



SERVICE STANDARD 7.1.1

CHAPLAINCY AND FAMILY SUPPORT

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Version Number	1.4
SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> SOP 7.1.1-1 Role of Chaplaincy> SOP 7.1.1-2 Qualification Requirements for NSW RFS Chaplains
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Contact	Senior Chaplain or Senior Family Support Chaplain
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The nature of the service given to the community by the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) members and those generally involved in fire related activities, is such that there is a need to provide support in a number of areas.
- 1.2 The Chaplaincy and Family Support service specifically provides spiritual support to members and their families in times of need such as personal tragedy, death, illness and loss and generally overlaps with other areas in providing a range of morale, welfare and financial support.

2 Policy

- 2.1 The Chaplaincy and Family Support service is available to all members of the NSW RFS and their families.
- 2.2 The Chaplaincy and Family Support service is managed by the Senior Chaplain and Senior Family Support Chaplain who are available state wide. They are supported by a number of volunteer Associate Chaplains throughout the state, selected from local clergy and representing all denominations.
- 2.3 The Chaplaincy and Family Support service is in no way intended to alienate or replace Parish Clergy from their NSW RFS parishioners, rather the opposite. It is intended to care for specific needs and to provide another contact with their faith.
- 2.4 Chaplaincy and family support is available on a 24 hour basis by contacting the Senior Chaplains initially via State Operations on 1800 049 933 or on 0418 622 479 or by contacting your local Associate Chaplain.
- 2.5 The Senior Chaplains must be advised immediately of the death or serious injury of a member when on duty.
- 2.6 All contact with the Chaplaincy and Family Support network will be on a confidential basis unless otherwise agreed by the person or persons seeking support.
- 2.7 The Senior Chaplains report to the Commissioner or their appointed nominee.

3 Related documents

- > [Chaplaincy Guidelines](#)
- > Rural Fire Service Major Incident S44/Disaster Plan – see RFS Chaplaincy Incident Action Plan
- > [Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)
- > [Service Standard 7.1.2 Critical Incident Support Services](#)

4 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
1 September 1999	1.0	Initial release
13 June 2007	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 7.1.1 v1.0> Updated to reflect current practice> Addition of SOP 7.1.1-1 Role of the Chaplaincy> Addition of SOP 7.1.1-2 Qualification Requirements
29 October 2009	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 7.1.1 v1.1> Updated to new format and to reflect current practice
13 April 2016	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repealed and remade SS 7.1.1 v1.2> Updated to new format and to reflect current practice
1 June 2020	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Repeals and remakes SS 7.1.1 v1.3> Minor administrative updates

SOP 7.1.1-1

ROLE OF CHAPLAINCY

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This SOP provides information regarding the role of Chaplaincy. Further details can be found in the Chaplaincy Guidelines.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 The role of Chaplaincy is to minister to the spiritual welfare of members of the NSW RFS and their families and to give whatever assistance possible to ancillary units associated in support of the NSW RFS.
- 2.2 If there is a request to conduct any services, the Chaplain will enquire whether the member has any religious affiliation and if so, encourage the inclusion of the priest/pastor, or minister of that particular religion. If there is no religious affiliation on the part of the member concerned, the Chaplains will do all in their role to support and fulfil the request of the members.
- 2.3 Other responsibilities of the Chaplaincy and Family Support service which are incorporated in the above roles are to:
 - a. provide visitation and support to injured members and their families, at home or in hospital;
 - b. counsel (when requested) with regard to personal and/or family problems, with referral to appropriate support services or groups for professional support;
 - c. be available to conduct weddings, infant dedications, funerals of members or their extended family. Such services are also available to 'retired' members;
 - d. be available to support the State Operations Centre Staff, Fire Control Officer or Brigade Captain in contacting family of a member who has been killed or seriously injured in 'the line of duty' and provide support to that family in whatever way possible;
 - e. participate in and support members of the NSW RFS in their community projects where possible, e.g. Field Days, Fundraising;
 - f. visit brigades where and when appropriate and possible; and
 - g. promote and encourage support groups that will enable members to voice their needs to 'others who care' e.g. Programs such as drug and alcohol abuse, dysfunctional families, spouse/partner support, grief, loss and self-esteem.
- 2.4 It is important to understand that the Chaplaincy and Family Support service is in support of 'total family' and not just the NSW RFS member.

On-scene support

- 2.5 The Chaplains will provide 'on-scene support' to members involved in serious incidents at the request of the Officer in Charge. This area of involvement will be in close liaison with the Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) team and in no way would impinge on that function.
- 2.6 The service and support of the Chaplains can be most valuable in the area of 'victim support' at a major incident or rescue.
- 2.7 The Chaplains can provide valuable assistance to the Officer in Charge by taking victims or family aside and explaining to them the standard operating procedures used by the brigades at the scene. This is also a timely place to lend a listening ear to those who need to talk, and to do practical things, such as comforting people by offering them food or blankets. It is also helpful to put them in touch with other agencies.
- 2.8 The Chaplains will also be available to assist any brigade personnel on the scene who may have a need to talk about a particularly stressful aspect or incident.

SOP 7.1.1-2

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NSW RFS CHAPLAINS

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This SOP outlines the qualifications and appointment for NSW RFS Chaplains. Further details can be found in the Chaplaincy Guidelines.

2 Procedures

Qualifications

- 2.1 NSW RFS Chaplains should:
 - a. be an ordained recognised religious practitioner;
 - b. have sufficient experience in pastoral and parish work to ensure that he/she is able to cope with the spiritual, psychological and social needs of those seeking assistance;
 - c. show a willingness to conform with the relevant NSW RFS policies and directions;
 - d. only be expected to act within the mandate of appointment given by their Denominational Head; and
 - e. be fully aware of the confidentiality of his/her role and that the provision of service should be at the request of the member or Command and Control personnel.

Appointment

- 2.2 Both the Senior Chaplain and Senior Family Support Chaplain are appointed by the joint approval of the head of Denomination and the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Associate Chaplaincy

- 2.3 The Senior Chaplains are responsible for establishing a Chaplaincy and Family Support Network across the State. Local clergy are identified from various denominations who are already providing valuable service and support to the NSW RFS and hopefully creating additional support in areas where there is no Chaplaincy coverage.
- 2.4 The Senior Chaplains are responsible to the respective Head of Denomination regarding 'Pastoral' Denominational requirements.
- 2.5 The associate Chaplain is encouraged to be mindful of their existing commitments together with the practice of maintaining healthy self-care whilst serving as a volunteer.
- 2.6 The Senior Chaplains officially represent all Associate Chaplains and Family Support Officers and acts as a liaison between the NSW RFS Senior Executive and the Heads of Churches.

3 Related Forms

- None