



SERVICE STANDARD 2.1.4 APPOINTMENT OF FIELD AND GROUP OFFICERS

Item	Description
Title	Appointment of Field and Group Officers
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SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> SOP 2.1.4-1 Election of Group Officers> SOP 2.1.4-2 Duties of NSW RFS Group Officers> SOP 2.1.4-3 Removal or Suspension of Field and Group Officers> SOP 2.1.4-4 NSW RFS Retired Officer Program> SOP 2.1.4-5 NSW RFS Senior Management Teams> SOP 2.1.4-6 Removal or Suspension of SMT Membership
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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 The NSW RFS values adaptability and resourcefulness and, aligning to the principles of flexible membership, recognises the importance of retaining the vast experience of officers who no longer wish to hold Field or Group Officer positions within a brigade or group of brigades.
- 1.3 This Service Standard details the requirements in relation to the appointment, suspension and removal of NSW RFS Brigade Officers and Group Officers, and provides detail on the Retired Officers' Program.

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 Management Team (SMT):** the group of senior local NSW RFS members who assist the District Manager with the strategic and day-to-day management of the rural fire district. Refer to SOP 2.1.4-5 Senior Management Teams for further information.

3 Policy

Election and appointment of Field Officers

- 3.1 Field Officers are appointed after the election by brigade members in accordance with the brigade's constitution.
- 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 and 1.2.1 NSW RFS Rank and Rank Insignia.
- 3.4 In accordance with Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members, the District Manager may waive the requirements for volunteer qualifications in their District provided that the member has demonstrated that they are working to achieve the relevant qualifications within a reasonable time and the District Manager is satisfied that current operations can be conducted safely.
- 3.5 The District Manager may, after consultation with the SMT or the brigades in the district, set other reasonable criteria that must be satisfied by those nominating for Field Officer positions.

Election and appointment of Group Officers

- 3.6 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 SMT and/or the brigades in the district.
- 3.7 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 .
- 3.8 In accordance with Service Standard 1.2.1 NSW RFS Rank and Rank Insignia nominees for election as a Group Officer must hold the Group Leader (GL) qualification. The District Manager may vary this requirement in accordance with Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualification for NSW RFS Members.
- 3.9 The District Manager may, after consultation with the district SMT and/or the brigades in the district, set other reasonable criteria that must be satisfied by nominees for election as a group officer.

Removal or suspension of Group Officer 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.

Removal or suspension of Field Officers from Office

- 3.11 The District Manager may revoke or suspend a 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 reasonably 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 Field Officer whose appointment is revoked or suspended pursuant to clause 3.11 a., b. or c. may ask the relevant Regional Manager to review that decision.

Removal or suspension of Group Officers from Office

- 3.13 The District Manager may revoke or suspend a Group Officer's appointment if:
- a. The District Manager believes that the member has become incapable of properly carrying out the duties of a Group Officer;
 - b. The District Manager believes that the conduct of the officer is adversely affecting the efficient operation of the group, the district or the safety of members; or
 - c. It is recommended by the appropriate disciplinary authority, in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline.
- 3.14 A Group Officer whose appointment is revoked or suspended pursuant to clause 3.13 a. or b. may ask the relevant Regional Manager to review that decision.

Temporary appointments

- 3.15 A District Manager may appoint any member of the NSW RFS as a Senior Deputy Captain or Deputy Captain of a brigade 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 brigade.
- 3.16 If the Captain's position becomes vacant and the brigade is unwilling or unable to elect another member to that position, the District Manager may appoint a suitably qualified member of the NSW RFS to that position until the next annual general meeting, or for a shorter period.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 Before appointing a member in accordance with clauses 3.15, 3.16 or 3.17 the District Manager must be satisfied that the member has the necessary qualifications to safely discharge the functions of that position.
- 3.19 A member who has stepped down from holding a Group Captain, Deputy Group Captain or Brigade Captain position with the NSW RFS may be appointed by the District Manager as a Retired Group Captain, Deputy Group Captain or Brigade Captain, in accordance with SOP 2.1.4-4 Retired Officer Program.
- 3.20 In accepting the retired officer designation, the member agrees not to stand for election for any ranked positions.

