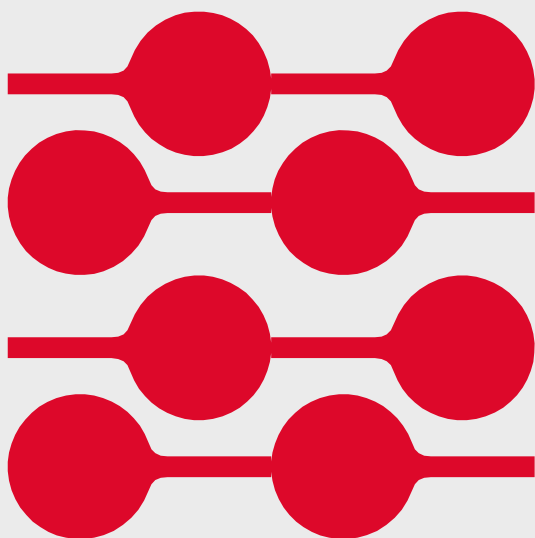


STORM AFFECTED LAND PROGRAMME



Information for
neighbours

Home removals and land use



September 2026 – Version 2.0



About this guide

This guide is for people who live next to or share a boundary with a property that has been bought by the council following the 2023 storms.

We recognise that living next to a property affected by the storms and navigating the changes that follow can be stressful and uncertain. You may also have been storm-affected yourself and may still be dealing with the impacts of that on your financial or mental wellbeing.

Auckland Council is committed to managing this process as considerately as possible, and to keeping you informed as plans develop and decisions are made about the future of the council-owned property.

This guide covers why council has purchased the property, what to expect while the house is removed and the site is cleared, and how decisions about the land's future use will be made.

Please note this guide is intended as general information only and does not constitute legal advice. For advice specific to your situation, please consult a qualified professional.

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What is a Category 3 property?

The council assessed storm-damaged properties using a national categorisation system that was introduced by the Government in 2023, following the Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle.

Property owners were able to register to have their individual home assessed and for a category to be assigned to it. Category 3 means the dwelling on the property has been assessed as being too high risk for people to continue living there safely.

Owners of Category 3 properties became eligible for a voluntary buyout, funded through a combination of central government and council funding. Once a buyout is agreed and completed, ownership of the property transfers fully to Auckland Council.

Is categorisation still available?

Registrations for property risk assessments and categorisation closed in October 2024 and no more properties will be added to the programme.

What will council do with the property now?

Council will make plans for the interim and long-term use of the land that's been acquired, but this will take some time because of the large number of properties that have been bought out across Auckland and the need to have site specific assessments to identify options for future use.

The priority is to ensure the property is safe and any hazards are managed.

Possible future uses for the property will depend on whether the property is retained by council or sold, and these decisions will be guided by the council's [Future Land Use policy](#).

If the property is kept by council, it could be used for flood resilience and stream management, it could be added to neighbouring parkland, or it could be managed as high-hazard land.

If council decides to sell the property it could be redeveloped safely for housing or it could be sold as green space to neighbours. More information about the future use of land can be found in this guide.

Will you remove the Category 3 house?

Most of the houses that have been bought will be removed via relocation, deconstruction or demolition.

In a small number of cases, the house may be kept and construction work will be done to make it safe so someone can live in it again. An example of this could be converting a downstairs living area into a garage or storage area.

The timeline for each house removal will depend on things like the location, complexity and type of property ownership. Around 1200 Category 3 storm-affected houses across Auckland will be bought, so it will take several years to remove all the houses and make decisions on how the land will be used.

How this affects you as a neighbour

Having a council-owned property next door can understandably raise questions for you.

Auckland Council's ownership of the property next door does not affect your property rights and your title interests remain your own. Your right to sell your property is not affected.

Site maintenance and security

The council maintains council-owned properties to a reasonable standard, with a focus on areas visible from roads and footpaths such as berms and front yards. Sites with houses still on them are monitored by regular security patrols.

If you have an issue with a Category 3 home that has been purchased by the council, please raise a maintenance request in the '[Auckland Council Report a Problem tool](#)'. If you need assistance in raising a request, please refer to this [Report a problem guide](#). Note that until council takes ownership of a property, we are unable to do any work on it.

