

TRANSMISSION LINE BUFFER CORRIDOR



WHAT ARE TRANSMISSION LINE BUFFER CORRIDORS?

Transmission line buffer corridors (sometimes known as ‘buffer zones’ or ‘transmission yards’) are the area below, and around, transmission lines in which activities and land uses that are incompatible with the safe and efficient operation of the national electricity transmission network are avoided.

WHY ARE TRANSMISSION LINE BUFFER CORRIDORS BEING INTRODUCED?

Transmission line buffer corridors are not new and have been in many district plans for a number of years. However, the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008 recognises the need to operate and maintain the National Grid as a matter of national significance and all councils now need to include buffer corridors in their district plans. Buffer corridors are used to manage the risk to people and property, and to ensure that the national electricity transmission network, which feeds power to our homes, businesses and farms, is protected. There have been a number of incidents over recent years where towns and cities have lost power supply for a substantial amount of time due to the activities of others near transmission lines.

WHAT IS RESTRICTED BY THE TRANSMISSION LINE BUFFER CORRIDORS?

The purpose of buffer corridors is to prevent or manage those activities that are incompatible with the national electricity transmission network.

The buffer corridors do not restrict normal farming activity such as cropping, harvesting, grazing, ploughing etc. Nor would they prevent a hay shed being built underneath a line (although we would prefer it didn't occur). Only incompatible activities - eg: (in rural areas) milking sheds, residential dwellings and some major earthworks - primarily around the foundations of the transmission towers would be restricted. Normally, earthworks that are restricted would relate to subdivision.

The buffer corridor rules do not include any controls around vegetation and planting as the effects of these are managed by the Electricity (Hazards From Trees) Regulations under the Electricity Act.

For changes in land use, for example residential or industrial subdivision, the buffer corridors aim to address the issues at the subdivision stage as most issues are best managed through optimising the subdivision layout. Intensive development in advance of subdivisions should also be designed around lines.

Council plans already control many of the types of activities that Transpower is concerned about. For example, subdivision cannot take place without resource consent.

WILL I NEED TO GET A RESOURCE CONSENT IF THE ACTIVITY I WANT TO UNDERTAKE IS WITHIN THE BUFFER CORRIDOR BUT IS COMPATIBLE WITH TRANSMISSION LINES?

Hopefully not. We are working with key stakeholders and councils to ensure that activities that do not typically pose a risk to the network do not unnecessarily require resource consent. These will still need to comply with the NZ Electricity Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances (NZECP34:2001) which is mandatory.

WILL I BE ABLE TO CONTINUE MY DAILY WORKING ACTIVITY?

Your daily working activity would not be affected by buffer corridors including those with orchards, farms etc. Some new structures may be restricted, particularly very high structures, but through careful design most activities are able to be accommodated. However, if you have concerns, please talk to us. We are committed to ensuring that there is minimal impact on landowner activity.

**HOW WIDE ARE THE
TRANSMISSION LINE BUFFER
CORRIDORS?**

We have evaluated all transmission line types throughout the country to determine the appropriate corridor width to ensure that it does not impose unnecessary restrictions on land use.

Typically, Transpower's proposed approach is a 12 metre setback from the centreline of the transmission line and around support structures. In this corridor, we are suggesting all activity that is potentially incompatible with the transmission line, should require resource consent.

Activities potentially affected within this corridor include residences, milking sheds and intensive development in urban fringe and rural areas, substantial extensions to existing buildings and major earthworks - primarily those around the foundations of the transmission towers that could undermine the towers or that materially reduce clearances to live conductors.

For further information, please download our information sheet on Transmission Line Buffer Corridors and our Checklist on compatible activity near transmission lines at www.transpower.co.nz.

WHAT IS NZECP 34:2001?

NZECP34:2001 is a mandatory code of practice which sets minimum safe distances from transmission lines to protect persons, property, vehicles and mobile plant from harm or damage from electrical hazards.

The Code establishes clearance distances to buildings and structures, the ground, and other lines, as well as how close buildings, structures and excavations can occur to poles and towers.

The Code is not a new requirement and has been in place for over 11 years. Although mandatory, the Code can be difficult to interpret and has been difficult to enforce. It also does not address a number of issues including the effects of development underneath transmission lines.

**I ALREADY HAVE A BUILDING
UNDER YOUR TRANSMISSION
LINES. WILL I HAVE TO
REMOVE IT?**

No. Existing lawful activities already in place under the transmission lines can continue. These activities are likely to have existing use rights: for example where buildings such as houses are already in the buffer corridor. If something happens to these buildings (such as being burnt down), you should be able to rebuild to the same scale as before.

**I ALREADY HAVE A BUILDING
UNDER YOUR TRANSMISSION
LINES. WHAT HAPPENS IF I
WANT TO ALTER IT?**

We are interested in alterations that reduce our ability to access the towers, carry out maintenance, and reduce safe electrical clearances. These alterations would increase the level of risk to you or the transmission network. In most cases alterations within the existing footprint of the building (that don't increase height) would be acceptable but landowners should ensure that all alterations comply with NZECP34 to ensure safe clearance distances are achieved. Please check with your local council for specific advice about the district plan provisions.

**DO BUFFER CORRIDORS ALLOW
TRANSPOWER TO INCREASE THE
VOLTAGE OF THE LINES, OR
MAKE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO
INCREASE THEIR CAPACITY?**

No. The buffer corridors do not change Transpower's current rights or obligations. If Transpower needed to make such changes to a transmission line, affected landowners would be consulted.

**DO THE BUFFER CORRIDORS
PROVIDE RIGHTS OF ACCESS BY
TRANSPOWER?**

No, Transpower has obligations under the Electricity Act with respect to notifying landowners and occupiers of any access needed. These obligations are unaffected by the buffer corridor requirements.

About Transpower

Transpower is the state-owned enterprise that owns and operates the National Grid that carries electricity around New Zealand. Further information on transmission line buffer corridors can be found by downloading our 'Checklist' and 'Information Sheet' from www.transpower.co.nz.

