



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



## **Code of Practice**

# **Filming on Public Conservation Lands**

**Developed by Film New Zealand and the Department of Conservation  
for the benefit of screen production in New Zealand**

**2009**

**The Department of Conservation welcomes film makers onto public  
conservation lands and the screen production industry agrees to follow  
this code.**

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## Filming on Public Conservation Lands

### Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide film crews with guidance and assistance to help them to conduct filming activities on public conservation lands in such a way that the values of the lands where they are filming will be protected.

### Consents

Film crews will apply to the Department for consent to undertake their filming activities. The Department of Conservation (DoC) "Guidelines for Managing Commercial Filming on Public Conservation Lands 2009" (available at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/concessions-and-permits/concessions/applying-for-a-concession/commercial-filming/>) sets out the various processes and requirements, including forms, for applying for location filming consent from the Department.

Film crews will familiarise themselves with this Code and follow it when applying for their DoC concession. In most cases the application is best lodged at the DoC office nearest the primary location that is to be used.

### Filming within Iwi Boundaries

Film crews should take guidance from the following Guidelines when filming with Iwi boundaries:

- The SPADA/Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu "Guidelines for Filming within the Rohe of Ngai Tahu" should be obtained, understood and followed for operations in the Ngai Tahu rohe. A copy is available on the Film NZ website, <http://www.filmnz.com/production-guide/permissions.html#maoriland>.
- The Nga Aho Whakaari – Maori in Film & Video Inc. "General Guidelines and Protocols for Filming within Iwi (Tribal) Boundaries" should be obtained, understood and followed for operations in the rohe of other tribal authorities. A copy is available on the Film NZ website, <http://www.filmnz.com/production-guide/permissions.html#maoriland>.

### Location Management

#### *General*

Maintaining responsible and positive behaviour by film crews at locations in public conservation lands will help to retain access for the film industry to those locations and to public conservation lands in general.

Film crews should be aware that they are filming in areas that have been protected for their particular values and attributes, and that access to those areas can be validly withdrawn if harm is caused during filming.

### **Contact Protocols**

- The film crew should make contact with the local DoC office as early as possible in the production planning stages. The **Area Manager** is the correct person to contact.
- A single point of contact (usually the location manager) is preferred by DoC.
- Film crews should provide DoC sufficient time to respond properly to requests for filming permits. DoC will endeavour to process applications in a timely manner, in acknowledgement of filming timeframes. The following are targets for issuing permits:
  - One off permits: 5 working days
  - Low impact Non-notified: 12 weeks
- Crews should endeavour to provide DoC staff with as much information as possible as early as possible in the application process. This should include details of locations, activities and potential effects, and a clear picture of the proposed 'end-product'.

### **Filming Permit Conditions**

The conditions of the filming permit are the fundamental mechanisms by which the values of the location will be protected. Location managers must clearly understand the permit conditions and ensure that all of the crew activities are conducted in a manner consistent with those conditions.

It is, in certain circumstances, possible to seek a variation to the permit during filming (extra locations, slightly different activities etc). Film crews should give as much advance notice to their DoC contact of possible variations so that there is sufficient time to consider and respond. If there is a DoC Monitor present for filming, they may be empowered to make "on the spot" revisions/changes to the permit should they arise.

### **Vehicle Management**

Generally vehicles may only be operated on formed roads within public conservation lands. Parking areas and turning areas will be clearly defined and taped off. Where permission is granted to drive or place vehicles off-road, all efforts will be taken to minimise the effects of that activity, and, to prevent encouraging other vehicle owners trying to access the same places, all trace of the activity should be removed.

### **Helicopter Use and Management**

Helicopter companies who are hired to support film work will always require their own concession permit. It will normally be the responsibility of the helicopter company to arrange this with DoC staff. In many cases local companies will already have concessions for the activity. In the interests of minimising impacts on others in the vicinity of the location, helicopter flights paths should be directed away from popular recreation sites (e.g. carparks and popular short walks).

## ***Crew Management***

There are a number of simple ways in which the physical impact of people on the locations can be minimised. Some of these will be stated in the film permit, but film crews can be proactive about minimising damage by ensuring on-site mechanisms are put in place voluntarily. Examples include:

- Identifying 'soft' surface areas where damage is likely and keeping traffic off those surfaces using techniques such as boardwalks, taping-off, and carpets.
- Providing rubbish receptacles at the location, especially for cigarette butts.
- Clearly defining (with tape if necessary) the perimeter of the location and ensuring crew do not venture outside that perimeter.
- Thinking about the introduction of weed sources to the location, and how to prevent this (eg cleaning vehicles)

## ***Other Visitors***

The presence of film crews may involve interaction with other users of the locations, in some cases because other users are trying to enjoy the location themselves, and in other cases because the public specifically have come to see the film crew. If location security is important to your crew, then this should be included in the permit application. In some circumstances it is appropriate to restrict public access to the location or parts of it, but crews should make efforts to ensure access to tramping tracks or other recreational opportunities are not cut off.

