

## Companies urged to fight 'unprecedented' quarry dust monitoring rules

ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

The quarrying industry has exploded in Yaldhurst in recent years as quarry owners seek to capitalise on the Christchurch rebuild.

Quarry companies in Canterbury are being urged to fight plans for mandatory dust monitoring by industry leaders who are dismissing new rules as "unnecessary" and oppressive.

Operators face strict enforcement over airborne dust, despite a study in west Christchurch finding it [poses no serious risk to public health](#).

The regulations, which begin in December, come in the wake of the results of an air monitoring programme in Yaldhurst, initiated after years of complaints from residents concerned about their health.

But the rules – unveiled last week by Environment Canterbury (ECan) – have triggered a backlash from the quarrying industry, which has urged businesses to "vigorously fight" them and consider legal action.

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Aggregates and Quarrying Association (AQA) chairman Brian Roche said the move was "unprecedented" in New Zealand.

Compulsory monitoring would be a burden on scores of small quarries across Canterbury that do not crush aggregate and so generated little dust, he said.

"We are surprised and disappointed that ECan appear to have ignored their own data and have announced this without consulting the quarry sector.

"It may well be that the decision is not legally enforceable and we encourage quarrying companies to seek legal advice."

STUFF

Quarrying companies have been told they must abide by strict new monitoring regulations being brought in in December.

Yaldhurst residents who have led the battle over quarrying distances are sceptical about the programme's results and whether the quarrying industry will be willing to self-regulate.

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Soraya Nicholas, chairwoman of the Yaldhurst Environment Group, believed there were errors in the monitoring and questioned how well ECan and health bosses understood the issues.

She also suggested the wet weather in recent months could have skewed results, and was doubtful about whether quarries will comply over rules.

"The quarries have now been told to install dust monitors on their boundaries, but they're self-monitoring," she said.

"Do you think any quarry manager will phone ECan and say, 'we have a dust problem today, please record it on file, and we'll stop work'?"

Old West Coast Rd resident Anna Youngman said she had "no faith whatsoever" the mandatory monitoring will happen because quarries have never had to be so accountable.

"[I am] disappointed with the so-called powers that be that should be looking after our health."

JOSEPH JOHNSON/STUFF

ECan chief operating officer Nadeine Dommissie, right, says the move to introduce new monitoring standards is a "huge step forward" for dust management.

Their plight has drawn sympathy from people in nearby Templeton embroiled in their own fight against a proposed Fulton Hogan quarry.

In a message to members, residents' association chairman Garry Kilday said the monitoring results were a "travesty" but no surprise, saying the organisation would write to ECan asking to discuss them.

ECan chairman Steve Lowndes, Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel, Selwyn Mayor Sam Broughton and Canterbury District Health Board chief executive David Meates have written to Environment Minister David Parker calling for discussions about minimum setback distances between quarry operations and homes.

But authorities concede quarry dust is a nuisance and have promised tougher enforcement, vowing to clamp down on operators who flaunt new rules.

All consented quarries within 500m of homes – around 20 or 30 in Canterbury – must have dust monitors on their boundaries by December 1.

Operators will have to make the data available to ECan and inform the regional council in the event of a breach.

ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

Despite the monitoring programme results, residents believe their health is suffering from quarry dust. Some, like Anna Youngman, are resorting to drastic measures to protect themselves.

Health and safety organisation MinEx said Canterbury quarries were developing a voluntary code of practice to provide reassurance over their efforts to contain nuisance dust.

But chief executive Wayne Scott challenged ECan to prove that dust measured at building sites, unsealed roads or quarries could affect residents 500m away.

He called on the regional council to reveal the nature of the dust that triggered the few cases of exceedance above acceptable levels during monitoring, saying the most common cause is from wood burning or sea spray.

Roche, of the AQA, argued the results showed dust can be managed under existing planning laws and through resource consents.

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