

Glossary

Term	Definition
Adaptation	The process of adapting to the physical impacts of climate change on the environment, the economy, infrastructure and society. Examples are raising river or coastal stop banks and planting drought-resistant crops. ¹⁸
Adaptation plan	Adaptation planning for climate change is transitioning from a phase of awareness to the construction of actual strategies and plans (robust evidence, high agreement). ¹⁹
Business Continuity Plan (BCP)	A business continuity plan (BCP) pinpoints the most important parts of your business, identifies potential risks to these critical pieces and prepares you to recover as quick and easy as possible. ²⁰
Climate	Climate refers to the average weather experienced in a region over a lengthy period, typically at least 30 years. This includes temperature, wind and rainfall patterns.
Climate change	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in its Article 1, defines climate change as “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and which is in addition to natural climate variability seen over comparable time periods”.
Climate hazards	The potential occurrence of a natural or human-induced physical event or trend that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, as well as damage and loss to property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems and environmental resources.
Coastal inundation / sea level rise	New Zealand has low-lying coastal areas that are vulnerable to inundation (flooding) by the sea, especially during storms. Coastal inundation is particularly likely when high tides, storm surge and/or large waves occur at the same time. At these times, areas where rivers or creeks meet the sea are more vulnerable because high seas can cause the rivers to back up inland. Sea level is also rising, and future storms may be more intense, so areas that are inundated only occasionally now are likely to be inundated much more often in future. ²¹
Drought	A drought is defined as a rainfall deficit which restricts or prevents a human activity – for example, farming or power generation. Extended dry periods are experienced in New Zealand most years, but whether they are classed as drought depends on a range of factors. They are usually defined by when potential evapotranspiration deficit (PED) exceeds 300mm. ²²
Extreme weather event	An event that is rare at a particular place. Definitions of ‘rare’ vary, but an extreme weather event would normally be an event that occurred less than once every 10 years. The characteristics of what is called extreme weather may vary from place to place. ²³
Flooding	A flood is when water covers land that is normally dry. Floods are usually caused by heavy or prolonged rainfall but can also occur due to landslides triggered by heavy rainfall or earthquakes, failure of dams, high sea levels at river mouths, coastal storm inundation and tsunami. ²⁴
Fossil fuels	Non-renewable fuels including coal, oil and natural gas. ²⁵

¹⁸ NIWA (n.d.) Glossary of terms: niwa.co.nz/helping-your-business-or-organisation-plan-climate-change-adaptation/climate-change-adaptation-toolbox/glossary

¹⁹ IPCC (n.d.). IPCC glossary: apps.ipcc.ch/glossary

²⁰ BusinessNZ (n.d.) Continuity and contingency planning: business.govt.nz/risks-and-operations/planning-for-the-unexpected-bcp/continuity-and-contingency-planning

²¹ NIWA (n.d.). Coastal storm inundation: niwa.co.nz/hazards/coastal-storm-inundation

²² NIWA (n.d.). Droughts: niwa.co.nz/hazards/droughts

²³ NIWA (n.d.) Glossary of terms: niwa.co.nz/helping-your-business-or-organisation-plan-climate-change-adaptation/climate-change-adaptation-toolbox/glossary

²⁴ Civil Defence NZ (n.d.). Floods: civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/consistent-messages/flood

²⁵ Sustainable Business Network (n.d.). Glossary of sustainability: sustainable.org.nz/learn/tools-resources/glossary-of-sustainability

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Greenhouse gases	A greenhouse gas is a gas in the atmosphere that absorbs heat energy (known as infrared radiation). Greenhouse gases are important for the Earth's climate because they allow incoming energy from the sun through. However, human activities have increased the concentration of certain greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere, creating a 'blanket' effect, increasing global temperatures. ²³
Heatwaves	Heatwaves are an unusual hot weather (max, min and daily average) over a region persisting at least two consecutive days during the hot period of the year based on local climatological conditions, with thermal conditions recorded above given thresholds.
Hot day	An extreme sweltering day in New Zealand is often defined as a day when the maximum temperature exceeds 25°C.
Intense rainfall events	An intense rainfall amount is the value reached that provides the uppermost 10% (or 90th quantile) of the total seasonal precipitation. ²³
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	Established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the IPCC surveys worldwide scientific and technical literature and publishes assessment reports that are widely recognised as the most credible existing sources of information on climate change. ²³
Landslides	Landslides, sometimes called landslips or simply slips, are the downhill movement of soil and rock driven by gravity. These are exacerbated by events such as flooding. ²⁶
Mātauranga Māori	Literally translated means 'Māori knowledge'. A modern term that broadly includes traditions, values, concepts, philosophies, world views and understandings derived from uniquely Māori cultural points of view. ²³
Mitigation	Any action that results, by design, in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by source or enhances removals by sinks. Examples include switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings to reduce energy consumption and expanding forests to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
Paris Agreement	In 2015, all parties to the UNFCCC came together for the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris and adopted by consensus the Paris Agreement, aimed at limiting global warming to less than two degrees Celsius, and to pursue efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Paris Agreement also brings together member nations to undertake ambitious efforts to adapt to its effects. ²³
Percentile	The value below which falls a specified percentage (e.g., 90% of a set of values. The 10th and 90th percentile values are commonly used to define the thresholds for extreme events. For example, the 90th percentile daily average temperature is that which is exceeded on only one day in 10. ²³
Physical risks and opportunities	Physical risks and opportunities are those associated with the impacts from climate change. These risks and opportunities can be event driven (acute) or associated with longer-term shifts in climate patterns (slow onset).

²⁶ Landslides NZ (n.d.). Science: landslides.nz/science

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Potential Evapotranspiration Deficient (PED)	Evapotranspiration is the process where water held in the soil is gradually released to the atmosphere through a combination of direct evaporation and transpiration from plants. As the growing season advances, the amount of water lost from the soil through evapotranspiration typically exceeds rainfall, giving rise to an increase in soil moisture deficit. The difference between this demand (potential evapotranspiration), and the actual evapotranspiration is defined as the potential evapotranspiration deficit. In practice, PED is the amount of water required by irrigation, or that needs to be replenished by rainfall, to maintain plant growth at levels unconstrained by soil water shortage. ²⁷
Resilience	The ability of a social or natural system to absorb disturbances while keeping the same basic structure and ways of functioning and the capacity to adapt to stress and change. ²³
Scenario	A plausible and often simplified representation of the future climate, based on an internally consistent set of climatological relationships that has been constructed for explicit use in investigating the potential consequences of anthropogenic climate change, often serving as input to impact models. ²⁸
Supply chain	A network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product to the final buyer. ²⁹
Transition risks and opportunities	Transition risks or opportunities arise from the shift of global systems towards a decarbonised future.
Taonga Māori	Taonga Māori refers to tangible and intangible items that are highly valued in Māori culture.
Wildfire	In New Zealand, 'wildfires' includes forest, grassland and scrub fires that can threaten lives and property. 'Bushfire', however, often has a more specific meaning, referring to fires in native bush areas, though it is also used colloquially by the media and public in both New Zealand and Australia.

²⁷ NIWA (n.d.). Drought indicator charts: niwa.co.nz/climate-and-weather/nz-drought-indicator-products-and-information/drought-indicator-charts

²⁸ Flato G, Marotzke J, Abiodun B, et al. Evaluation of Climate Models. In: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/

²⁹ NIWA (n.d.). Glossary of terms: niwa.co.nz/helping-your-business-or-organisation-plan-climate-change-adaptation/climate-change-adaptation-toolbox/glossary