## ***Temporary Structures***

The introduction of temporary structures such as shelters, port-a-loos, sets and props is normally acceptable at most locations. Crews should remember that many of the locations are subject to extremes of weather, and props and other temporary structures should be built and secured so that they don't end up blowing away or disintegrating. Rock and foam structures must be made off site. Obviously all trace of the structures must be removed at the end of shooting.

Care should be taken to locate shelters and other heavily used structures in areas where foot traffic will not result in damage to the area.

## ***Portable Generators***

Most of the national parks in NZ have by-laws that prohibit installing or operating portable operators except in an emergency. Film crews who need to operate this type of machinery should consult with local DOC staff to find alternative locations.

## ***Vegetation/Landscape Management***

Tying-back of vegetation and other non-destructive management is normally acceptable, but cutting of vegetation is not. Introduction of foreign plants will, in most circumstances, not be permitted. Likewise digging of earth or shifting of earth or rocks will, in most circumstances, not be permitted.

## ***Didymo***

Didymo is an invasive species that can form massive blooms. Thick growths can adversely affect freshwater fish, plant and invertebrate species by reducing the number of suitable habitats.

Film crew will follow the recommended cleaning methods as advised by Biosecurity New Zealand.

1. Check: Before leaving the river, remove all obvious clumps of algae and look for hidden clumps. Leave them at the affected site. If you find any later, do not wash them down the drains. Treat them with the approved cleaning methods below, dry them and put them in the rubbish bin.
2. Clean: Soak and scrub all items for at least one minute in either, hot (60°C) water, a two percent solution of household bleach or a five percent solution of salt, nappy cleaner, antiseptic hand cleaner or dishwashing detergent. A two percent solution is 200ml, a five percent solution is 500ml, with water added to make 10 litres.
3. Dry: If cleaning is not practical, after the item is completely dry to touch, wait an additional 49 hrs before contact or use in another waterway.

## ***Animals***

Proposals to use animals such as dogs, horses etc on location will be raised with DoC staff as early as possible in the location planning process.

## ***Monitoring***

On most shoots DoC will require some level of monitoring of the activities and effects of the film crew. The role of the monitor is an important one, not only so the values of the location can be protected, and the production company can discharge their responsibilities under the filming permit, but also so that the reputation of the film industry as a whole can be protected.

Crews should make all efforts to assist the monitor in their job, and to follow any directions given by the on-site monitor.

Monitors should make comparable effort to conform to filming schedules and production protocols.

## ***Sustainability, Health and Safety***

The screen production industry is committed to ensuring locations continue to be sustainable.

Crew will endeavour to use the suggestions for recycling and reducing waste from the Greening The Screen website.

Productions with temporary structures may be given a fee reduction on the wrap days if they prove they are committed to recycling their materials and reducing materials going to landfill

The screen production industry is committed to sound Health and Safety practices. Film crew are committed to their own safety and the people around them.

## Special Effects

Types of special effects commonly required during screen production:

1. Simulated Snow/Ice effects
2. Simulated Fire/Smoke effects
3. Simulated Explosions/Pyrotechnic effects
4. Specialized "Rigging"/Wirework

Below is a guideline to the safe and ecologically friendly options available. The best solution is one that fosters a closer relationship between DoC and the screen production industry.

### 1. Simulated snow/ice effects

With the growing use of CGI (computer generated images), the need to cover vast areas of land/forest with various products has been greatly reduced. Most shots now call for a smaller area where there is actual interaction with the surroundings. The environment can be completely protected from any harmful effects, if the correct products are used in the right situation.

Production companies must explain the shots, angles, area affected and the steps they have put in place to assure the containment and cleanup/removal of all product, during shooting and when shooting has ceased. The weather and wind conditions should also be a factor when designing and executing these effects.

For acceptable snow effects production companies must:

- 1.1. Stay clear of especially sensitive areas.
- 1.2. Cover the minimum amount of area possible.
- 1.3. Use a biodegradable (cellulose/starch based) non toxic product where possible (these products are edible). Use only products where a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) can be produced. Products must be approved by DoC.
- 1.4. Contain all product while shooting.
- 1.5. Remove all product when shooting has ceased. (Even the starch based products should be removed to minimise the advantage given to one species over another if consumed or broken down in the soil).
- 1.6. When a "Close Up" shot may require an alternative product be used, these products (magnesium sulphate, biodegradable paper, plastic, foam etc) should be contained and used on a liner to prevent any leeching into soil or possible plant burn. Using a liner also improves the quality and efficiency of clean up.
- 1.7. When possible select a test area (in consultation with DoC) and carry out a trial effect. This only needs to be a small area using the chosen products and explaining the application, containment, cleanup and contingency plans in place.
- 1.8. Ensure the stored product is contained in an area that is protected from the weather and wildlife.
- 1.9. Have experienced local (New Zealand) supervision.

