

A guide to land repair involving land drainage issues

This guide will assist property owners who are experiencing problems with land drainage (excess water) on their properties following the earthquakes.

Why is there a drainage problem on my property since the earthquakes?

There are a number of different causes of land drainage problems as a result of the earthquakes. These include:

- new groundwater springs coming up into a property and flowing over the surface of the land
- local settlement or lowering of the land, causing water to form ponds after rainfall
- damage to disused wells.

Whose responsibility is it to fix the problem?

Land drainage issues are a matter for the individual property owner to resolve. We recommend that you check with your insurer in the first instance.

If the land damage has been identified by EQC during their assessment of your land claim, you may have received a settlement to pay for all or part of the repair.

What sort of repair work is likely to be needed to get rid of the excess water?

Owners should contact an engineer or drainage specialist to investigate the cause of the drainage problem and design and install a suitable solution for the property.

Generally, wet areas resulting from new springs or localised ponding will need to have a drainage system installed which discharges to a Council-approved connection to a stormwater outfall or waterway. Pump systems will be required in cases where a gravity system is not available.

Where there are a number of properties that are affected in a localised area it may be more economic to develop a communal system which provides an outfall for multiple properties. In this situation an engineer should be engaged to design and project manage the installation of the system. Easements will generally be required to protect all parties' interests. Owners can request that the main pipeline be transferred to the Christchurch City Council where there are multiple properties connected.

Damage to disused wells is another common issue that is often confused with the appearance of groundwater springs. It is common for the cap on the well to become dislodged, resulting in artesian flows coming to the surface. These are common on unfilled sections and often occur under floor slabs or dwelling extensions. They require specialist well-sinkers to locate and seal the well permanently.



Building consent requirements

Installation of a drainage system to discharge excess water from a property will require a building consent from the Christchurch City Council. Your engineer or contractor should be able to assist with this.

Resource consent requirements

Land drainage works may require resource consent from Environment Canterbury, or the Christchurch City Council, or from both councils. A streamlined resource consent process has been put in place for land repair works.

Christchurch City Council rules

The Christchurch City Council resource consent requirements differ depending on whether the property is located within the Christchurch City area or within Banks Peninsula.

In the Christchurch City area, installation of a drainage system connecting to the public stormwater system is defined as a "permitted utility" under the Christchurch City Plan and does not require resource consent from the Council.

On Banks Peninsula, installation of a drainage system must comply with the earthworks and vegetation clearance rules for the zone in which the property is located, or resource consent will need to be obtained from the Council.

Environment Canterbury rules

Under Environment Canterbury's Regional Plans, discharging land drainage water (which has occurred as a result of the earthquakes) into the Christchurch City Council stormwater network or a waterway can be carried out as a "permitted activity" (resource consent not required), as long as the discharge water is not contaminated, and doesn't come from a site where land contamination has occurred.

If your land drainage water is likely to contain hazardous substances, or be otherwise contaminated, you will need resource consent from Environment Canterbury to discharge the water into the stormwater network.

The installation of a land drainage system will also require earthworks to be carried out, along with dewatering in some instances. Whether or not resource consent is required for earthworks or dewatering will depend on where your property is located.

On the "flat land" areas of Christchurch (ie excluding the Port Hills area), earthworks and dewatering necessary to install your land drainage system are likely to be permitted, provided certain conditions are complied with. In general, you will need to ensure appropriate erosion and sediment control measures are in place to minimise sediment from entering nearby waterways, kerb and channel systems, and drains, and in cases where dewatering is to be carried out, you will need to ensure that any property is not from a site registered on Environment Canterbury's Listed Land Use Register.

Within the Port Hills area, any earthworks associated with the installation of a land drainage system are likely to require resource consent, given the depth of excavation needed.

For more information about resource consents for land repair visit

www.ccc.govt.nz/landrepair or contact the Land Repair Team.

Christchurch City Council Call Centre: 941 8999

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