



SERVICE STANDARD 2.1.4

APPOINTMENT OF FIELD AND GROUP OFFICERS

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Version Number	3.1
SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ SOP 2.1.4-1 Election of Group Officers➤ SOP 2.1.4-2 Duties of Group Officers➤ SOP 2.1.4-3 Removal or Suspension of Field and Group Officers
Owner	Deputy Commissioner Field Operations
Contact	Director Area Operations
Approved Date	16 March 2022
Effective Date	28 March 2022
Next Review Date	16 March 2027
Document Control	Electronic - Printed Copies are Uncontrolled

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) supports the efforts of all members and encourages interested volunteers to aspire to brigade and district leadership roles.
- 1.2 This Service Standard details the requirements in relation to the appointment, suspension and removal of NSW RFS Brigade Officers and Group Officers.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this Service Standard, the following definitions apply:
 - a. **Field Officer:** a position elected by members of the brigade in accordance with the brigade's constitution. Field Officers are:
 - i. Captain;
 - ii. Senior Deputy Captain; and
 - iii. Deputy Captain.
 - b. **Group Officer:** a position elected by the brigades in the Group. Group officers are:
 - i. Group Captain; and
 - ii. Deputy Group Captain.
 - c. **Senior Leadership Team (SLT):** the group of senior local NSW RFS members who assist the District Manager or Area Commander with the strategic and day-to-day leadership of the rural fire district or Area command. (Formerly known as the Senior Management Team – SMT).

3 Policy

Election and appointment of Field Officers

- 3.1 Field Officers are appointed following election by brigade members in accordance with the brigade's constitution, and confirmation by the District Manager.
- 3.2 Elections for Field Officers must be held every three years, although the brigade constitution may provide for a shorter period of one or two years.
- 3.3 Nominees for election as a Field Officer must have achieved the minimum level of competency in accordance with Service Standards 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members.
- 3.4 The District Manager may, after consultation with the SLT in the district, set other reasonable additional criteria to be satisfied by those nominating for Field Officer positions in that district.

Election and appointment of Group Officers

- 3.1 Group Officers are elected by members of the brigades forming the group, in accordance with SOP 2.1.4-1 Election of Group Officers and the procedure established by the District Manager, after consultation with the district SLT.
- 3.2 Elections for Group Officers must be held at least every three years, although the procedures established by the District Manager may provide for a shorter period of one or two years .
- 3.3 Nominees for election as a Group Officer must have achieved the minimum level of competency in accordance with Service Standards 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members.
- 3.4 The District Manager may, after consultation with the district SLT, set other reasonable additional criteria to be satisfied by those members nominating for election to a group officer position.

Removal or suspension of Group or Field Officers from Office

- 3.10 The procedure to be followed by a District Manager is set out in SOP 2.1.4-3 Removal or Suspension of Field and Group Officers.
- 3.11 The District Manager may revoke or suspend a Group or Field Officer's appointment if:
 - a. The District Manager believes that the officer has become incapable of properly carrying out the duties of a Field Officer;
 - b. The District Manager believes that the conduct of the member is adversely affecting the efficient operation of the brigade or the safety of members in the brigade;
 - c. The District Manager is asked to do so by the members of the brigade in accordance with the provisions of the brigade's constitution; or
 - d. It is recommended by the appropriate disciplinary authority, in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline.
- 3.12 A Group or Field Officer whose appointment is revoked or suspended pursuant to clause 3.11 a, b. or c. may ask the relevant Area Commander to review that decision.

Temporary appointments

- 3.13 If a Field Officer's position becomes vacant and the brigade is unwilling or unable to elect another person to that position, the District Manager may appoint a suitably qualified member of the NSW RFS to fill that position until the next annual general meeting, or for a shorter period.
- 3.14 A District Manager may appoint a member of the NSW RFS as a Group Captain or Deputy Group Captain for a period of not more than 12 months if the District Manager believes that it is necessary to ensure the safe and effective operation of the group or district.
- 3.15 Before appointing a member in accordance with clauses 3.13 or 3.14 the District Manager must be satisfied that the member has the necessary ability and qualifications to safely discharge the functions of that position.

