

RESPONSE PROCEDURES

INCIDENT CALLS

Receiving incident calls at fire stations

It is common for people to report incidents by going to a fire station or ringing a fire station rather than calling Triple Zero.

When this happens, it is the responsibility of the firefighter taking the call to get enough information to determine the exact location of the incident and what resources need to be responded, including the response of other agencies such as the RFS, Police or Ambulance.

The more details you can get, the easier it is to provide the appropriate response and for firefighters to develop a plan of attack while on route.

Ask these questions

If you receive a call at a station, you must ask the following questions:

- What is the nature of the problem?
- The exact address or location of the incident?
- The nearest street or landmark?
- Is any person injured or trapped?
- Access details if the incident is within a complex such as a shopping complex, industrial site, construction site, etc.
- Any additional information (including the caller's name and phone number)?

Always confirm the details taken to ensure that they are correct, and be prepared to provide safety advice, such as 'Leave the house now!', 'Close all doors behind you', or 'Make sure every one is accounted for'.

Note: If the person uses English as a second language you may also have to ask what language is being spoken.

Pass on the call

Promptly contact the Communication Centre by telephone or radio and give the Operator all the details, including whether your station is responding to the call. The details of the call must also be recorded in the Occurrence Book.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Preparedness and Response, (02) 9318 4353

File Reference: CHO/02775

In Orders 2002/23

RESPONSE GUIDELINES

Response of additional appliances from stations

1 Discretion to respond additional appliances to fires, rescues and hazmat incidents

While most appliances are dispatched to incidents by the Communication Centres (ComCens), there are circumstances in which a Station Commander has the discretion to respond additional appliances from their station to fires and hazmat incidents, for example:

- when the Station Commander has local knowledge that indicates additional resources may be required, or
- when retained stations need to use a second appliance to transport additional retained firefighters to an incident.

At stations with dual rescue appliances, the Station Commanders have the discretion to respond the additional rescue appliance to rescue calls within their rescue area. In the event that further rescue resources are required, Station Commanders can request their attendance through the ComCen. The ComCen will then pass the request onto the Police Rescue Coordinator.

Relevant ComCens will ensure the Police Rescue Coordinator is aware of the current status of Fire and Rescue NSW's accredited rescue appliances in accordance with the policy on [Notification of rescue unit status](#) on page 3.

At stations with dual hazmat appliances, the Station Commanders do not have the discretion to respond the Hazmat Pump outside the station area. Requests for the Hazmat Pump to leave its station area must be made through the Communication Centre Supervisor in consultation with the relevant Zone Commander, Duty Commander and the Hazmat Manager.

2 ComCens must be notified of all responses

To ensure that the response of additional appliances does not jeopardise Fire and Rescue NSW's ability to respond to other incidents, the Station Commander or Officer in Charge of the appliance must notify the ComCen before responding, giving the reason for the response, for example:

Appliance: *Newcastle Comms, Tanker 444 Blue*
ComCen: *Newcastle Comms, pass your message Tanker 444*
Appliance: *Newcastle Comms, Tanker 444 Blue. Code 1 to Singleton Heights incident, transportation for Retained Firefighters only*
ComCen: *Newcastle Comms, received your Code 1 at 1435 hours, channel clear*

In most cases this will be a formality, but the ComCen has the authority to refuse a request or to refer the request to the Incident Controller for confirmation that the resource is required. This ensures the ComCen can meet its responsibility to maintain response coverage across its dispatch area.

For example, if there is another incident in progress, the additional appliance may be required to remain at the station to provide coverage for stations that have been moved up. Another example would be where the ComCen has been informed of a security threat that requires resources to be held in reserve.

Notification of the ComCen also means that the response will be recorded in FireCAD and included in AIRS reports.

Contact Officer: *Director Operational Capability, (02) 9265 2713*
File Reference: *CHO/05822 In Orders 2005/18 as amended by In Orders 2006/10 and In Orders 2006/20, with amendments*

Response of specialist appliances crewed by two firefighters

To assure crew safety, Heavy Rescue, Heavy Hazmat and Aerial appliances must always respond with the support of an additional FRNSW appliance, preferably a pumper with officer and crew.

An additional appliance does not have to be dispatched when a specialist appliance responds to an incident where other FRNSW crews are already in attendance or are en route.

At incidents outside FRNSW Fire Districts the role of the additional appliance is to back up the specialist crew, not to undertake roles of other agencies, such as fire protection, when those agencies are also in attendance at the incident.