Damage from break-ins and vandalism is an ongoing issue, and some houses have to be boarded up to prevent this. If you see any suspicious behaviour please report it directly to the police.

Insurance

We know insurance is a common concern for neighbours of Category 3 properties. Auckland Council has been working closely with the insurance industry since the 2023 weather events and insurers are aware that risk categories apply only to the specific dwelling that voluntarily registered and received a category, and not to neighbouring properties.

To date, we have not encountered situations where insurance has been completely unavailable to neighbours of Category 3 properties. However, individual insurers may make their own decisions about cover and premiums based on their risk models for an area, so we cannot guarantee this on your behalf. If your insurer does change your cover or increase your premiums, it is worth shopping around as another insurance company may offer better terms for your situation. An insurance broker can help you compare options.

Council's responsibility as a landowner

Where Auckland Council owns a share in, or all of the property next door, it takes on the responsibilities of a property owner. In practical terms this means the council is responsible for:

- Maintaining the property to a reasonable standard
- Securing the site if the house is unoccupied
- Complying with relevant health, safety, and building legislation
- Making decisions about the future use of the land
- Consulting with shared owners on cross-lease or unit title properties and obtaining their consent where it's needed, for example before removing the dwelling

Natural hazards on Council land

We will also consider any genuine concerns that you have about a natural hazard on Council land affecting your property – for example, subsidence or rockfall.

Council doesn't have a general duty to prevent natural hazards on its land, or to protect land from natural hazards. Property owners remain responsible for protecting and managing their own land, and in the first instance you may wish to seek independent professional advice and / or contact your insurer to discuss options.

If you are worried about a hazard on neighbouring council land, we will review the situation and consider if there are any low-level measures that are appropriate. However, we will not be undertaking extensive or costly work to protect private property.

We will also reasonably facilitate any mitigation or remediation works that you wish to undertake (eg by permitting access across our land or considering an application for works on Council land), but we are unlikely to contribute financially to private works.

Other concerns

Some concerns that neighbours raise with us and are better handled by other parts of Auckland Council. For example, the storm affected land team is not the right contact for:

- Issues within your own private ownership area
- General stormwater or drainage concerns
- Building compliance matters
- Legal or specialist advice
- Other matters handled through Auckland Council's business-as-usual services

For any of these, Auckland Council's main contact channels (aucklandcouncil.govt.nz / tel: 09 301 0101) are the best starting point.

What will happen to the house next door?

Most of the Category 3 houses that have been bought will be removed. Auckland Council works with a panel of companies with expertise in house relocations, deconstruction and demolition, and work is allocated to these companies based on the individual site requirements.

Before removal begins

After the council takes ownership of the property, a number of technical checks must be completed before removal work can start. These may include geotechnical assessments of the land, asbestos testing, selecting the safest removal method, confirming access requirements, setting up contractors to do the work, and arranging any required resource or building consents or traffic management plans.

While this is happening, Auckland Council will maintain the property on a monthly schedule, focusing on areas visible from the road and footpath.

Note: The council cannot begin removal works or undertake maintenance until the property has been purchased and it is owned by council. Until that point, the previous owner remains responsible for the property.

How will the house be removed?

Before any work starts, the house is assessed and a removal plan (called a Resource Recovery Schedule) is developed. This is a plan which identifies how the house will be removed, itemises all material in the house, and sets out where that material will end up.

Houses are removed in one of three ways:

1. **House relocation** is the preferred option. About one third of homes can be relocated and reused as a home in another location. The remainder cannot be relocated due to the extent of storm damage, how the house has been built or access restrictions at the property.
2. **House deconstruction** is used where relocation is not possible. The house is carefully taken apart by hand and then using machinery, with materials salvaged and reused to minimise waste going to landfill.
3. **House demolition** is only used when it is unsafe to relocate or deconstruct the house, for example where it sits on unstable ground or has been severely damaged. This is the least preferred option.

Utility disconnection

One of the first steps in the house removal process is the disconnection of electricity and gas. Disconnection applications are made to the utility provider and the disconnection is completed by Vector. Water disconnections are usually completed once the house has been removed as water is used during the deconstruction process to keep dust levels to a minimum.

Asbestos survey

As part of the assessment process, an asbestos survey is completed to identify whether there is any asbestos-containing material (ACM) in the house. If asbestos is found, a team of licensed asbestos removalists will remove it. An asbestos assessor will then carry out a final review and issue a certificate confirming all ACM has been removed.

