

ENQ-38016-R8R0S1

Date: 10/3/2020

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Via: [REDACTED]@requests.fyi.org.nz

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Official Information Act Request

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your request to Dr Megan Woods, Minister of Energy and Resources, which was transferred on 28 January 2020 to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

You have asked:

- *What testing is done for radioactivity of the oil industry drill cuttings in New Zealand?*
- *What is the process for disposing of the oil industry drill cuttings on land and at sea?*

Your request has been treated as a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

What testing is done for radioactivity of the oil industry drill cuttings in New Zealand?

An application for a marine consent must include an assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed activity, such as the possibility of encountering Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material in the reservoirs or subsoil to be drilled. If the radioactivity of drill cuttings is a concern, the EPA may also require information about any environmental effects associated with radioactivity.

To date, the EPA has not required testing of oil industry drill cuttings for radioactivity, as concerns about radioactivity have not arisen.

What is the process for disposing of the oil industry drill cuttings on land and at sea?

As the EPA does not hold information on the process for disposing of drill cuttings on land, I am refusing your request for this information under section 18(e) of the OIA (the document alleged to contain the information does not exist). Disposing of drill cuttings on land is the responsibility of regional councils, therefore I recommend that you contact your local regional council for more information.

A marine consent under the Exclusive Economic Zone Act and Continental Shelf Act 2012 (EEZ Act) is required for the disposal of exploration drill cuttings at sea. The disposal process would be assessed as part of an application for a marine consent and, if consent is granted, conditions can be imposed in order to manage any anticipated effects.

You can find more detailed information about disposal at sea, and when a marine consent is required for various types of activities, on the EPA's website at <https://www.epa.govt.nz/industry-areas/eez-marine-activities/undertake-an-activity-in-the-eez/oil-and-gas-operations/> (click on the '+' next to 'Marine consents for exploration and production activities' and then on 'Drilling').

Further information on marine consents can be found at <https://www.epa.govt.nz/industry-areas/eez-marine-activities/about-the-exclusive-economic-zone-and-continental-shelf/process-for-marine-consents/>

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Michelle Ward
General Manager, Climate, Land and Oceans
Environmental Protection Authority