Tankers with a crew of two are not subject to this instruction as they often respond alone to minor, short duration bush and grass fires where safety can be managed by the crew.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Preparedness and Response, (02) 9265 2758

File Reference: NFB/04292

Commissioner's Orders 2011/15

Notification of rescue unit status

1 Notification of unavailability for response

Under the [State rescue policy](#), all accredited rescue units are required to notify the NSW Police, through the Police Rescue Coordinator, when an accredited rescue unit is unavailable for response.

Station Commanders must notify their Communication Centre (ComCen) immediately if the accredited appliance can not respond for any reason, such as insufficient trained personnel available or appliance breakdown. The ComCen will notify the Police Rescue Coordinator.

2 Dual-appliance rescue stations

At dual-appliance rescue stations, Station Commanders must advise their ComCen whether one or both vehicles have sufficient rescue operators. The ComCen Supervisor will record this in FireCAD and pass this information to the Police Rescue Coordinator.

3 Notification of change of rescue status

Station Commanders must also notify their ComCen, who will notify the Police Rescue Coordinator, when the status of their rescue accreditation changes due to unavailability of other rescue units (ie when upgraded from secondary to primary).

Contact Officer: Director Operational Capability, (02) 9265 2713

File Reference: CHO/05822

In Orders 2005/18, with amendments

'No caller on line' incidents

1 What are 'no caller on line' incidents?

'No caller on line' incidents are incidents where a Communication Centre (ComCen) has received a Triple Zero call but there is no caller on the line.

Telstra only puts calls through to Fire and Rescue NSW when the caller has requested the fire service or if the caller has told the Telstra operator details that lead the Telstra operator to decide that they need the fire service. This means that we have to deal with these calls as an alarm of fire.

Under the *Fire Brigades Act 1989*, Fire and Rescue NSW has an obligation to respond to all calls of fire.

2 ComCen actions

The ComCen Operator will immediately ring back the calling number to find out if a response is required.

If the ComCen Operator cannot make voice contact, they will initiate a response to the Calling Number Identification billing address if the call is from a fixed telephone.

If the call is from a mobile telephone, we cannot take any further action, as no address details are available for the call.

3 Response standard

The response to a no caller on line incident is one pumper under siren.

Contact Officer: Director Operational Capability, (02) 2965 2713

File Reference: CHO/05822

In Orders 2003/9, with amendments

Hazardous material incidents on State waters

1 Introduction

The *Fire Brigades Act 1989* has been amended to give the Commissioner the discretion to respond to hazardous material incidents on State waters at the request of a port authority. This amendment formalises the existing long standing arrangement between the ports authorities and Fire and Rescue NSW.

2 Responsibility for State waters

The ports corporations and NSW Maritime are responsible for dealing with pollution incidents (including hazardous material incidents) on State waters. State waters include:

- the territorial sea adjacent to NSW
- the sea on the landward side of the territorial sea adjacent to the State that is not within the limits of the State; and
- the parts of the waters of the Ports of Botany Bay, Clarence River (Yamba), Newcastle Harbour, Port Kembla, Sydney Harbour and Eden that are within the limits of the State.

The ports corporations and NSW Maritime are the combat agencies for hazardous material incidents on State waters, in accordance with the [NSW State Waters Marine Oil and Chemical Spill Contingency Plan](#).

3 Response to hazardous material incidents on State waters

At the request of the relevant port authority, Fire and Rescue NSW will respond to hazardous material incidents on State waters to assist the port authority.

4 The amendment to the Fire Brigades Act 1989

The *Fire Brigades Act 1989* was amended by the *Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (No 2) 1998* which was proclaimed on 26 November 1998. Section 4 was amended and a new Section 20A was added, as follows:

Section 4 -Application of Act

Insert after section 4 (3):

- (4) *This section has effect subject to sections 20 and 20A.*

Section 20A

Insert after section 20:

20A Hazardous material incidents outside area to which Act applies

- (1) *The Commissioner may, at the request of a port authority, permit any members of a fire brigade to attend the site of a hazardous material incident (whether land-based or otherwise) on that part of State waters in relation to which the port authority exercises functions.*

- (2) *At the site of such a hazardous material incident the members of the fire brigade may take such measures as the officer in charge of the members thinks proper for the protection and saving of life and property, for confining and ending such an incident and for rendering the site of such an incident safe.*
- (3) *In such a case the provisions of this Act apply to the hazardous material incident and to anything done at the site of the incident as if the incident were not on State waters.*
- (4) *In this section:*

port authority means:

- (a) *the Minister administering the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995, or*
- (b) *a Port Corporation (within the meaning of the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995) exercising port safety functions (within the meaning of that Act).*

site includes any area in the vicinity of the incident as is for the time being determined by the officer in charge.