Asbestos removal is subject to strict quality controls. If asbestos is identified at the property next door, you will be notified directly. The risk to neighbours and surrounding areas during licensed asbestos removal is minimal.

Are you able to provide the exact date for when my neighbouring Category 3 property is due to be removed?

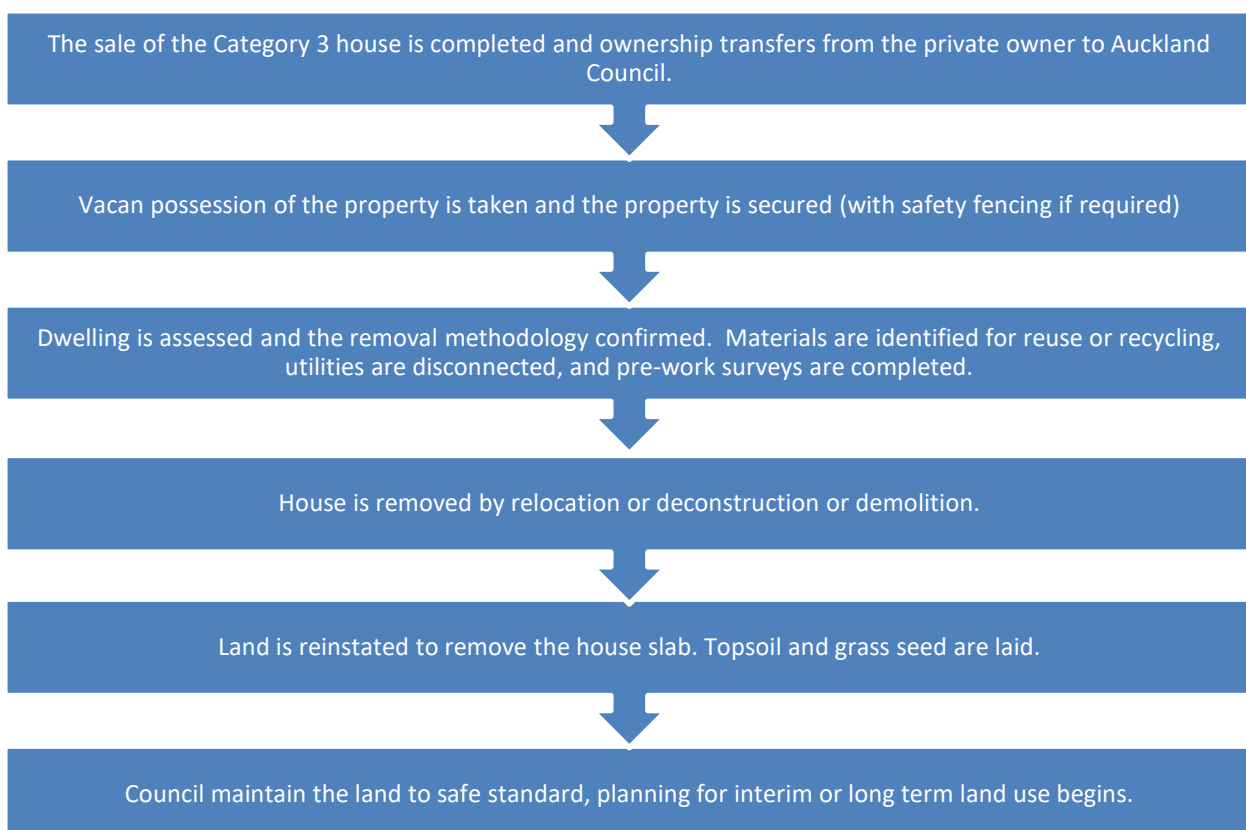
While our home removal team is moving as quickly as possible, we recognise it can be frustrating waiting to hear when nearby properties will be removed. The timeline for each house removal is dependent on several factors such as the property location, complexity, and type of property ownership.

For example,

- a property with a steep site or other access issues
- heritage considerations (which often require a resource consent)
- cross-lease or unit title shared ownership (where we need to work closely with remaining owners).

We will share indicative timeframes for removal when we can.

The stages of house removal



What each method involves

House relocation

A relocation crew will prepare the building for removal, which typically involves cutting and bracing the building into sections and separating it from its foundations.

