



Thursday 18 November 2010 Newmont Waihi Gold Media Release

Safety first says mining company

Newmont Waihi Gold and its drilling contractor have strong safety concerns following recent protest action about Newmont's exploration programme.

The protest action, led by Green List MP Catherine Delahunty and involving representatives of some local resident and ratepayer groups, took place in a forestry block five kilometres north of Opoutere. The following week, a few members of a protest group crossed a well-signposted safety fence demarcating a work area around the operating drill rig where there are multiple hazards. Only inducted personnel wearing appropriate protective equipment are authorised to enter these areas.

Newmont Waihi Gold External Affairs Manager Sefton Darby says that while Newmont acknowledges the rights of residents to protest about the company's exploration activity the company has a duty of care to ensure the continued safety of not only the general public but also staff, contractors and forestry personnel.

"The protests have been peaceful. We respect and appreciate that. We understand that there are strong differences of opinion on this issue," says Darby. "However, we are also concerned about safety when people deliberately walk into a signed and fenced operational area or on active forestry roads with heavy machinery."

The area where Newmont is drilling is Crown-owned and administered by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) in forestry land owned by Matariki Forests who hold a Crown Forest Licence. Newmont holds an exploration permit, resource consents with the relevant regulatory authorities and access arrangements with both LINZ and Matariki to carry out prospecting activities and exploration drilling. All activities must comply with Resource Management Act consent conditions, various district plans, council regulations and observe all health and safety regulations.

Exploration drilling is starting this week at a site over the ridge from Onemana, also in an active forestry block where logging trucks, other heavy vehicles and machinery are working seven days a week. Newmont urges members of the public to observe the strict health and safety considerations in place in and around all drill sites. In addition, this time of year is a restricted fire season and calls for extra care.

Newmont Waihi Gold has been conducting exploration programmes, including drill testing, over the lower Coromandel for many years. The company is looking for high grade gold deposits capable of being mined by underground methods with a small surface footprint. A drill rig operating in an area does not mean that a mine will be developed. History has shown from more than thirty years of modern exploration activity in the Coromandel that over 300 kilometres of drilling has resulted in the discovery of only three mines. Statistically, only one area drilled in every thousand results in a mine.