

26 June 2023

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 05/06/2023 in which you asked for:

“I'm looking for information about DOC huts. Specifically, I'm researching the maintenance requirements and methods”.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. What factors influence how often a hut is maintained? (e.g., popularity, location, hut type)

The key factor that determines how often a hut is maintained is the outcome of hut inspections. Every one of the Department of Conservations (DOCs) huts are inspected on either a 2- or 4-year cycle, depending on its classification. The outcomes of these inspections determine what maintenance is required on the hut, and therefore how frequently the hut is maintained. Additionally, more frequent maintenance may occur if a DOC ranger or member of the public notifies us that work is required. Other factors may include whether storm damage has occurred or if a ranger or public member notices that work is required.

2. What external organizations are supported by DOC to maintain the huts?

There are several external organizations that are supported by DOC to maintain huts. These include the Back Country Trust (BCT), New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA), tramping and alpine clubs, and a variety of concessionaires, community groups and individuals. The level of support DOC provides to these groups varies and is based on the management agreement for the individual hut.

3. How many huts are actively:
 - Maintained by DOC.
 - Maintained by external organizations.
 - Unmaintained.

864 huts are maintained by DOC.

127 are maintained by others as listed above.

Unmaintained: All DOC huts are inspected, and maintenance undertaken as and when required.



4. Is there any standard methodology for how huts are inspected for damages and / or maintained?

Inspections are carried out in line with the publicly available DOC hut service standards (2004) (see <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-in-a-hut/about-doc-huts/> for a breakdown of these standards). Delivery of maintenance work is then managed through DOCs leader led work scheduling.

5. What are the most common causes of damage to huts that lead to repairs being needed?

Other than the normal wear and tear that occurs when any asset is used by visitors, the most common cause of damage that leads to hut repairs is vandalism and weather events.

6. How are materials for the huts delivered to site for construction or maintenance if required?

There are a variety of ways that materials for hut maintenance or construction are delivered to site. These include being physically carried in by rangers, driven in using a range of vehicle types depending on the terrain, or transported by air or boat. The mode of transport is considered on a case-by-case basis and depends on the location of the hut in question.

7. Are there any difficulties in keeping the huts maintained. If so, what solutions are in place to mitigate those difficulties?

As with any organization, there are a range of challenges associated with competing demands for resources across the wider conservation portfolio.

DOC has a variety of solutions in place to ensure our huts are maintained. This includes work being delivered by external organizations like the Back Country Trust and work by volunteers and tramping clubs. We also have several sponsorships from companies such as Dulux that help with some of the resources required.

8. Are heritage / historic huts maintained differently than standard huts? If yes, what are the differences?

The maintenance for huts that have identified cultural heritage values are similar in principle to those of other huts, except that there will be an additional emphasis to ensure the heritage values are maintained and kept. The specific maintenance needs will vary from hut to hut and will be documented in specific heritage maintenance plans.

The maintenance of DOCs heritage huts are guided by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) New Zealand Charter. This Charter is widely used in the New Zealand heritage sector as a benchmark for conservation standards and practice. (see <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/heritage/heritage-topics/huts/> for some examples of heritage huts).



Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Reg Kemper
Director Planning and Services
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai