

25 October 2014

To the parents and guardians,

With school holidays coming up we thought it important to remind parents and guardians that the empty houses in the residential red zone are not safe for our children and young people. We ask you to keep them off Crown-owned properties and to remind them of the dangers when entering any unoccupied property. They need to understand that entering these properties is trespassing.

Throughout the residential red zone Crown-owned houses are being demolished and properties are being cleared. Insurers and the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) have now cleared around 5500 of the 7030 properties on the flat land whose former owners have settled with the Crown – 75 per cent of the task. Insurers and CERA are clearing between 50 to 70 properties a week, depending on weather, the size of the dwellings, heavy vehicle access and whether they contain hazardous materials.

With the usual worksite hazards such as noise, dust and heavy machinery, it is important to talk with your children and young people about staying clear of sites and taking care around the heavy vehicles traveling through the area.

The houses and land also contain real risks that won't always be apparent, particularly to children and young people. These risks may be things such as asbestos, black mould, hazardous waste, exposed wires. There will almost certainly be building damage such as broken glass and rusty nails, and land damage such as holes.

Where there are unoccupied houses there is also the possibility of illegal occupants. While Crown-owned properties are monitored, there is a possibility of illegal activity and/or anti-social behaviour occurring. It is important that children and young people stay away from these properties.

If you spot anything suspicious you should phone the New Zealand Police immediately. If you have any questions or concerns you can contact us directly by phoning 0800 RING CERA or emailing info@cera.govt.nz

Yours sincerely

Brenden Winder
Security Manager, CERA