



## Fact sheet

# VOLUNTEERS AND FIRE AND EMERGENCY NZ

May 2017

Volunteers will become Fire and Emergency New Zealand 'personnel' on 1 July 2017.

### Fire and Emergency New Zealand Volunteers – the relationship

The relationship will be similar to that which the new organisation has with other personnel (employees and contractors), although crucially the relationship with volunteers will be one of 'engagement' rather than employment.

All volunteers will receive a 'Volunteer Engagement' document, which sets out volunteers' terms of engagement with Fire and Emergency New Zealand, and the organisation's commitments to volunteers.

### Our legislative commitment to our volunteers

The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act is unique in the way that it makes specific reference to recognising, supporting and developing its volunteers.

Volunteer firefighters have a significant role and constitute over 80 percent of the fire services' workforce, so it is essential that the Act contains appropriate support, and that there is clear accountability between Fire and Emergency New Zealand and volunteers. This includes:

- Fire and Emergency New Zealand's duty to volunteers and a requirement to consult with volunteers on matters that may affect them
- Section 118 of the Crown Entities Act where good employer principles apply to volunteers with necessary modifications
- The provision of advocacy services at no cost, and dispute resolution to all volunteers in the event that they need support for unusual circumstances.

### Better support for volunteers

There is a suite of initiatives currently under development as part of the package of better supporting volunteers. Some will be ready for Day One and some will be developed over the next three years, in collaboration with volunteers. The support initiatives that will be in place from Day One will include:

- A Volunteer Issues Process
- An Interim Dispute Resolution process
- Advocacy and Support services
- Wellness initiatives



- Increased funding for training and development, as well as additional in-field support roles
- An improved intranet, free Wi-Fi to volunteer stations and better connectivity.

Over the next three years, Fire and Emergency New Zealand will continue making improvements, including developing policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capability of volunteers. The table on the following page describes the initial plan.

Pending the outcome of the Phase Two Integration Plan, a full work plan for the next three years will be developed.

### **Operationally, most things will stay the same for Day One**

- Volunteers will remain members of existing Stations, Volunteer Fire Brigades or Voluntary Rural Fire Forces (VRFF)
- Brigades and VRFFs respond to the same kinds of incidents they are equipped and trained for now
- Local leadership roles continue
- Current urban rank structures continue
- Current rural operational roles continue
- Current terms and conditions continue
- Existing entitlements retained
- Relationships with unions and associations continue
- Emergency call taking and dispatch through Comcen continues, and rural dispatch continues where appropriate

### **Shaping the future of Fire and Emergency together**

The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Transition Project has brought together a wide range of volunteer and career personnel from across urban and rural sectors to put their minds to how things can be better and different in the future.

A 'Volunteer Working Group' and 'Volunteer Support Management Working Group' have been established to represent the voice of volunteers and volunteer leaders. They've been providing input into the design and development of initiatives to better support volunteers, as well as the Volunteer Engagement document. These groups will continue to have input into the development of a long-term Volunteer Strategy for Fire and Emergency New Zealand, which will include other support initiatives, training and resourcing, and will be rolled out over the next three years