State waters has the same meaning as in the Marine Pollution Act 1987.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Specialised Operations, (02) 9318 4872

File Reference: CHO/00169

In Orders 1998/25, with amendments

Response to lock outs

1. When Fire and Rescue NSW receives a call to a lock out and there is a risk to life and property, we respond to the incident as a fire, hazmat or rescue incident, as appropriate.
2. There is no requirement under the *Fire Brigades Act 1989* for Fire and Rescue NSW to respond to situations where there is no threat of injury or death to people or damage to property.
3. Locksmiths are the appropriate people to be called in most lock out situations. Their services are widely available and many provide a 24 hour service.
4. When a request is received for assistance at a lock out, or when firefighters arrive at an incident and it is found to be a lock out, the Communications Operator or Incident Controller must consider whether there is a risk of a person being injured or damage to property before taking action.
5. Unless such a risk is present, Fire and Rescue NSW will not assist in gaining entry to the property.
6. If there is no threat to people or property, firefighters should explain that it is not the Fire and Rescue NSW's role to respond to lock outs, and advise the caller to contact a locksmith.
7. Firefighters should make every effort to assist the caller to locate a locksmith.

Contact Officer: Director Operational Capability, (02) 9265 2713

File Reference: CHO/03401

In Orders 1998/4, with amendments

Reptile handling and awareness

1 Policy

The retrieval of reptiles from areas of public gathering and private dwellings is a community service provided to the public by selected Fire and Rescue NSW stations.

2 Accreditation

The State Rescue Board's training advisory panel has determined that reptile retrieval is not a rescue incident under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* and therefore does not require accreditation by the Minister.

3 Eligible stations

Only stations that have a documented history of requests for reptile retrieval may request training. This will require the endorsement of the relevant Zone Commander. Station training is coordinated through the Training Manager, in consultation with the Rescue Section.

4 Application

Due to the nature of these incidents, firefighters will be involved in reptile retrieval on a voluntary basis only. These guidelines cover firefighters who elect to be involved in reptile retrieval and are attached to the identified stations.

5 Training and equipment

When undertaking reptile retrievals, participating firefighters must:

- have satisfactorily completed Fire and Rescue NSW's approved training course and continue to maintain their competency through annual recertification
- be equipped with approved retrieval equipment
- have a current WorkCover approved first aid qualification, and
- ensure a 'No Touch' protocol is adhered to.

6 Risk assessment and first aid

Before undertaking a reptile retrieval, the following must be in place:

- a current 'Risk Assessment' is in place and communicated to all present (forms are available from the Rescue Section)
- at least one person present, not being the firefighter involved in the reptile retrieval, has a current WorkCover approved first aid qualification, and
- the appliance first aid kit, complete with a suitable pressure bandage, must be suitably located during the reptile retrieval so as to provide immediate first aid treatment in the event of a bite.

7 Response procedures

When attending to retrieve a reptile, the following procedures apply.

- 7.1 The fire appliance must proceed under normal road conditions to the retrieval site.
- 7.2 A minimum of two appropriately trained firefighters must be available.
- 7.3 The availability of communications with the nearest Communication Centre or the Triple Zero network must be confirmed.

8 Personal protective equipment

The minimum level of personal protective equipment to be worn during retrieval operations is:

- long sleeved work shirt with sleeves rolled down
- overtrousers
- Fire and Rescue NSW issue work gloves, and
- Fire and Rescue NSW issue protective eye wear.

Note: See also the infection control procedures in the policy on [Animal handling](#) on page 154.

9 Priority of emergency calls

Appliances should be available to respond to emergency calls if required. Emergency calls have priority except in unusual circumstances where lives may be in danger from the reptile.

When accepting a call to a reptile retrieval the officer in charge must take into account the following:

- what is the location of the retrieval?
- what travel and travel time is involved to attend the request?
- is the reptile inside or outside a structure?
- are people in immediate danger from the reptile?
- is there another trained unit closer to the incident?
- is there an alternative agency available to perform the retrieval?
- if the attending Brigade is a primary rescue station, can rescue responsibilities be maintained?
- are retrieval trained firefighters on duty?
- is there a current very high or extreme fire danger?
- how will it affect ongoing Fire and Rescue NSW activities such as drills, exercises, on-going or impending emergencies, and other relevant commitments?

10 Right of refusal

Fire and Rescue NSW at all times has the right to refuse a reptile retrieval request. The officer in charge should take into account the above points when making the decision.

11 Transport and release of reptiles

No reptile should be transported in the passenger compartment of a fire appliance. Reptiles must only be transported in an approved catch bag that is escape proof and in a suitable appliance pocket that will protect the reptile.

