



Media Release
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More wild weather likely in summer months ahead

AMI's team of weather experts are urging Kiwi homeowners to check their insurance needs ahead of the summer season – as their latest seasonal outlook predicts higher than usual flood risk in the North Island and increased wildfire risk in the South.

The call comes as New Zealand rounds off one of the busiest years on record for severe weather events, which included the destructive wildfires in Lake Ōhau and flooding in Auckland, Westport, Canterbury, and Napier.

“Unfortunately, the latest meteorological data is telling us that New Zealand’s wild weather run is far from over,” said Dr Bruce Buckley, AMI’s Principal Specialist in Meteorology.

“We’re already seeing considerable anomalies in Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures, which are the driving force behind New Zealand’s weather patterns. In some places, sea temperatures are already around three degrees higher than usual, which strongly suggests summer weather conditions are going to be far from normal.”

It is predicted that warmer waters will make it easier for tropical lows to sweep southward and affect New Zealand, exposing northern parts of the North Island to increased flash and river flood risk through summer, especially in 2022, and autumn.

AMI’s weather analysis also predicts the east coast of the South Island will have an increased risk of late season heavy rain, with hotter than normal temperatures also expected in the Canterbury and Otago regions. Hail events, although rare, look to have slightly elevated risks as well.

“We’re predicting an increased wildfire risk in areas to the east of the Alps, predominantly due to warmer than usual temperatures creating excellent conditions for wildfires – including producing plenty of fuel in the form of dried-up vegetation.

“Compounding this problem are the high-pressure systems expected to sit east of New Zealand over summer and continuing into autumn, increasing the number of north easterly wind regimes and further contributing to the types of conditions that help wildfires spread rapidly once they start,” Dr Buckley said.

AMI Executive Manager Claims, Dean MacGregor, says the recent flooding events in Westport and Auckland, and last year’s fires in Lake Ōhau, are a firm reminder of how destructive severe weather events can be.

“We will always be here to help customers get back on their feet after a major weather event – but we know from experience that preparing your home for flooding or wildfires ahead of time can save people and communities a lot of heartache.

“This seasonal outlook is telling us that parts of New Zealand could be on the receiving end of some damaging weather events this summer, so action should be taken now to prepare for it.



“This includes taking a moment to check insurance cover is in line with your expectations in the event you ever needed to rebuild, becoming familiar with the level of risk where you live, and carrying out maintenance around the home that will help protect it should the unthinkable happen,” Mr MacGregor said.

Preparing your household for heavy rain and floods

Mr MacGregor says there are important steps you can take to keep your home, vehicles and belongings from damage caused by flooding - the most important being to prepare as early as possible.

“If there is a heavy rain warning in your area, keeping up to date with weather forecasts is important, as is following instructions from Civil Defence and emergency services. This way you’ll be able to get your family somewhere safe with plenty of time to spare.”

In terms of preparing your home, Mr MacGregor recommends securing any loose objects outside or moving them indoors if you can - this includes garbage bins, chairs and tables, umbrellas, BBQs, pot plants and toys.

“If there is time and it is safe to do so, tie down large items like trampolines and portable swing sets securely and turn any trampolines upside down to minimise the surface area exposed to strong winds.”

Back inside the home, Mr MacGregor says it is a good idea to move valuables, appliances and furniture off the floor wherever you can to minimise damage and loss if there is any chance flood waters could reach your home.

“Even if there isn’t a flood or storm on the horizon, make sure you’re clearing your gutters regularly, pruning trees and shrubs around the walls of houses, and fitting seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps – as this all helps to reduce water damage to your home and possessions.”

Preparing your household for wildfires

There are around 3,000 to 4,000 fires in New Zealand each year, with the risk much higher for people living rurally and where urban and rural areas intersect.

Mr MacGregor says it’s important that homeowners at risk of wildfires take time to create a safety plan for their family, as well as a safety zone around their home to help slow the spread of fire and allow space for firefighters to fight the fire.

“Fire and Emergency New Zealand has some great guidance for creating safety zones around your property, which includes steps like converting parts of your property to lawn, planting fire-resistant vegetation and clearing debris and other flammable matter away from buildings to avoid fuelling fires once they start.

“You can also consider installing a sprinkler system – sprinklers are the fastest way to put out a



fire. If that's not a practical option for you, the best thing you can do is ensure there is access to an adequate supply of water on site for fire trucks to use," Mr MacGregor said.

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About Dr Bruce Buckley and the AMI Natural Perils team

With over 40 years' experience, Dr Buckley provides AMI with a wide range of technical advice on all aspects of meteorology and climate change. He is an expert in the field, holding a PHD in Mathematics (Numerical Weather Prediction) from the University of New South Wales. Dr Buckley is part of AMI's Natural Perils team, which is made up of climate scientists, meteorologists, hydrologists, engineers, statisticians and actuaries. Their job is to understand extreme weather events so they can accurately assess the risks customers face, while also looking at what we can do to help customers and communities mitigate those risks.

About AMI

AMI has been looking out for New Zealanders for 94 years and is part of the largest general insurer in the country, IAG New Zealand. IAG also trades under our brands State, NZI, NAC, Lumley and Lantern, as well as our bank partners ASB, BNZ, Westpac and The Co-operative Bank. IAG employs over 3,000 people, insures more than 1.8 million New Zealanders and more than \$650 billion of commercial and domestic assets.