



What are the penalties for damaging a stopbank?

The structural integrity of stopbanks is crucial to their ability to protect our communities from flooding.

If you or your organisation damage a stopbank you risk people's lives and livelihoods in the event of a flood. You may be liable for fines of up to \$20,000, three years imprisonment, or both.

If you see a damaged stopbank, please report it to us as soon as possible. You can call our advisory team on **0800 324 636** or report it via email to **floodbylaw@ecan.govt.nz**.



For the full Bylaw and maps of where it applies

ecan.govt.nz/floodbylaw

Find out more about stopbanks

ecan.govt.nz/stopbanks

If you have any further questions about stopbanks or the Bylaw, or to report damage to stopbanks in your area, please contact Customer Advisory Services: **0800 324 636**.

DISCLAIMER: This brochure is a guide only and should not be relied on as the basis for whether Bylaw Authority is required. Please check the Flood Protection and Drainage Bylaw 2013 (Amended 16 January 2019) or contact our Customer Services team for more information.



Stopbank guide

Responsibilities and requirements

Answers to commonly asked questions

What are stopbanks?

Stopbanks are specially designed and maintained embankments that help to limit or prevent the spread of floodwater onto surrounding land. Stopbanks usually include grass cover, smooth surfaces, a consistent height and no bare soil, holes or ruts.

Who owns stopbanks?

Most stopbanks in Canterbury are owned and maintained by Environment Canterbury. These stopbanks may be on private or public land. Some landowners may have constructed their own stopbanks or other flood protection measures, however, these do not guarantee protection for wider areas of land.

Where would I find stopbanks?

Stopbanks are found beside rivers and streams that are at risk of flooding nearby land during heavy or prolonged rainfall.

Some rivers have a single line of stopbank; others, such as the Waimakariri River, have a second line of stopbank that acts as a backup if the first line of defence fails or is overtopped.

While some stopbanks are put to the test regularly, others only prove their true value over a long period of time, sometimes up to 50 years or more.

You can find the locations of stopbanks and other flood protection infrastructure on **Canterbury Maps**.

How can we help protect our stopbanks?

Stopbanks are designed to protect communities from flooding. As such, they need to be well built and maintained.

A stopbank is only as strong as the weakest link and damage can result in the bank failing during a flood.

Common damage that can weaken stopbanks includes:

- **Gouges or ruts:** caused by 4WD or recreational vehicles
- **Damage to grass cover:** from animals grazing or trampling the surface
- **Excavations:** for buildings or fences
- **Planting:** unwanted trees or shrubs
- **Construction:** the building of other structures.



How are stopbanks legally protected?

Stopbanks are protected by the **Flood Protection and Drainage Bylaw (the 'Bylaw')**. This bylaw helps us manage, regulate and protect these assets from inappropriate modification, damage or destruction, and enables maintenance work. Other flood protection infrastructure also protected by the Bylaw includes rock work, flood protection trees, floodgates, groynes and drainage networks.

How does the Bylaw apply to stopbanks?

The Bylaw regulates activities within 7.5m of stopbanks or 20 metres at specific mapped parts of the stopbanks on Waimakariri River and Ashley River/Rakahuri.

Under the Bylaw, stopbanks are classed as 'Defences Against Water' (Section 5.3) and the following activities are regulated:

- Altering, damaging, or otherwise interfering
- Damaging or allowing damage to occur
- Allowing stock to damage or overgraze
- Planting any shrubs, trees and hedges
- Dumping or depositing any material
- Adjusting or interfering with equipment associated with the stopbank
- Constructing or locating structures
- Carrying out earthworks
- Constructing crossings or roads/tracks in, over, through, along or under
- Damaging any gates, signs, fences.

If you need to do any of the above activities, you will need to apply for a Bylaw authority from Environment Canterbury. The approval process is free and we are available to help you with your application.

Application forms can be found at ecan.govt.nz/floodbylaw