4 Related documents

- > [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)
- > [Rural Fires Regulation 2013](#)
- > [Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline](#)
- > [Service Standard 1.2.1 NSW RFS Rank and Rank Insignia](#)
- > [Service Standard 2.1.2 Brigade Constitution](#)
- > [Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members](#)
- > [Service Standard 8.1.1 Uniforms for NSW RFS Members](#)
- > [NSW RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)

5 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
1 September 1999	1.0	Initial Release
4 September 2007	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 2.1.4 v1.0> Complete review
17 December 2007	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 2.1.4 v2.0> Addition of New 'Retired Volunteer Officer Program' guidelines
23 June 2015	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 2.1.4 v2.1> Comprehensive review to remove guidelines. Addition of SOPS 2.1.4-2, 2.1.4-2, 2.1.4-3, 2.1.4-4 and 2.1.4.-5
16 March 2022	3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repeals and remakes SS 2.1.4 v3.0> Administrative review to align with updated SS 2.1.2 Brigade Constitution v3.0> Removal of content relating to Senior Management Teams to new SS 2.1.15 v1.0> Removal of content relating to Retire Officers Program to be included in SS 1.2.1 Ranking and Rank Insignia

SOP SS 2.1.4-1

Election of Group Officers

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the procedure by which NSW RFS Group Officers are elected.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 The *Rural Fires Act 1997* provides for the appointment of Group Officers for a period as defined in this Service Standard.
- 2.2 This procedure provides information to assist District Managers in establishing a local process by which Group Officers will be elected.
- 2.3 Group Officers for a group of rural fire brigades are elected in accordance with the procedure set out by the District Manager, after consultation with the district Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and/or the brigades in the district.
- 2.4 To be eligible for nomination for a position of Group Officer, it is preferred (but not essential) that a member should have held a Field Officer position within a rural fire brigade in the district.
- 2.5 There is no limit to the number of terms a member may be elected as a Group Officer.
- 2.6 Members who meet the desirable competencies for a Group Officer detailed in SOP 2.1.4-2 Duties of NSW RFS Group Officers, in addition to requirements within Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members are eligible to be nominated and elected as a Group Officer.
- 2.7 It is recommended that a brigade only nominate one member for each position of Group Captain.
- 2.8 It is recommended that a brigade only nominate one member for each position of Deputy Group Captain.
- 2.9 It is generally recommended that Group Officers do not hold dual operational appointments. However, the final decision will be the District Manager's, based on the operational needs of the area.
- 2.10 It is recommended that Group Officer elections be by the brigade vote rather than individual member's votes. This means that each brigade shall have one vote, rather than each individual NSW RFS member in a district having one vote each. The process whereby brigades decide the manner in which their individual vote shall be determined at the brigade annual general meeting.
- 2.11 In the case of a tied vote, the ballot should be re-run. In the event that a tied vote occurs for a second time, the names of the tied candidates may be placed in a 'hat' and the successful candidate will be the first name drawn by the returning officer.
- 2.12 It is recommended that the returning officer be independent, and agreed on by the SLT in conjunction with the District Manager.

3 Related forms

- None

SOP SS 2.1.4-2

Duties of NSW RFS Group Officers

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the duties of NSW RFS Group Officers.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 This SOP aims to provide incumbent and potential Group Officers with information to give direction and clarification to their position and provide a statement of the range of duties that may be required of the position.
- 2.2 This SOP seeks to outline the various aspects of the position as well as suggested desirable competencies so that any member considering undertaking this role can gain an understanding as to what is required of them.
- 2.3 Dependent on local requirements, some Group Officers may not be required to perform all the duties identified in this SOP. The range of duties shall be by agreement with the District Manager.
- 2.4 A Group Officer is charged with a position of authority and trust by the members of those brigades they are elected to represent. A Group Officer must in the execution of their duties uphold the values of the service and discharge their responsibilities without fear or favor.

Purpose of Group Officers

- 2.5 Group Officers play a key role in the management of the NSW RFS rural fire district by:
- providing operational and managerial leadership and advice to brigades;
 - participating in the leadership of the district through the provision of advice and guidance to the District Manager on all issues affecting brigades, volunteers and the NSW RFS;
 - participating in the leadership of the district, through membership of the district SLT;
 - advocating on behalf of the brigades in the group;
 - participating in the management of discipline and grievance matters through involvement in the District Disciplinary Panel (DDP) and investigations; and
 - providing a single point of contact between the District Manager and the brigades in the group.

