



NETWORK UTILITIES - POLICY

NU2.1 Introduction

Network utilities form part of the infrastructure of urban and rural areas required for the efficient and effective management of the District and the wellbeing of the community.

The trend is moving away from network utilities being provided by central or local government. Increasingly these network utilities are being provided by private companies with central and local government having no financial responsibility. This does not decrease the importance of the network utilities to the community.

Network utilities have the potential to generate adverse environmental effects. These effects may include:

- (a) The visual impacts of structures, particularly large/tall utilitarian facilities, for example, masts in Outstanding Landscapes;
- (b) Risks to public health and safety, for example, the effects of exposure to levels of radiofrequency fields exceeding those contained in the relevant accepted national standards; and
- (c) Noise and odour, for example, odour from reticulated sewage pumping stations.

These potential effects need to be avoided, remedied or mitigated, while recognising the community benefit in the provision of these services.

The National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008 (NPSET) is also relevant to this Chapter. The NPSET reinforces the national significance of the electricity transmission network and its continued operation, maintenance, development and upgrading. The NPSET requires decision makers to recognise and provide for the national, regional and local benefits of sustainable, secure and efficient electricity transmission.

There are also National Environmental Standards for both Telecommunications and Electricity Transmission. Both of these National Environmental Standards are outlined in the Network Utilities – Rules section of this District Plan. The Standards are available at: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/> and at Ruapehu District Council offices.

The RMA states that a District Plan can not duplicate the provisions of an NES thus the provisions of the NES have not been included in the District Plan. However, the Council is responsible for enforcing these standards.

NU2.2 Issues

- (a) The development of network utilities to enable the community to provide for its social and economic wellbeing.
- (b) Inefficient use and development of network utilities as physical resources.
- (c) Degradation of the quality of the environment due to the adverse environmental effects of the use and development of network utilities.

**NU2.2.1 Objectives**

- (a) To enable the efficient development, maintenance and operation of network utilities, while avoiding, remedying or mitigating any significant adverse effects on the environment.
- (b) To give effect to the objectives and policies of any relevant National Policy Statement, specifically the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission.

NU2.2.2 Policies

- (a) To have regard to the technical and operational requirements of network utilities and the contribution they make to the functioning and wellbeing of the community.
- (b) To avoid, remedy or mitigate any significant adverse effects of network utilities on:
 - (i) Amenity and character values;
 - (ii) Landscape values;
 - (iii) Biodiversity and water bodies.
- (c) To avoid reverse sensitivity issues by ensuring that incompatible activities are not located in close proximity to existing high voltage transmission lines.

NU2.2.3 Explanation of Policies

Policy (a) recognises the public good in the provision of network utilities, which enable people and the community to provide for their health, safety and wellbeing. However, policy (b) recognises that network utilities can have significant visual and environmental effects, which need to be considered, especially in sensitive environments, in relation to the Protected Areas Zone, and within areas identified as having Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes.

Overall, the policies seek to provide flexibility in the areas where these network utilities can be provided, while recognising that some areas are more sensitive to the effects of these activities than others. The Council, through its policies, seeks to ensure that the adverse effects associated with network utilities are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

The policies also address the potential for reverse sensitivity issues to occur when sensitive activities occur in close proximity to the high voltage transmission lines. This policy is reflected in Section DR3.4 – District Wide Rules – Setbacks from Electricity Transmission Lines.