

New Zealand's Fuel Response Plan 2026

Phase 1: Watchful

What's happening

The fuel market is operating effectively and fuel is available nationwide. However, prices are rising due to global market changes.

This phase is about supporting the market and making sure Kiwis have good information.

What the Government will do

- Monitor fuel stocks and shipments
- Publish twice-weekly stock updates
- Monitor global supply and maintain engagement with international partners
- Coordinate closely with industry players to ensure markets continue to work well
- Understand and prepare to reduce its own demand
- Provide information to the public, including on how to reduce fuel bills

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would
- Regularly check MBIE's website
- Be aware of EECA's information on fuel-saving measures

Phase 2: Precautionary

What's happening

The market continues to operate effectively and fuel is available nationwide, but there are signs of significant supply disruptions.

This phase is about shoring up supply, closer coordination between Government and industry, and managing demand.

What the Government will do

- Continue to monitor fuel stocks and shipments, and publish twice-weekly stock updates
- Work with international partners to keep fuel flowing to New Zealand
- Coordinate closely with key industry players to ensure fuel is effectively distributed
- Review regulations to enable reduced fuel use
- Implement a public sector fuel response plan
- Provide information to the public on how to reduce fuel bills and conserve fuel in the national interest

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would
- Consider combining trips, and/or other modes
- Regularly check MBIE's website
- Follow EECA guidance on additional measures to help save fuel day-to-day

Phase 3: Managed *UNDER CONSULTATION*

What's happening

Supply is tighter and the Government is making sure fuel gets where it is needed most.

This phase uses Government powers, implemented by industry, to protect critical services. Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to life-preserving services, and help direct fuel supply to others according to priority, for example via purchasing limits
- Provide regular public updates, listen to industry and communities, and adjust accordingly
- Regularly assess how things are going, and get back to Phase 2 as soon as possible

What you can do

- Be confident that ambulances, fire services, hospitals, and food supply chains are covered
- Follow any purchase limits
- Check the daily update to understand how long measures will be in place

Phase 4: Protected *UNDER CONSULTATION*

What's happening

There is a bigger or sustained supply disruption, and there are formal rules to ensure fuel is distributed fairly.

This phase is about protecting critical services, and making sure everyone else gets a share. Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services, and more strictly direct how fuel is distributed to other customers
- Maintain daily public updates, listen to industry and communities, and adjust as appropriate
- Regularly assess progress, and get back to Phase 2/3 as soon as possible

What you can do

- Know that essential services like food supply and emergency response are fully protected
- Use service stations as directed
- Check the daily update

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Phase 1: Watchful

What's happening

The fuel market in New Zealand is operating effectively and fuel is available nationwide. However, prices are rising due to external factors such as global market shifts and supply chain pressures.

This phase is about working closely with fuel importers, distributors and users, and making sure Kiwis have good information about what's going on so they can make informed decisions about what works best for them.

What the Government will do

- Monitor fuel stock levels and incoming shipments.
- Publish twice-weekly stock updates, so New Zealanders have accurate, up-to-date information on fuel supply.
- Work with fuel companies, airlines, and other key industry players to ensure markets continue to work well.
- Maintain engagement with international partners.
- Review and, if necessary, remove non-essential regulations to allow reduced fuel use where possible (such as changing fuel specifications).
- Understand and prepare to reduce its own demand, in case it needs to do so at Phase 2.
- Provide information to the public, including on how to reduce fuel bills.

What you can do

- Fill up vehicles as you normally would. There is no need to purchase more than you need – this helps to ensure that everyone, including those providing critical services, can access fuel when they need it.
- Stay informed by regularly checking MBIE's website for the latest information. The Government will provide clear, timely and accurate information to help you make well-informed decisions.
- Be aware of EECA information on additional measures that can help save fuel day-to-day.

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Phase 2: Precautionary

What's happening

The market continues to operate effectively and fuel is available nationwide, but there are signs of significant supply disruptions. These might include delays in deliveries or limitations on how quickly fuel is restocked in certain areas.

This phase is about closer coordination between Government and industry, shoring up supply, and taking steps to manage demand responsibly, both within the public sector and across the wider community. New Zealanders will continue to receive clear, accurate and timely information.

What the Government will do

- Continue to monitor fuel stock levels and incoming shipments.
- Continue to publish public stock updates twice weekly so New Zealanders have accurate, up-to-date information on fuel supply.
- Work with fuel companies, airlines, and other key industry players to ensure effective regional distribution of fuel.
- Work with international partners to keep fuel flowing to New Zealand.
- Review and, if necessary, remove further non-essential regulations to allow reduced fuel use where possible.
- Implement a dedicated public sector fuel response plan to manage its own demand, ensuring that government services continue to operate effectively while using resources responsibly.
- Provide information to the public on how to reduce fuel bills and conserve fuel in the national interest.