Key duties of a Group Officer

- 2.6 The key duties of a Group Officer include, but are not limited to:
- Assist brigades in the procurement of stores in accordance with service standards and policies, and district standard operating procedures or guidelines;
 - As required, command and deploy personnel and equipment, devise and implement tactics and strategies, and liaise with other authorities during operations;
 - Enhance incident management and Incident Control System (ICS) effectiveness where appropriate, and participate as an incident management team member;
 - Provide input to the preparation and review of the local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan, Fire Access and Fire Trail Plans, Operations Coordination Plan and other District/Area level plans where required;
 - Organise combined training and meetings of brigades as required;
 - Facilitate training and assessment of brigade personnel as required, and assist the District Office as and when required;
 - Promote volunteer recruitment and retention;
 - Value and support members by actively promoting a diverse, flexible and adaptive membership;
 - Foster better relationships with officers of other agencies, with the assistance of the District Manager;
 - Gain a working knowledge and understanding of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and Regulations, NSW RFS Service Standards and SOPs, and other relevant legislation and policies;
 - Assist in monitoring the day to day readiness of tankers, equipment, stations and personnel of the rural fire brigades in the group;

- l. Aid in the safety and welfare of brigades and the maintenance of morale, and assist in the effective management of brigades and personnel;
- m. Ensure any matters referred to them are actioned in accordance with NSW RFS Service Standards, SOPs and policies;
- n. Participate as a member of the SLT and attend meetings of Group Officers, Brigades, Bush Fire Management Committees, District Liaison Committees etc. as required;
- o. Assist in promoting the NSW RFS and the role of volunteers;
- p. Ensure members within the group act in a professional manner which reflects positively on the NSW RFS and in accordance with the NSW RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics and Organisational Values;
- q. From time to time and by agreement, perform duties as may be required by the District Manager or delegate;
- r. Provide advice to permit issuers if requested;
- s. Provide input to the preparation and review of brigade pre-incident plans and operational plans for hazard reductions and mitigation works;
- t. Provide advice on the need for, and condition of, fire trails;
- u. Assist in the conduct of community engagement activities as required; and
- v. Collect and collate information on fuel levels and risks in the district, as required.

Desirable competencies

- 2.6 In addition to the minimum qualification of Group Leader (GL) in accordance with Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for RFS Members, the following may be included as competencies determined by the District Manager, in consultation with the SLT:
- a. Demonstrated leadership experience;
 - b. Sound knowledge of rural fire fighting techniques;
 - c. Experience in managing resources in an emergency situation;
 - d. Working knowledge of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and Regulations;
 - e. Demonstrated ability to work within a team environment;
 - f. Demonstrated ability to communicate, negotiate, and resolve conflict;
 - g. Class C or Class MR driver license; and
 - h. Possess Prescribed Burning Supervisor (PBS) qualification.

3 Related forms

- > None

SOP SS 2.1.4-3

Removal or Suspension of Field and Group Officers

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the procedure by which a NSW RFS District Manager may remove or suspend a Field or Group Officer.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 A District Manager who decides to revoke or suspend a Field or Group Officer's appointment pursuant to clause 3.11 of this Service Standard must give that member notice in writing (the Notice) that their appointment is to be revoked or suspended.

- 2.2 The Notice must:

- a. set out the facts and circumstances that have led to the District Manager to consider revocation or suspension of the appointment;
- b. invite the member to provide the District Manager with a written response or submission as to why the member's appointment should not be revoked or suspended;
- c. specify the date by which any such response or submission must be provided;
- d. advise the member that if they do not provide a written response to the Notice within the time specified, their appointment will be revoked or suspended; and
- e. advise the member that they can apply in writing to the Area Commander to have the decision reviewed.
- f. Provide the name and contact details of the relevant Area Commander.

- 2.3 The District Manager must allow the member at least 14 days from the date on which they received the Notice to provide a response or submission.

This period may be reduced in circumstances where the District Manager believes that the safety of members of the brigade or the ability of a brigade, group or district to function safely and effectively requires the appointment to be revoked or suspended more urgently.

In the most serious cases the member's appointment may be suspended with immediate effect and the member then allowed time to make a submission as to why their appointment should not have been revoked.

- 2.4 The Notice must be given to the member by one or more of the methods referred to in clause 38 of the *Rural Fires Regulation 2013*. These include but are not limited to:

- a. physically giving it to the member;
- b. posting it to their last known residential or business address; or
- c. sending it by fax or email to a fax number or email address the member has provided to the NSW RFS.

Appeal procedure

- 2.5 The decision to suspend or revoke a Field or Group Officer's appointment may be appealed by applying in writing to the relevant Area Commander.

- 2.6 If requested to do so in writing, an Area Commander may conduct a review of the decision to revoke or suspend a Field or Group Officer's appointment in any manner the Area Commander believes is appropriate, provided that the member is given a reasonable opportunity to make a written submission to the Area Commander in relation to the matter.

- 2.7 Within 21 days of receiving a request to review a decision to revoke or suspend a Field or Group Officer's appointment the Area Commander must advise:

- a. the member;
- b. the District Manager who made the original decision to revoke or suspend the member's appointment; and
- c. the Director Area Operations

in writing as to whether the decision to revoke or suspend the member's appointment is upheld or revoked.

3 Related forms

> None