



## Working together to make a difference

NSW Rural Fire Service Supportive Employer Program

# Guide for employers with NSW RFS volunteers

## What is the role of the NSW Rural Fire Service?

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) volunteers have been protecting local communities from bush and grass fires for more than 100 years. Today, our volunteers attend a range of emergencies like bush and grass fires, house and structure fires, road accidents as well as providing assistance at other events like floods, storms and searches.

**NSW RFS volunteers respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round.**

## What do NSW RFS volunteers do?

NSW RFS volunteers are a familiar sight in local communities but there's more to it than just fire fighting. NSW RFS volunteers perform a range of other roles in areas such as community education, training, radio communications, catering, logistics, youth development, aviation support and planning.

## How can employing a NSW RFS volunteer benefit my business?

NSW RFS volunteers are highly trained and skilled individuals. All NSW RFS volunteers are required and encouraged to participate in a variety of training programs and activities.

The NSW RFS is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and the majority of training undertaken by our volunteers is linked to national qualifications. These qualifications are recognised outside of the NSW RFS.

If your employee is a NSW RFS volunteer you should benefit from their enhanced skills and competencies, such as:

- Leadership and decision-making skills;
- Organisational and project management skills;
- Improved ability to handle stress and cope under pressure;
- Problem solving and analytical thinking;

- Team work and a willingness to take on additional responsibilities;
- Experience dealing with hazardous situations;
- Increased familiarity with working under policies and procedures;
- Enhanced Work, Health and Safety awareness;
- Experience in dealing with the public and community;
- Technology based skills.

The NSW RFS is a reputable organisation, with a wonderful tradition and a very proud history. Your association with the NSW RFS may bring other benefits to your business, including:

- Improved company image within your local community;
- Increased morale, loyalty and job satisfaction amongst employees;
- Demonstrated commitment to being an employer of choice;
- An opportunity to demonstrate work/life balance for employees;
- An effective way for employers to contribute to social capital, volunteerism and local community spirit;
- Building networks through collaboration with other local employers.

## What if my employee is injured while undertaking emergency work?

All personnel are covered if they are injured whilst undertaking authorised activities under the Rural Fires Act 1997. All NSW RFS volunteers are eligible for workers compensation in accordance with the *Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987* for injuries sustained while taking part in authorised Brigade activities.

For more information WorkCover NSW can be contacted on 13 10 50 or [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

# Working together to make a difference

NSW Rural Fire Service Supportive Employer Program



## How can I verify that my employee was attending a NSW RFS incident or other activity during work hours?

Employer / volunteer leave arrangements are usually built on mutual trust but should you require verification the NSW RFS can provide it upon request. Your employee can obtain this verification by contacting their local NSW RFS District office.

## Are there any financial incentives available to employers of NSW RFS volunteers?

The NSW RFS is unable to offer financial compensation to employers but the NSW State Government provides a pay-roll tax exemption for wages paid to employees attending emergencies or incidents during work hours. More information regarding pay-roll tax exemptions can be found at [www.osr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au) under pay-roll tax exemptions, type 2.

## Releasing employees during work hours

As an employer you can make a significant contribution to your community by releasing NSW RFS volunteers from work responsibilities to respond to emergencies as they arise.

The NSW RFS encourages volunteers and their employers to negotiate leave arrangements in advance; be it a verbal or written agreement.

Leave arrangements may include; only releasing employees during quiet times, flexible work practices, time in lieu, using personal leave, rostered days off, unpaid leave or implementing a special leave agreement such as Emergency Services leave.

Below is an **example** of a written leave agreement that can be adapted to suit individual businesses.

*Full time, part time and casual employees involved in recognised voluntary emergency services shall be entitled to paid leave at ordinary time rates to attend to emergency situations during work hours.*

*It shall be the responsibility of the employee to keep the company informed about the length of leave needed to attend to emergency duties.*

*In order to be paid at ordinary time rates, the employee shall provide the company with proof of attendance at the emergency incident.*

## Other ways employers can help the NSW RFS

Releasing your employees from their work duties to attend emergency incidents and other NSW RFS activities makes a valuable contribution to the NSW RFS.

There are other ways you, as an employer, can assist the NSW RFS. For instance, you could incorporate one or more of the following practices into your workplace:

- Introducing a leave arrangement or flexible work hours for volunteers in your workplace;
- Display NSW RFS promotional and fire safety material in your workplace;
- Inform new employees about opportunities to volunteer with the NSW RFS either during their induction or by including information brochures in their employment pack and discuss leave arrangements;
- Display the Supportive Employer Pledge in your workplace.

## Supportive Employer Pledge

The Supportive Employer Pledge is a statement on behalf of employers who support the NSW RFS and its volunteers. The NSW RFS encourages you, as a supportive employer, to use and display this pledge in your workplace:

***Across New South Wales over 70,000 dedicated Rural Fire Service volunteers pledge to protect our communities from fire and other emergencies; often sacrificing personal income and time with their loved ones for the greater good of our community. Their devotion and unwavering commitment to combating bush fires in NSW increases our capability to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.***

***As a volunteer friendly employer we are proud to honour their valiant efforts and assist our local community by supporting NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers in our workplace.***