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would. There is no need to purchase more than you need – this helps to ensure that everyone, including those providing critical services, can access fuel when they need it.
- Consider combining trips, where it is practical to do so, to make the most of your travel, and consider other modes of transport if they are accessible and available to you.
- Follow EECA guidance on additional measures to help save fuel day-to-day.
- Stay informed by regularly checking MBIE's website for the latest information. The Government will provide clear, timely and accurate information to help you make well-informed decisions.

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Phase 3: Managed

UNDER CONSULTATION

What's happening

Supply is tighter and the Government is making sure fuel gets where it is needed most.

This phase is about using Government powers, developed in close coordination with industry and frontline service providers, to protect critical services. This phase will be implemented by industry.

Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services.
- Help direct fuel supply to customers according to priority (e.g. emergency services, hospitals, and water and power infrastructure) so critical providers can access what they need.
- Introduce purchasing limits to keep supply available for everyone, under the following indicative priority bands:
 - *Band A: life-supporting services* – uncapped supply – e.g. emergency services, courts, corrections, hospitals, lifeline utilities and defence
 - *Band B: economically-important services* – e.g. critical transport services (e.g. road freight for supermarket and grocery supply chains, international air links), food supply and primary production during time-critical periods
 - *Band C: essential services* – e.g. public transport, essential infrastructure maintenance, and rural GPs and district nurses
 - *Band D: other commercial customers* – this comprises all other commercial and business fuel uses
 - *Band E: general retail sales to consumers.*
- Provide regular public updates on stocks, incoming shipments, and what to expect.
- Listen to industry and communities, and adjust the approach as appropriate.
- Regularly assess conditions and try to get back to Phase 2 as soon as possible.

What you can do

- Be confident that ambulances, fire services, hospitals, and food supply chains are fully protected.
- Help by following any purchase limits, only buying what you need, and leaving supply available for others.
- Check the regular updates to understand how long measures will be in place.

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Phase 4: Protected

UNDER CONSULTATION

What's happening

There is a bigger or more sustained supply disruption and there are formal rules in place to ensure fuel is distributed fairly.

This phase is about protecting critical services, and making sure everyone else gets a share.

Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services.
- More strictly direct how fuel is distributed across all other customers.
- Set rules about when and how customers purchase fuel.
- Maintain regular public updates and give clear notice before any changes to the rules.
- Listen to industry and communities, and adjust the approach as appropriate – we would rather adjust quickly than stick to an approach that isn't working.
- Regularly assess how things are going, and try to get back to Phase 2 or 3 as soon as possible.

What you can do

- Know that essential services like food supply and emergency response are protected
- Use service stations as directed
- Check the regular updates for the current stock position and to understand how long these measures will be in place

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The process to move between phases of the plan

What will prompt a move between the phases?

The Fuel Security Ministerial Oversight Group will be responsible for deciding whether a shift between phases is appropriate, with the group required to consider a move when there is a change in any of the six assessment criteria.

These criteria will be used to assess a movement up or down a response phase. If there is a change in any of these criteria, the Ministers will meet to make their assessment and a decision on whether a move is appropriate. The assessment criteria are:

1. export restrictions – if any of New Zealand’s source refineries introduce or relax export restrictions
2. changes to New Zealand’s fuel stock levels of plus or minus three days since the most recent published update
3. a fuel company informs the government that they are unlikely or unable to fill future orders
4. a breach, or a notification of an imminent breach, of the minimum storage obligations
5. any significant policy changes in Australia or from the International Energy Agency
6. a significant disruption to regional distribution.

How will you know if decisions to move between phases will be made?

A group of senior Ministers will decide whether New Zealand needs to move between phases. Ministers may decide that New Zealand needs to be at different phases in the plan for different fuels: for example, we could move to Phase 2 for diesel but stay at Phase 1 for petrol.

Ministers will consider a broad range of information. There is no single change that will automatically move us up or down a phase. Ministers will assess the full picture each time and publicly explain any decision to change phases.

Ministers will exercise care and judgement in making decisions – we will only move up a phase when there is a clear and genuine need, and we will move back down as soon as conditions allow.

At the moment, it doesn’t look likely that we’ll need phases 3 or 4, but it’s best to be prepared in - having a plan in place gives Ministers the ability to make evidence-based decisions rather than reacting under pressure. New Zealanders also need confidence that we are ready to act in a measured way if circumstances change..

What could a decision to move phases be based on?

Ministers will receive advice on the following, which will inform decision-making:

- Whether fuel is getting to New Zealand as expected – e.g. whether countries that supply our fuel have restricted exports, or whether shipments are being delayed
- What fuel companies and airlines are telling us – e.g. whether they are having difficulty sourcing supply or whether they are seeing pressures at specific airports or terminals
- How our fuel stocks are tracking – whether levels are stable, falling, or increasing
- What’s happening internationally – whether our key partners, like Australia, are taking action and how these actions affect New Zealand
- Whether specific communities are being affected – e.g. whether fuel stations in a specific region are consistently struggling to get supply.