

ECan explains crack-down on quarries

Bernie Napp - Wed, 27 Jun 2018

Environment Canterbury says dust monitors at quarry boundaries within 500 metres of people's homes will assure operators manage dust responsibly.

Monday's ECan's publicity material, "[dust up over quarries](#)" spurred the Aggregate and Quarry Association to "vigorously fight" the requirement.

Nadeine Dommissie, ECan's chief operating officer, told *Inside Resources* today: "The programme has highlighted there are dust nuisance issues from time to time."

"In its most recent consents, Environment Canterbury requires dust boundary monitoring, which is what we are now requiring the quarries to do if they are within 500m of a residential property."

The distance is from the quarry boundary to the residential dwelling, not to the property boundary.

"We are taking a conservative approach to where we will be requiring consented quarries to monitor sensitive boundaries for dust," Dommissie said.

The 500m was based on the transect data, which indicated that at 500m there were no exceedances of PM10. The results showed one exceedance at 250m from the nearest quarry.

"This approach is designed to provide an evidence base for quarries to assure the community that their operations are not producing nuisance dust beyond their boundaries, and that they are taking all practicable measures to avoid and mitigate dust nuisance."

"Existing consents have a condition that relates to 'all practicable measures to mitigate dust' and we believe boundary monitors are required to achieve this," Dommissie said.

Canterbury Medical Officer of Health

Canterbury Medical Officer of Health Ramon Pink, concluded from the Yaldhurst Air Quality Monitoring Programme results that there is "[no serious risk to public health](#)".

"Nuisance dust levels will not cause long-term health effects, but we know it can cause irritation and symptoms of concern in some people, and we have prepared a [factsheet](#) with advice for residents."

The results showed negligible levels of respirable crystalline silica. They showed that exceedances of the one-hour safe exposure level of airborne particles up to 10 microns in diameter (PM10) occurred during 0.3 per cent of the programme duration.

Clarification of the 500-metre setback proposal

Christchurch Mayor [Lianne Dalziel](#) initially suggested a setback of 500 metres from houses.

A simple calculation reveals a 500-metre setback would eliminate almost all quarrying in the region, with likely demands from quarry companies for compensation.

The 500 metres may have stemmed from Australia, in [Victoria](#) where there is very little water for dust suppression.

Alternatively, from [Queensland](#) where setbacks of 200m or 1000m from "key resource areas" prevent housing construction too close to mineral deposits – a reverse sensitivity measure.

ECan is currently proposing "national guidance" on setbacks for quarries, without specifying a separation distance.

That is consistent with [J Swap's proposal](#) of a national policy statement and/or national environmental standard for quarrying.

Environmental lawyer [Rachel Devine](#) has suggested industry could take advantage of consultation on national planning standards to push this proposal. Submissions close on August 17.

