



# PRIVACY BREACH INFORMATION

**Know Your Privacy  
Obligations**



Privacy Commissioner  
Te Mana Mātāpono Matatapu

## Privacy breaches

Privacy breaches are bad news. Loss or misuse of personal information can cause people harm and damage your organisation's reputation.

## What is a privacy breach?

A privacy breach occurs when personal information is lost, stolen or accessed without permission. Sometimes, an organisation may be prevented from accessing information they hold.

Common examples include theft of documents or electronic devices, computer hacks, ransomware attacks, employee browsing, or emails being sent to the wrong person. Privacy breaches can also happen through workplace gossip.

## Harm

If the breach has caused or may cause someone serious harm, you need to notify the Privacy Commissioner.

'Harm' can include:

- loss, damage or disadvantage
- loss of a benefit or right
- emotional harm, such as significant humiliation or loss of dignity.

## Four steps to take

When there's a privacy breach, we recommend you:

### CONTAIN

Find out what's happened. Take steps to stop the breach from getting worse.

### ASSESS

Make an assessment of the seriousness of the breach. We have an online tool that can help you do that. You can find it here:  
[www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us](http://www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us)

### NOTIFY

If you think it is a serious privacy breach, tell our Office as soon as you can. You may also need to tell the people affected. The online tool **NotifyUs** is the best way to report privacy breaches to the Commissioner:  
[www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us](http://www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us)

### PREVENT

When the privacy breach has been resolved and the crisis is over, take steps to prevent future breaches.



## Telling affected people

If a serious privacy breach happens, you may also have to notify the people affected. This is so they can take steps to protect themselves, such as changing their password. There will be instances where telling people could cause more harm than good. There are some options to consider in those situations. Feel free to discuss it with our Office.

## For more information

You can contact our Office for advice:



[www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us](http://www.privacy.org.nz/notify-us)



Email [notifyus@privacy.org.nz](mailto:notifyus@privacy.org.nz) or



Call 0800 803 909.



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