4 Related documents

- > *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- > *Rural Fires Regulation 2013*
- > Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline
- > Service Standard 1.1.9 Child Related Activities
- > 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	Version	Description
1 September 1999	1.0	Initial Release
4 September 2007	2.0	Complete review
17 December 2007	2.1	Addition of New 'Retired Volunteer Officer Program' guidelines
23 June 2015	3.0	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

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 by the members of the brigades in that group or rural fire brigades. This election is to be in accordance with the procedure set out by the District Manager, after consultation with the district Senior Management Team (SMT) 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 Only those members who meet the desirable competencies for a Group Officer detailed in SOP 2.1.4-2 Duties of NSW RFS Group Officers 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 SMT 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.

Purpose of Group Officers

- 2.4 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 management 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 management of the district, through membership of the district SMT;
 - 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

- 2.5 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 and Operation Coordination Plan;
 - Organise combined training and meetings of brigades as required;
 - Facilitate training and assessment of brigade personnel as required, and assist the Learning and Development Officer 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 SMT 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 Operations Officer;
- 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 SMT:
- 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 or 3.13 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 Regional Manager to have the decision reviewed.

- 2.3 Where possible the District Manager should 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.

- 2.5 Within 14 days of receiving any response or submission, the District Manager must advise:

- a. the member;
- b. the relevant Regional Manager; and
- c. the Director Regional Services

in writing of their decision as to whether the member's appointment has been revoked or suspended.

Appeal procedure

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

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

- 2.8 Within 21 days of receiving a request to review a decision to revoke or suspend a Field or Group Officer's appointment the Regional Manager 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 Regional Services
- in writing as to whether the decision to revoke or suspend the member's appointment is upheld or revoked.

3 Related forms

> None

SOP SS 2.1.4-4

NSW RFS Retired Officers' Program

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the requirements for retiring Group Captains, Deputy Group Captains and Captains to retain their rank for ceremonial purposes, in recognition of the valuable contribution they have made to the NSW RFS.
- 1.2 For many retiring Group Captains, Deputy Group Captains and Captains their participation in the NSW RFS does not cease in the true sense, but deviates into a range of roles within the NSW RFS which may include:
 - a. Providing local knowledge to incident management teams (IMTs);
 - b. Subject to maintaining competency, participate as IMT members so as to allow current group officers to be divisional commanders;
 - c. Safety coordinators;
 - d. Assist in the welfare of other members;
 - e. Offsider to out of area crews/commanders;
 - f. Offsider to existing Group Officers to assist with divisional command responsibilities;
 - g. Community Engagement;
 - h. Assist in training;
 - i. Mentor newly appointed Field or Group Officers;
 - j. Assist with day to day activities at the Fire Control Centre;
 - k. Participate in District mentoring and advocacy programs;
 - l. Participate in grievance or disciplinary processes including being a member or chair of a district disciplinary panel;
 - m. Any other duties as determined by the District Manager in consultation with the SMT.

Participation in the Senior Management Team (SMT)

- 1.3 Generally retired officers will not form part of the SMT however this is a matter to be determined locally and would require the support of the SMT and the endorsement of the District Manager.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 The Retired Officer (RO) program allows long standing volunteers to retain the rank that they held on retirement subject to meeting certain recommended criteria.

Definition of a Retired Officer

- 2.2 A RO is defined as a member of the NSW RFS who, having held the position of Group Captain, Deputy Group Captain or Captain has ceased to hold that position due to stepping down from that position. In so doing, the RO elects not to hold any ranked position within a brigade or stand for re-election in any Brigade or Group Officer election.

