

8 September 2023

s9(2)(a)



Thank you for your request to Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, dated 28 July 2023. You requested the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- 1. How many fire-related incidents have there been associated with Kāinga Ora homes each year over the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*
- 2. How many of these incidents have been caused by a) tenants or b) other parties?*
- 3. How many houses belonging to Kāinga Ora have been demolished due to fire damage each year over the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*
- 4. What has been the cost of demolitions for fire damage each year for the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*
- 5. The top ten most costly demolitions for fire damage over the past five years, with information on location and cause of fire if known.*
- 6. How many properties in development for Kāinga Ora have been impacted by fire damage each year over the past five years? (I.e. damaged by fire during the construction process.) Please also break this down by region.*

I note that you have requested the information in a format that can be both copied and searched.

On 23 August 2023 we extended the deadline for a decision on your request to 8 September 2023 because the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request were such that a proper response could not reasonably be made within the original time limit.

Sadly, a number of Kāinga Ora homes are damaged by fire every year. Sometimes the damage is so significant that it is not financially viable to repair the home, and it needs to be demolished. You will see from the examples provided that the highest cost demolitions due to fire also had significant asbestos contamination. Older homes with building materials containing asbestos are safe if the integrity of the material is not significantly compromised, but hazardous in the event of a fire, and costly to safely extract, dispose, and remediate. Most of the highest cost demolitions were 'twin units', so the total cost is for the demolition of both units, which was necessary in each case due to the extent of damage and contamination.

Kāinga Ora has over 70,000 properties, and these losses represent just 0.07 percent of our homes per year. Nevertheless, any fire is devastating, for us and certainly for our customer in the home. Regardless of the cause of a fire, whānau wellbeing is one of our key focus areas and we are committed to do all we can to keep people safe, help them prevent fires occurring in their homes and

reduce harm caused if fires do occur. Education is key, and our Housing Support Managers regularly provide fire safety information to our customers, along the lines of the advice and tips in the Fire Safety page on our website (see <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/tenants-and-communities/our-tenants-health-and-safety/fire-safety/> ). We actively support customers and whānau who experience fires, working quickly to find them alternative housing.

We also work closely with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ), and have a joint FENZ and Kāinga Ora Memorandum of Understanding to work together on fire safety in our homes. This includes collaborating on educational pieces for our customers, such as the winter fire safety content in our current Close to Home customer newsletter (<https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Close-to-home/Issue-65-with-translations/C2H-Issue-65-Winter-2023-English.pdf>).

Smoke alarms are provided in all our homes for the safety of our customers - in living areas, the hallway, attached garages and one in each bedroom. They are safe and reliable when looked after, and we ask our customers to test them regularly, and to immediately let us know if they think a smoke alarm may be faulty. We also test smoke alarms during our yearly home inspections.

Larger housing developments, such as multi-level apartment complexes, are also required to meet fire safety requirements in accordance with the Building Act 2004, Building Code, and other legislative requirements including the Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) Act and Regulations (2018). For these developments, Kāinga Ora commissions individual fire engineering design at the building design stage, and when consented works are undertaken on an existing multi-level property.

We make sure the end design includes the most appropriate mix of active fire safety systems (which can include systems that have to activate such as fire alarms, emergency lights, exit signs and sprinklers), passive fire systems (fire separations, fire doors, fire rated structural elements), means of escape features (exit routes, exit doors, stairwells), and provisions for firefighting (hydrants, signage, access points). Importantly, the Building Code does not prescribe any one fire safety system for large complexes. For example, there is no legislative requirement for sprinkler systems. Whether Kāinga Ora owned or managed multi-level buildings have sprinklers is dependent on the individual fire engineering design for each property. Your questions and our responses are set out below.

*1. How many fire-related incidents have there been associated with Kāinga Ora homes each year over the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*

The requested information is provided in full in Attachment 1.

*2. How many of these incidents have been caused by a) tenants or b) other parties?*

Information on the cause of fires at Kāinga Ora properties is provided in Attachment 2. Specific data relating to whether fires have been caused by tenants or other parties, where it exists, is held on individual tenancy files, and is not collected centrally. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

*3. How many houses belonging to Kāinga Ora have been demolished due to fire damage each year over the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*

*4. What has been the cost of demolitions for fire damage each year for the past five years? Please also break this down by region.*

The requested information is provided in full in Attachment 3.

5. *The top ten most costly demolitions for fire damage over the past five years, with information on location and cause of fire if known.*

The requested information is released to you in full in Attachment 4.

6. *How many properties in development for Kāinga Ora have been impacted by fire damage each year over the past five years? (I.e. damaged by fire during the construction process.) Please also break this down by region.*

Where homes are being built under contract to Kāinga Ora or are managed through our Housing Delivery System, we have responsibilities under health and safety legislation as a PCBU (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking). Any fires on these sites are required to be reported in our Health and Safety reporting system. I can confirm, however, that there are no reports in our system of fire damaging properties in development for Kāinga Ora in the past five years.

Kāinga Ora also acquires new properties that have been built through private developments. Where this occurs we acquire the property once completed and do not own it through the construction period. We do not specifically track fires on sites we are acquiring in this way, but to our knowledge no significant fires have occurred on these construction sites over the past five years, other than the recent fire at the Huntington Park development.

I trust you find this information useful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of my decision on your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that Kāinga Ora proactively releases its responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request may be published at <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/publications/official-information-requests/>, with your personal information removed.