The house is then lifted onto a relocation trailer. Where site access is restricted such as down a hill or along a narrow right-of-way, a crane may be used to lift sections out. Trees along the access route may need to be trimmed, and structures such as fences or sheds may need to be temporarily removed.

Preparation work takes place during the day. The actual movement of the house is considered an over-dimension vehicle movement and is governed by rules set by NZTA. Typically moves can't happen until after 10pm. This is because slow-moving trucks have less impact on traffic at night, and it is safer for pedestrians and other road users. You'll be notified in advance of the night your neighbour's house is scheduled to be moved.

After the house has been removed, a work crew will clear any remaining structures and slabs, and spread topsoil and grass seed across the site.

The typical timeframe from site preparation through to land remediation is approximately three weeks.

House deconstruction

A deconstruction crew will follow the removal plan and remove materials by hand to salvage and reuse as much material as possible.

Once all recoverable material has been removed by hand, machinery will arrive and complete the mechanical deconstruction. This typically involves a 12-tonne digger. After the concrete slab has been removed, the final crew will spread topsoil and grass seed across the site.



Mechanical deconstruction in action

The typical timeframe from site preparation through to land remediation is approximately two to three weeks.

You may notice different crews arriving at different stages and there may be short gaps between them - this is normal and expected. If a crew packs up and leaves and the site doesn't look finished, please don't be concerned. A further crew will be scheduled to complete the ground remediation. The job is not complete until topsoil and grass seed have been spread.



Different stages of house removal

House demolition

In rare cases where a house is too severely damaged to be salvaged, or where site conditions make deconstruction unsafe for workers, the house will be demolished. Demolition crews will work within the Auckland Unitary Plan rules that manage construction noise, vibration, traffic management, and construction hours.

The demolition can usually be completed in a few days, from when the crew arrives on site.

How sites are left

Sites that have had the houses removed won't necessarily look like other parks in your neighbourhood. The priority is to move the structures that are no longer considered safe to live in. Typically concrete driveways are left in place as they may be useful for whatever future land use is decided. You may also see some structures left in place, this is usually because they are providing some sort of retaining function.

All sites will be grassed and put onto a monthly maintenance schedule.



Concrete wall and slab left in place as acting as retaining (grass is still to establish)



Driveways are usually left in place and sites have a lower level of maintenance than what you may be used to.

Access and safety during works

Contact details	- The main contractor for each property will have a dedicated site manager and their contact details will be displayed on site signage. They are your day-to-day contact in case of any issues during the works, or if you have questions about what is happening at the property. - A deconstruction liaison will also be assigned from the council team. Their role is to work with the council project manager to ensure the contractors are delivering the works in an agreed way and are managing any issues. They will be your point of escalation if you need it.
Health and safety	Deconstruction areas are restricted work zones. Please follow all signage and the directions of the site manager to keep yourself and others safe.
Shared utilities	In the unlikely event that any temporary interruptions to services are needed (e.g. power, water) you'll receive at least 48 hours' notice of plans (except where an urgent safety issue arises).
Construction traffic and parking	- Contractors may need temporary access across shared areas and your site manager will discuss this with you ahead of time. Access will be maintained to all surrounding residents during the works. If any access restrictions need to be put in place they will be clearly communicated with you. - The exact number of vehicle movements will depend on how the house is being removed or how much material is being removed from the site. - In some cases, a Traffic Management Plan will be required, and in these cases, it will be provided to neighbours. - If the dwelling is to be relocated, the contractor will be required to obtain any necessary road access permits from the relevant road controlling authorities. - In some cases, contractors may request neighbours vehicles to be parked away from the house relocation area during removal to provide clear access and prevent accidental damage.
Shared driveways and common areas	- The contractor will talk to you about any practical matters relating to access across shared driveways or impact on shared boundaries, such as fences. They will work with you directly and this may include seeking your written consent for some activities. - A survey of shared driveways and common areas will be completed before and after the house removal work to inspect for any damage. These surveys are referred to as 'dilapidation surveys' and often are photos and video walk-about of the site to show the physical condition pre and post removal. - Any damage to common property will be repaired to the same or equal condition prior to damage at Auckland Council's cost.
Noise and dust	- Demolition/deconstruction noise and vibration will be managed to the standards required by the Auckland Unitary Plan. - Dust suppression (e.g., water) will be used where needed.
Hours of work	- Monday to Friday: 7:30am to 6:00pm - Saturday: 7:30am to 5:00pm

