

Dealing with pests and rubbish in emergencies

Managing pests

Emergencies, such as natural disasters or other disruptions, make pests a bigger problem. They can spread disease, damage property and contaminate food. Keep things clean, and make sure rubbish and sewage are disposed of properly.

- Use insect repellent to keep away flies, mosquitoes, ticks, and sandflies.
- Use pest-control products (available from hardware or farm supply shops). Follow all safety instructions to avoid harming people, animals, or the environment.
- Call professionals for large pest problems.
- Use rat and mouse baits safely. Keep all poisons away from children and pets.
- Get medical help if you are bitten or feel unwell after contact with pests.
- Stop mosquito breeding by emptying water from containers outside.
- Make sure all food is covered in pest proof containers.

Mosquitoes

- Empty water from containers like pots and buckets.
- Cover or screen water tanks.
- Drain or fill water-logged areas.
- Repair leaking septic tanks.
- Treat still water with larvicide or light oil to kill larvae.
- Spray outside surfaces and vegetation where adult mosquitos rest with a residual synthetic pyrethroid insecticide.¹

Flies

Flies breed quickly – about one week per cycle.

- Keep rubbish and manure covered or remove them.
- Install screens on doors and windows.
- Use fly sprays (e.g., Raid®, Mortein®) for quick control.
- Apply a residual synthetic pyrethroid insecticide¹ to walls, ceilings, window frames and nearby vegetation.

Fleas, Lice, Ticks

- Keep grass short, clear weeds.
- Vacuum carpets and furniture and wash bedding often.
- Treat pets regularly.
- Use a residual synthetic pyrethroid insecticide¹ on infested areas, clothes, bedding, beds and furnishings.
- Wash or heat-treat clothing and bedding (at least 60°C or a hot dryer for 30 minutes).

Bed Bugs

- Check beds and bedding often.
- Use a residual synthetic pyrethroid insecticide¹ for cracks, crevices, bed frames and mattresses (e.g. permethrin, deltamethrin, cypermethrin).
- Call pest control experts if needed.

Rodents (Rats and Mice)

- Store food securely and remove rubbish.
- Seal all holes and entry points.
- Use traps and baits (e.g. brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, flocoumafen).
- Remove food and water sources.
- Use pest control experts for large infestations.

¹ examples of residual synthetic pyrethroid insecticide are alpha-cypermethrin, cypermethrin deltamethrin, permethrin or bifenthrin

Managing rubbish

Tell your insurance company about any damaged items before getting rid of it. If you are not insured, make a list of any items being dumped. Take photos if necessary to record what you are getting rid of.

Rubbish collection may be disrupted, and piles of waste attract pests.

- Follow instructions from Civil Defence or your local council on getting rid of rubbish.
- Separate food scraps from non-perishables and compost if possible or keep in a vermin proof bin. Flatten bulky items.
- Hazardous substances like chemicals should be handled with extreme care. Wear protective gear, avoid floodwaters, and report unknown or dangerous waste (e.g. asbestos) to your local council.
- Dispose of dead animals promptly to prevent disease and water contamination. Seek advice from your local council on disposal options.

If collection is not available

- **Remove:** take it to a central collection point if one exists.
- **Burn:** Dry rubbish in drums or in a simple incinerator (if permitted by council - concrete blocks, bricks and wire mesh).
- **Store:** rubbish in one place that is shaded and animal proof. Use covered containers or tightly tied plastic bags until collection resumes.

For more information

- Contact your local council
- Visit Health New Zealand website: [Protecting your health during and after a natural disaster](#)
- For workplace waste visit WorkSafe: www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/hazardous-substances/managing/hazardous-waste/