Under no circumstances are reptiles to be stored on Fire and Rescue NSW premises.

Reptiles should be released at the earliest opportunity into a suitable bushland location. National Parks and Wildlife guidelines should be followed when selecting a release location.

To minimise the risk of releasing exotic (non-native) reptiles into native environments, suitable arrangements must be made with local WIRES representatives for an appropriate drop off point. This includes reptiles of unidentifiable species, those that are sick or injured and those that are captured during colder months.

12 National Parks and Wildlife reptile release guidelines

The following conditions apply to any reptile we capture and release.

- 12.1 A record of capture including the type of reptile, the location of release and duration of captivity, must be recorded in the station's Occurrence Book.
- 12.2 Reptiles are to be released into an area in which that species is endemic and not more than 20 kilometres from the original capture site.
- 12.3 The local Area Manager of a National Park is to be notified prior to the release of reptiles into any National Parks and Wildlife managed areas.
- 12.4 Where possible, reptiles are to be released out of sight of the general public.
- 12.5 Venomous reptiles transported from capture site to a release location must be transported in a locked, escape proof container.

13 Decontamination of capture equipment

Any equipment that has come into contact with a reptile should be removed from service and washed in clean soap and water to remove any residue from the reptile. Wearing PVC gloves during decontamination of equipment is recommended.

Contact Officer: Senior Rescue Instructor, (02) 9742 7338

File Reference: CHO/07141

In Orders 2004/22, with amendments

Sydney Harbour heritage wharf developments

Many of the Sydney Harbour heritage wharves including Walsh Bay, Pyrmont Bay, Jones Bay and Woolloomooloo Bay, either have recently undergone, or are currently undergoing, re-development. Some wharf buildings have either been refurbished or remain in their original character of lightweight construction (usually timber), built over a concrete apron. In each case the apron is, in turn, supported above the harbour by timber or concrete marine piles.

As part of the approvals process relating to each development, Fire and Rescue NSW has sought to assess engineered characteristics associated with fire safety and Fire and Rescue NSW intervention. Fire and Rescue NSW has serious doubts whether any of the assessed wharf aprons, other than the finger wharf redevelopment at Woolloomooloo Bay, is structurally adequate to support the imposed loads of Fire and Rescue NSW vehicles.

Accordingly, considerable limitations will apply at all times to the access of Fire and Rescue NSW vehicles on to the Sydney heritage wharves. The following precautions must be taken:

Woolloomooloo Bay finger wharf

Single lane access is available for Fire and Rescue NSW vehicles including the Bronto hydraulic platform. **No vehicle must pass or be situated alongside another vehicle at any time, while upon the apron.** In the event that single lane access is not maintained the marine piles supporting the structure will become severely overstressed. The nature of the redevelopment of the Finger Wharf provides limited turnaround facilities for Fire and Rescue NSW vehicles.

Other heritage wharves

In every case, no Fire and Rescue NSW vehicle (pumper, rescue, platform, ladder etc) should proceed on to, or be deployed on to any part of the wharf which is supported above the harbour by marine piles. Should the need arise to convey crews and equipment to the most distant end of any wharf structure, other means may need to be employed.

These measures and precautions are to relate only to the existing heritage wharves or those heritage wharves previously redeveloped, such as:

City West Development - Jones Bay - Wharves 19, 20 and 21.

Pyrmont Bay - Wharves 7, 8 and 9.

Sydney Theatre Company and adjacent wharves - Walsh Bay wharves 2 to 9.

In each instance where a wharf is occupied (as in those above), full sprinkler protection and hydrant fire mains have been provided, and booster assemblies are located at the street access to the wharf. All pumping operations should therefore be undertaken at the respective booster assembly at the street access, in order to supplement supplies for first attack crews on the wharf. Structurally adequate access has been provided up to each booster assembly.

It can be assumed that heritage wharves in Newcastle and Wollongong have similar structural characteristics. Accordingly, strict limitations on vehicular access must also be observed.

The Structural Fire Safety Unit, (02) 9742 7400, can provide further information regarding the Sydney wharf redevelopments.

Contact Officer: Structural Fire Safety Unit, (02) 9742 7400

File Reference: FSD/POL/131467

In Orders 1998/16, with amendments

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Incident Management Team response

1 Introduction

Fire and Rescue NSW uses the Incident Control System (ICS) for managing emergency incidents. The ICS Standard Operational Guidelines outline the position descriptions for Incident Management Teams (IMTs).

