recorded for monitoring purposes.

This Action Plan under the benefit test

The following assessment demonstrates the Action Plan's relevancy, adequacy, and purpose under the Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023.

Does the activity align with the objectives (section 128) and functions (section 129) of the Natural Hazards Insurance Act?

This Action Plan has been developed to align with the objectives in section 128 and the functions in section 129 of the Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023.

The Goal, Objectives and Actions have been specifically designed to deliver on section 129(e):

- *To contribute to the sharing of information, knowledge, and expertise (with the Crown, public and private entities, and the public generally) including in relation to:*
 - *Natural hazards and their impacts;*
 - *Damage to residential buildings, residential land, and other property as a result of natural hazards, including how that damage might be prevented or reduced;*
 - *Community resilience to natural hazards;*
 - *Natural hazard risk management; and*
 - *Planning for, and recovering from, natural hazards.*

Does the Natural Hazards Commission believe, on reasonable grounds, there is potential that insured persons will benefit from funding the activity?

Work delivered under this Action Plan will contribute to reducing the risk of natural hazards on insured persons under the scheme. Reducing risk by understanding and reducing our vulnerability and/or exposure will reduce impact and losses when a natural hazard event occurs. Exposure and vulnerability can be reduced in many ways. This has been demonstrated in this Action Plan in how we will inform, enable, and influence matters such as land use planning, built environment resilience and building

knowledge of risk mitigations, all of which contributes to the retention of insurance.

Insurance is a balance of taking on risk, knowing that the likelihood of payouts is low and/or controlled. This means insurers care about the way we manage and adapt to risk. Not increasing our exposure or vulnerability, i.e. building smartly, resiliently, and safely and reducing our risk by improving how we hard engineer (e.g. flood defences) and adapting to risk by moving communities in high-risk areas (e.g. planned relocation), will support the retention of natural hazards insurance.

We will use data, information, knowledge, and expertise to reduce natural hazard risk and thereby support insured persons. An example can be seen in how we are working to build stronger homes, promoting building above code for new builds and building back better when a natural hazard event occurs. Figure 1 below shows designing and building above minimum code is becoming cheaper. This is because our technical capabilities are becoming better and recourses easier to access and more cost effective. The Natural Hazards Mitigation Saves 2019 Report 9F⁷ investigates the cost-benefit of natural hazard mitigation, when designing and building to improved codes/exceeding building codes. The report suggests building above code can save \$4 for \$1 invested. By providing this information to hazard risk management professionals and working with subject matter experts we can actively influence and enable changes within the built environment.

7 National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves 2019 Report

Building Better is getting more affordable over time

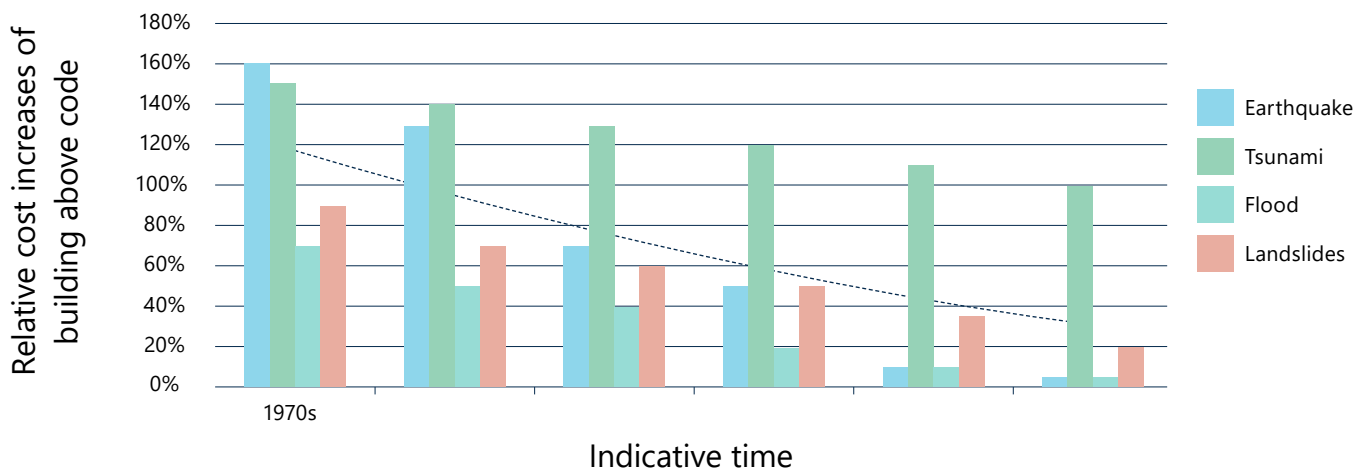


Figure 1: Affordability of building above code over time

Does the Natural Hazards Commission believe, on reasonable grounds, that there is the potential to reduce the future cost of natural hazard cover?

Reducing natural hazard risk will help us to maintain or reduce the cost of natural hazard insurance cover. This has also been summarised on Page 10 of NHC's Risk Reduction Strategy.⁸

New Zealand's contingent liability for natural hazards damage, based on loss modelling is approximately \$1.2 Billion per year. Reducing risk will not only save lives, property, and wellbeing, it will reduce our liability and protect insurance for the future.

As described in the Risk Reduction Strategy, we can reduce risk by understanding and reducing our vulnerability and/or exposure. These concepts are the premise of the actions within this Action Plan and all other work that will be completed under it.

What is the evidence of the potential benefit or reduced cost to the Scheme?

There have been success stories domestically, and internationally, that demonstrate that early intervention to reduce natural hazard risk has resulted in decreased costs and impacts on people, property, and the economy. Evidence suggests that reducing natural hazard risk is more cost effective than response and recovery. This type of information provides the cost-benefit analysis for advocating for change and improving our approaches to investing in risk reduction and natural hazards risk management.

While reducing risk is financially and socially hard, especially through engineering and planned relocation, the benefit of investment is becoming clearer.

8 NHC Risk Reduction Strategy 2025–2029

Using the goal of the Risk Reduction Strategy and this Action Plan, we will build existing evidence to influence and enable these impacts in New Zealand, thereby addressing this aspect of the benefit test. Useful examples include, but are not limited to:

- Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves (2019), The National Institute of Building Science - a study of mitigation measures and their associated benefit-cost ratios meant to guide and support hazard mitigation decision-making. It assesses the trade-offs of adopting model codes, exceeding code minimums, federal funding, private retrofit, and infrastructure investment against flooding, hurricane surge, wind, earthquake, and wildland-urban interface fire.
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (United Nations) – a global framework for how nations should prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks. It has 4 priorities: 1) Understanding disaster risk, 2) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 3) Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, 4) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery.
- Unlocking the Triple Dividend of Resilience: Why investing in disaster risk management pays off (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 2015) – provides evidence for how investing in resilience can yield a 'triple dividend' by 1) avoiding losses when disasters strike, 2) unlocking development potential by stimulating innovation and economic activity, 3) through the social, environment and economic co-benefits of disaster risk management investments even if a disaster does not happen for many years.
- Being prepared for the Next Disaster Pays Off. A new economic study finds every \$1 spent on climate resilience and preparedness saves communities \$13 in damages, cleanup costs, and economic impact.⁹

9 U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2024 The Preparedness Payoff: The Economic Benefits of Investing in Climate Resilience



**Natural Hazards
Commission**
Toka Tū Ake