

ENQ-41081-B7K3K5

9 April 2021

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1NEWS

Via: ██████████ [@tvnz.co.nz](mailto:██████████@tvnz.co.nz)

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Official Information Act Request

Dear ██████

Thank you for your official information request received on 10 March 2021 for the following information:

1. The number of permit applications to EPA from New Zealand companies to import and export 'plastic waste' (since Jan 1, 2021).
2. The number of applications that were rejected before shipment.
3. The number of 'plastic waste' exports that have been shipped without permits in 2019,2020 and 2021.
4. For (1) and (3), the number that were seized at a New Zealand port, and the number refused entry to countries along the shipping route or at the destination country.
5. For (1) (2) and (3), the companies the waste were from, plus the amount they tried to send.
6. For (1) (2) and (3) the reasons for the rejections.
7. For (1) (2) and (3) the types of waste that were rejected.
8. For (1) (2) and (3) where the waste has been taken instead and what's being done to it.
9. Any correspondence that details all the above decisions.
10. Which countries does New Zealand import and export plastic waste - could I also get this as a percentage breakdown?

On 16 March 2021 we transferred part of your request (question (3) and the parts that relate to (3) in questions 4- 8, and question 10) to the New Zealand Customs Service, as they are the agency responsible for enforcement of import and export of waste in New Zealand and we believed some parts of your request was more closely connected with their functions. We are responding to the part of question 4 that relates to plastic waste exports that were refused entry to countries along the shipping route or at the destination country as they relate to our role of competent authority for the Basel Convention.

On 7 April 2021 you confirmed that you did not require correspondence relating to question 4 about 'plastic waste' shipped without a permit that was refused entry to countries along the shipping route or at the destination country.

The Environmental Protection Authority's role in plastic waste imports and exports

Before responding to your request, I thought it might be helpful to set out the background to the regulation of plastic waste and what the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) role is.

The EPA is the 'Competent Authority' for the Basel Convention in New Zealand, which controls the transboundary movements of hazardous and other wastes. Our role is limited to assessing applications, issuing permits for the import and export of hazardous and other wastes, and liaising with other competent authorities to get permissions to ship via the prior-informed-consent procedure and if there are any issues with shipments.

Prior to 1 January 2021 plastic waste did not require an import or export permit. However, an amendment to the Basel Convention means that a permit is now required to import or export some types of plastic waste. Without the right permit, the shipment could be seized at a New Zealand port, or refused entry to countries along the shipping route or at the destination country. Shipments that are refused entry may be returned to the company at their cost. The onus is on companies to comply with both New Zealand law and the laws of the importing country. This also applies if a company is using a third party to export plastic waste.

Further information regarding the import and export of plastic waste is available on the EPA website: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/industry-areas/hazardous-substances/hazardous-waste/importing-and-exporting-plastic-waste/>

Plastic waste permits

The EPA has not received any applications for permits from New Zealand companies to import or export plastic waste since 1 January 2021. As a result, no applications have been rejected before shipment and we hold no correspondence relating to permit applications from 1 January 2021.

Plastic waste refused entry at destination country

As the Competent Authority in New Zealand, the EPA was notified by the Ministry for the Environment in 2019 about containers comprised of plastic waste being refused entry to Indonesia. They were refused entry on the basis that the containers are alleged to be contaminated with hazardous and household waste. Although the plastic waste did not require a permit, any hazardous waste did require a permit. The containers were part of 547 containers exported by various countries that were refused entry to Indonesia. The containers have not yet been returned to New Zealand.

We are not aware of any other imports or exports of plastic waste that was shipped without a permit being refused entry to countries along the shipping route or at the destination country.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. You can contact the Ombudsman on 0800 802 602, or by email at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via ministerials@epa.govt.nz.

We will publish your request and our response on our website, www.epa.govt.nz, within 10 working days from today. We make OIA responses available so others can read more about the work we do and the questions we are asked. Any information that might identify you will be removed to protect your privacy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dr Chris Hill
General Manager,
Hazardous Substances and New Organisms