## **2. Simulated fire/smoke effects**

For acceptable fire/smoke effects production companies must:

- 2.1. Ensure DoC is informed and issue both Film Permits and Fire Permits for the effects required.
- 2.2. In fulfilling the above consents and subsequent permits, most of the requirements will be covered.
- 2.3. Production must supply a safety and procedure plan including all the various characteristics particular to the location, ensuring enough water is at hand and the fire fighting capabilities are of a standard to quickly deal with the fire if it gets out of hand. Most local fire services will, for a small donation or fee, supply some appliances and personnel to assist the Special Effects Team with fire protection. An experienced Special Effects Supervisor/co-coordinator should be engaged for any fire effects and will liaise closely with the local fire service.
- 2.4. It is advisable to research and make contact with the local helicopter operators and keep them informed of the schedule of events. A compatible "monsoon bucket" or the equivalent can be pre arranged and site to water source flight times factored into the plan. The immediate "set" area must be well supplied with both water and Co2 type fire extinguishers and monitored by the Safety Officer.
- 2.5. Wherever possible fire effects should be executed using plumbed propane systems, allowing the fire to be controlled and turned on and off at will. When larger liquid fuel effects are required the system should be engineered in such a way as to not allow spillage or unburnt fuel to leech into the surrounding area. This can be attained by having spillage capabilities matching or in excess of the fuel storage containers. The fuel supply system must be pressure tested to ensure no leakage. The mains supply lines need to be easily, quickly and safely turned off in any situation. Fuel storage on site should be within the approved guidelines and may require OSH permitting.
- 2.6. Production must agree to reinstate any area harmed by fuel contamination.
- 2.7. Smoke effects using electric and gas powered machines (where the gas flame is enclosed) and fans must be designed so that they do not pose any problem to the surrounding environment. The local fire services must be advised of the days, times, and location where smoke effects will be executed to reduce the chance of false alarms.

## **3. Simulated explosion/pyrotechnic effects**

For acceptable explosion/pyrotechnic effects production companies must:

- 3.1. Ensure DoC is informed and issue both Film Permits and Fire Permits for the effects required.
- 3.2. Ensure the Special Effects Supervisor/co-ordinator is experienced and a holder of an OSH approved "Safe Handlers Ticket".
- 3.3. If flame type explosion effects are required proceed as with fire type effects planning and coverage.
- 3.4. All explosive charges must be stored as per the OSH guidelines and the minimum explosive required should only be carried to and within the site.
- 3.5. A site plan showing safety distances, escape routes, camera positions etc. must be prepared and may be required to gain an OSH permit.



- 3.6. Any products used as debris/dust should be environmentally inert and if possible be sourced (with DoC supervision) from the natural surroundings. All debris etc. must be cleaned up when filming is completed.

Note: Special Effects type explosions differ from standard explosions in the way they are executed. A special effects type explosion utilises a “Mortar Pot” or “Tray” to place the explosive charge into, this ensures that only the debris/dust placed in the “Mortar pot” is blasted out leaving the surrounding area untouched. This is a safety requirement, as dangerous projectiles could be launched if charges were simply placed in the ground. This also enables re takes to be easily and quickly reset.

#### **4. Specialised rigging/wire work**

This is a very specialised requirement and is totally dependent on the particular location involved. Sometimes in film making the need arises for the Special Effects, Safety, Stunt, Camera, Art, or Lighting Departments, to “Rig” or attach equipment in difficult locations, requiring the need to temporarily fix to some part of the natural environment. When this is necessary, it is important to meet with all involved and explore the alternatives and truly determine if the requirement can be fulfilled with another method. If it is decided that the fixing has to take place it should be done with DoC guidance, keeping the impact on the environment to a minimum. This can be as simple as blanketing a tree root system or padding its trunk/branches from ropes, slings and straps – to drilling a hole in a rock and using a removable anchor point.

#### **Conclusion**

This 2009 updated Code of Practice reflects the work undertaken by Film New Zealand in consultation with the screen production industry professionals, and by the Department of Conservation and its conservancy managers. It builds on the original Code of Practice for Filming on Public Conservation Land launched in July 2005 that has served both filmmakers and concessions administrators since that time.

The original Code of Practice was developed by Film New Zealand’s consultant Louise Baker (Figureworks) and Harry Maher (Department of Conservation) in consultation with the screen production industry and conservancy staff.

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