# Background – Local Government’s role in fire services

## Local Government plays a large role in rural fire services

New Zealand’s fire services are organised in urban and rural sectors. The table below shows that, currently, local government is a key player in delivering and funding rural fire services.

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| Service | Operated by | Funded from |
| Urban fire services | * Operated by the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) Commission, with paid and volunteer brigades. | * The fire service levy (a levy calculated on property and motor vehicle insurance). |
| Rural fire services | * 52 Rural Fire Authorities (mostly councils and the Minister of Conservation). This includes Enlarged Rural Fire Districts (which are amalgamated Rural Fire Authorities and include councils as a stakeholder and funder). * Rural Fire Authorities have paid staff and volunteers. * National Rural Fire Authority (part of the New Zealand Fire Service Commission) coordinates rural fire. | * Local Government through rates. * Rural Fire Fighting Fund (contributions from the NZFS Commission from the fire service levy and the Department of Conservation). * Department of Conservation. * Forest owners and land holders through levies. * Cost recovery from person responsible for rural fires. |

## New unified fire services means local government will no longer operate rural fire services

New Zealand’s urban and rural fire services are going to be unified from mid-2017 into one new fire services organisation with regional committees. This means local government will no longer operate rural fire services.

Local government will remain involved with the fire services as members of the regional committees. The regional committee members will be appointed by the new fire service organisation’s Board and would include other stakeholders such as the Department of Conservation. The new organisation will decide how many committees there will be and their boundaries.

Local government will also remain involved in rural fire through their civil defence and resource management functions.

## The change will deliver 21st century fire services for New Zealand.

New Zealand’s fire services have not fundamentally changed since the 1940s. The intent of this change is to set up:

* “fit-for-purpose” 21st century fire services that are flexible, modern and efficient; and
* fire services that work well, are funded appropriately and that value the workforce and volunteers.