Recommended criteria

- 2.3 To be eligible to retain their rank into retirement it is recommended that the retiring member has:
 - a. been a member of the NSW RFS for a minimum of 15 years;
 - b. served with due diligence and distinction and has upheld the values and ethos of the NSW RFS;
 - c. accumulated 10 years service as a ranked officer of the NSW RFS;
 - d. been nominated by their brigade/district;
 - e. been recommended by the SMT;
 - f. been endorsed by the District Manager.

Competency maintenance

- 2.4 RO's shall agree to undertake any refresher training or other forms of competency maintenance if they are providing assistance or advice in specialised areas.

Wearing of rank and uniform

- 2.5 The name tag of the officer will have "Retired" after the rank title e.g. Group Captain (Retired) Bob Smith.
- 2.6 A member of the RO program is entitled to wear the dress uniform of the NSW RFS and the rank at which they retired, whilst engaging in authorised ceremonial occasions such as station openings, funerals and medal ceremonies or where the District Manager has given approval for a particular function.
- 2.7 Rank is not permitted to be worn on any personal protective clothing or operational uniform unless approved in writing by the District Manager in accordance with clause 2.6.

Duration of retired rank

- 2.8 Once the RO has been endorsed as such, the District Manager shall ensure that the RO's membership record in the NSW RFS management system has been updated to reflect the retired status and the date this becomes effective.
- 2.9 Once an officer has been formally endorsed as a retired Group Captain, Deputy Group Captain or Captain they are entitled to retain the retired rank status indefinitely unless or until the following occurs:
- a. they surrender their rank and title;
 - b. as a result of any disciplinary action brought against them;
 - c. they resign as a member of the NSW RFS; or
 - d. they die.

3 Related forms

- > None

SOP SS 2.1.4-5

NSW RFS Senior Management Teams

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the requirements for NSW RFS District Managers establishing a Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 1.2 The SMT assists the District manager in the strategic and day-to-day management of the Rural Fire District (the district).
- 1.3 The SMT may be known within districts by other names, however all such groups are to be known as the SMT.

2 Procedures

Purpose of the SMT

- 2.1 The SMT represents all NSW RFS volunteers in the district and is a consultative body to the District Manager in relation to the management of the district including:
 - a. Strategic direction;
 - b. Corporate and business planning;
 - c. Budget preparation and priorities;
 - d. Local standard operating procedures (SOPs);
 - e. Liaison between the brigades and the district; and
 - f. Any other function as specified in the Service Standards.

Structure of the SMT

- 2.2 The SMT is comprised of the District Manager, District Staff and senior NSW RFS Volunteer Officers. These may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Group Officers;
 - b. Captains;
 - c. selected senior district staff;
 - d. retired senior volunteer officers; or
 - e. any other current member appointed by the District Manager.
- 2.3 The SMT shall provide proportionate representation of all brigades in the district to ensure all district types of brigades are represented (i.e. Operational and Support brigades etc).

Establishment of the SMT

- 2.4 The District Manager shall appoint members to the SMT.
- 2.5 Membership of the SMT shall be for three years, or such lesser period as may be consistent with the Group Officer tenure in the district.

Resignation of SMT members

- 2.6 Upon resignation of a member of the SMT, the District Manager, having consulted with the senior volunteer officers of the district, may appoint a new member to the SMT.

3 Related forms

- > None

SOP SS 2.1.4-6

Removal or Suspension of Senior Management Team Membership

1 Purpose

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

2 Procedures

- 2.1 A District Manager who decides to revoke or suspend a SMT member's appointment 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 making the decision to revoke or suspend 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 without further notice; and
 - e. advise the member that they can apply in writing to the Regional Manager to have this decision reviewed.
- 2.3 Where possible the District Manager should allow the member at least 14 days from the date on which they received the Notice to provide a response or submission.

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.
- 2.4 Within 14 days of receiving any response or submission, the District Manager must advise:
 - a. the member; and
 - b. the relevant Regional Managerin writing of their decision as to whether the member's appointment has been revoked or suspended.

3 Related forms

- > None