	• Sunday and Public Holidays: Work only by exception You can speak with the site manager if you have any concerns about hours or work or construction noise.
Trees	• We try and avoid removing any trees and it will only be done in circumstances where contractors need to create access to remove a house or get machinery in. • Fallen trees will only be removed if they present a health and safety risk. • Where we are operating in Significant Ecological Areas or in Kauri dieback areas, best practice controls will be implemented.

Future and interim land use of properties

Once a house has been removed, the land becomes council-owned vacant land. Deciding what to do with more than 1,200 sites is a significant undertaking and making the right decisions will take several years.

Our priorities are making sites safe, and managing the long-term financial impact on Aucklanders. While we will carefully consider all possible uses for each site, it may not always be possible to use the land in the way neighbours or the wider community would prefer.

Responsibility for decisions about buying and selling land sits with Auckland Council's Governing Body. Local boards communicate the views and preferences of their communities, and take responsibility for any sites made available for local parks or community activities, including providing the budget to maintain them.

While decisions are being made

Reaching a decision on the future use of each site requires thorough analysis, including geotechnical or other hazard assessments to understand whether land can be made safe, and working across council teams to explore options such as stream management or other flood resilience work. This takes time, and we appreciate your patience while this work happens.

In the meantime, all council-owned vacant land is maintained to ensure a tidy appearance, with a focus on areas visible from roads and footpaths.

Many sites are active worksites or have land stability hazards that make them unsafe. We strongly discourage anyone from entering these sites. Where it is safe to do so, some sites may be available for public access while long-term decisions are being worked through.

Having a say

We want communities to be part of the process of determining the future use of land where possible, and we are exploring partnership opportunities with mana whenua. If you have ideas or suggestions for how a site could be used, you can register these through our expressions of interest register which is available at <https://ourauckland.nz/futureuse>. This information will be considered as part of the future land use process.

Interim use

While long-term decisions are being made, some sites may be available for short or medium-term, non-residential activities. These interim uses help keep land active and cared for.

Community groups, trusts, and incorporated societies are welcome to apply for low-risk activities such as native planting, grazing, small community events, temporary art or play spaces, and weed control. Commercial uses may also be considered where they reduce council costs or generate revenue.

Any interim use must be temporary, low-risk, and must not compromise future decisions about the land.

To apply, complete the interim land use request online at <https://ourauckland.nz/futureuse>. A member of the Storm Affected Land team will then work with you to assess the proposed activity and the site, and guide you through the process. Depending on your proposal, you may need to provide a health and safety plan and agree to any associated costs.

Applications are assessed with input from relevant council teams and local boards. Each application is considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account safety, planning rules, community benefit, and whether the activity could affect future land use decisions.

Future sale of sites

The buyout programme has cost more than \$1 billion, and Aucklanders have told us it is important to minimise the impact of this on rates. Selling some land for redevelopment is one way we will look to do that.

Where site hazards can be mitigated, we will explore opportunities to sell land for redevelopment, or to adjacent landowners. Although the existing houses were unsafe to live in, there may be options to build new housing on some sites in a way that manages risk differently. This may include combining neighbouring sections into larger clusters.

Where land is sold, appropriate conditions will be attached to manage any remaining risk, for example, requiring ground floor units to be used as storage rather than living space, or special rules placed on development of sites (e.g. land covenants, encumbrances) or other title, or agreement arrangements.

Further information

You can find out more about the storm affected land programme by visiting the future use of storm affected land page at <https://ouraukland.nz/futureuseon>. On this page you'll find information about the wider programme, decision-making on land use, and links to relevant policies. There is also a link to the Expression of Interest register for Category 3 land (to suggest a future use or register your interest in purchasing land), and to the Request for interim land use form (for requesting a temporary use of land).

If your property is in a flood-affected area, there is advice and resources available on how to prepare your home for flooding, and you can find more information on the council website. The flood viewer also provides information about flood risk and advice on how to reduce the impacts of flooding.

If you have any questions about the home removals or future land use programme, you can email the team at **stormaffectedland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz**.