Nāku noa, nā



Nick Maling  
**General Manager – National Services**

**Attachment 1: Number of fire related incidents associated with Kāinga Ora Homes 2018/19 – 2022/23**

Region	Year					Total by region
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
Bay of Plenty	9	11	20	19	14	73
Canterbury	19	43	31	32	31	156
Central and East Auckland	21	32	37	40	36	166
Counties Manukau	88	98	94	92	93	465
East North Island	24	40	35	22	34	155
Greater Wellington	34	40	38	42	32	186
Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast	7	9	8	3	6	33
North and West Auckland	19	29	28	36	35	147
Northland	13	19	18	15	16	81
Otago and Southland	18	19	18	13	6	74
Taranaki, Whanganui and Manawatū	21	23	22	27	27	120
Waikato	32	23	30	38	21	144
<b>Total per year</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>1,800</b>

**Attachment 2: Cause of fires in Kāinga Ora properties 2018/19 – 2022/23**

<b>Cause of fire</b>	<b>Total</b>
Appliance	90
Arson/suspicious	183
Cigarette/candle	108
Electrical	139
Children with matches/lighters	86
Other	214
Rubbish	14
Unattended cooking	841
Unknown	126

**Attachment 3: Cost and total number of houses demolished for fire damage by region 2018/19 – 2022/23**

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		Total Demolition Count	Total Demolition Spend
Region	Demo Count	Total Spend	Demo Count	Total Spend	Demo Count	Total Spend	Demo Count	Total Spend	Demo Count	Total Spend		
Bay of Plenty	5	\$158,585	1	\$223	4	\$223,081	7	\$144,376	1	\$13,146	18	\$539,411
Canterbury	4	\$93,791	3	\$126,956	6	\$180,270	6	\$102,185	6	\$178,014	25	\$681,216
Central and East Auckland	5	\$82,478	5	\$94,982	-	-	2	\$56,696	4	\$58,311	16	\$292,467
Counties Manukau	2	\$52,125	4	\$91,773	7	\$146,501	5	\$204,198	11	\$475,856	29	\$970,453
East North Island	4	\$124,277	10	\$382,947	9	\$299,303	7	\$402,304	5	\$276,656	35	\$1,485,487
Greater Wellington	5	\$108,150	7	\$307,112	2	\$73,726	-	-	3	\$221,797	17	\$710,785
Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast	1	\$40,227	1	\$25,283	1	\$41,126	-	-	1	\$38,264	4	\$144,900
North and West Auckland	3	\$52,680	4	\$141,293	2	\$110,516	3	\$16,215	2	\$26,221	14	\$346,925
Northland	2	\$111,488	1	\$54,105	-	-	3	\$75,322	2	\$146,253	8	\$387,168
Otago and Southland	-	-	1	\$23,347	3	\$101,022	-	-	-	-	4	\$124,369
Taranaki, Whanganui and Manawatū	3	\$84,273	5	\$113,615	4	\$225,189	9	\$649,101	4	\$147,391	25	\$1,219,569
Waikato	2	\$47,737	7	\$245,076	1	\$11,486	2	\$20,528	6	\$106,160	18	\$430,987
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>\$955,811</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>\$1,606,712</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>\$1,412,220</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>\$1,670,925</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>\$1,688,069</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>\$7,333,737</b>

**Attachment 4: Ten most costly demolitions for fire damage 2018/19 – 2022/23**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Demolition Cost</b>	<b>House Description</b>	<b>Cause (Determined by FENZ)</b>	<b>Context</b>
Highbury, Palmerston North	Apr 22	\$229,188	House Single Storey	Undetermined - Origin Kitchen	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Significant asbestos spread and contaminated demolition including soil. Large volume of contaminated soil excavated and safely disposed of, and new fill added.
Taihape	Apr 21	\$154,339	House Single Storey	Battery Charger - Origin Lounge	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Contaminated demolition. Extensive soil scrape and new fill.
Otangarei, Whangārei	Jun 23	\$146,078	Twin Unit Two Storey	Undetermined	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Two connected multi story units affected. Extensive soil scrape and new fill.
Elgin, Gisborne	Feb 22	\$135,632	Twin Unit Two Storey	Undetermined - Origin Kitchen	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Asbestos removal prior to demo. Two connected units affected.
Onekawa, Napier	May 23	\$105,633	Twin Unit Single Storey	Undetermined - Origin Garage	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Duplex - One unit affected but both required demolition due to asbestos contamination. Extensive soil scrape and new fill.
Marfell, New Plymouth	Jul 21	\$100,817	Twin Unit Two Storey	Electrical Failure - Origin Garage	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Duplex - One unit affected but both required demolition due to asbestos contamination. Extensive soil scrape and new fill.
Feilding	Mar 22	\$100,811	Twin Unit Single Storey	Electrical Failure - Origin Bedroom	Asbestos contaminated fire damage. Contaminated demolition. Extensive initial soil scrape, followed by additional soil scrape and new fill.
Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt	Jan 23	\$98,207	House Single Storey	Unattended Cooking - Origin Kitchen	Asbestos removal prior to demolition. Demolition and site clearance.
Feilding	Feb 22	\$93,417	House Single Storey	Undetermined	Asbestos removal plus partial contaminated demolition and clearance.

New Windsor, Auckland	Apr 21	\$93,266	Flats	Undetermined	Fire in middle unit of 3 units. Entire block compromised beyond economical repair. All 3 units demolished and site cleared.
--------------------------	--------	----------	-------	--------------	---