
CLOSED LANDFILLS POLICY 2003

Section 2

General Approach to Risk Management

Wellington City Council has an on-going programme to investigate the extent and level of risk associated with the thirty-two closed landfills within Wellington City.

This programme is structured around the following general priorities:

1. Assessment of extent and level of landfill gases;
2. Assessment of exposure to soil contamination;
3. Assessment of health and environmental risks associated with leachate;
4. Assessment of risks associated with subsidence.

Ordering of priorities is based on the view that undetected gas migration from closed landfills theoretically presents the more immediate risk and the greatest immediate potential for harm. Work has been undertaken to identify the level of potential risk associated with former landfill gases and to classify the sites accordingly - this work is still continuing. Classification of the closed landfills according to their potential landfill gas risk will determine the level of gas management mitigation work required and the extent that gas-monitoring programmes (currently underway) will be implemented.

Priorities in terms of risk will need to be re-assessed continuously in line with changing conditions and circumstances related to individual landfill sites or development taking place in proximity of a closed landfill site.

To address these issues it is essential that each closed landfill has, a site specific Management Plan. Management Plans for each Former Landfill are being prepared, with the order of work dictated by the initial classification of landfills in terms of potential gas risk. These plans will address the immediate issue of mitigation of potential gas risks (where necessary), they will also outline a programme of future investigative work for the other listed potential risks.

The detailed investigative work on potential gas risk is scheduled for completion in 2003, at that point, an overall assessment of potential risks associated with contaminated soils and leachate will commence, this will then influence any future mitigation programmes, should they be needed.

The following approach to managing potential risks associated with closed landfills has been taken:

- minimising exposure to potential risks; and
- where appropriate mitigation of the existing risks associated with each closed landfill.

The overall risk assessment process will drive the necessity for mitigation programmes.