The composition of an IMT depends on the size and complexity of the incident. Standard Operational Guideline 2.3, [Alarm Response Protocols](#), ensures that sufficient firefighters and officers are responded to fulfil IMT roles.

2 Incident Management Team rosters

The [Recommended practice for Greater Metropolitan Directorate Incident Management Teams](#), available on Station Portal, details the rostering arrangements for IMTs in the Greater Metropolitan area.

Zone management teams outside the Greater Metropolitan area have plans in place to use identified personnel, and contingency plans to request additional senior officers from the Greater Metropolitan area if necessary.

Incident Controllers should not hesitate to call for additional command support if it is required at an incident, regardless of location.

3 Call off/escalation

As senior officers arrive and confer with the Incident Controller on the IMT requirements for the incident, the Incident Controller may determine that the scale and complexity of the incident does not require additional senior officers, in which case those not required will be released or called off.

Alternatively, if the Incident Controller requires additional senior officers to manage the incident, they are to request them through their Communication Centre.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Lessons Learned, (02) 9265 2966

File Reference: NFB/02382

In Orders 2008/17, with amendments

Recalling country Station Officers to duty

Station Officers are appointed to Country Brigades as Officer-in-Charge in order to provide additional professional support and expertise.

Station Officers so appointed are entitled, as far as is practicable, to enjoy their off duty periods unfettered by incidents of a *minor* nature.

However, when a call of fire or other incident is received during the off duty hours of the Station Officer involving possible substantial property loss or a threat to life or of other serious nature including major hazmat incidents, the Captain or Retained Member in charge is to ensure that the Station Officer is contacted or acquainted with the known facts, as soon as possible.

Station Officers are expected to attend when they are of the opinion that the situation would benefit by such response or whenever so requested by the Retained Member in charge at the incident scene and may take charge or conduct other essential duties in accordance with the *Standard Operational Guideline No 1: Incident Control System*.

It is essential that all resources, human and otherwise, available in country areas are judiciously utilised to ensure the most efficient service is given to the community.

Station Officers and Captains are expected to cooperate in harmony and develop mutual arrangements so that this instruction may be given effect.

In Orders 1995/19, with amendments

Equipment for commanders' vehicles during major incidents

1 Introduction

As a result of suggestions from Inspectors at debriefs following the 2001/2002 bushfires, kits have been developed for senior officers allocated spare vehicles during major emergencies.

2 Permanently allocated vehicles

Provision of equipment for permanently allocated vehicles is the responsibility of the officer to whom the vehicle is allocated, in consultation with management of the appropriate Directorate.

3 Emergency car kits

The kits contain essential items such as:

- topographical maps for Sydney and outer Sydney
- street directories for Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Blue Mountains and Central Coast
- a compass
- a mobile telephone
- Fire and Rescue NSW telephone directory
- an ICS resource kit
- ICS tabards
- torch and battery
- first aid kit
- hand-held GRN transceiver, and
- other ancillary items including goggles, dust masks and a water bottle.

4 Responsibility

It is the responsibility of officers allocated a temporary vehicle during a major incident to ensure that they receive necessary resources (a car kit) before being deployed to an incident. The officer will sign for and return the kit after performing duties, unless relieved in the field. Any losses/breakages must be accounted for and replacement arranged through the Directorate where the officer is stationed.

5 Logistics

The emergency car kits are stored at the Rescue Section and the Bushland Urban Interface Section at Greenacre. Accordingly, senior officer deployments to major incidents will in future originate from Greenacre if there is a need for a car kit.

Contact Officer: Manager Bushland Urban Interface, (02) 9742 7348

File Reference: CHO/06663

In Orders 2003/1, with amendments

SPECIALIST PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT

Urban search and rescue

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Fire and Rescue NSW is designated by the [Major structure collapse sub-plan](#) of the *State disaster plan* (DISPLAN) as having responsibility for the overall management and control of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Task Forces, personnel and equipment.
- 1.2 A USAR Task Force includes Fire and Rescue NSW rescue operators trained to nationally accredited levels, and Ambulance SCAT Paramedics, Police dog handlers and search dogs, engineers, hazmat specialists, and other specialised functions.
- 1.3 The main focus of Fire and Rescue NSW USAR infrastructure is protection of the people of NSW in the event of major structure collapse. However, by agreement with Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and the United Nations, it is possible that Task Forces could be called upon to deploy to other states within Australia, or overseas.

2 Structure collapse

- 2.1 Minor structure collapses will be dealt with using normal rescue and emergency management arrangements at the local level.
- 2.2 In the event of a major structure collapse, a coordinated response will generally be required.
- 2.3 The NSW Police Force, in consultation with responding units, is responsible for determining whether an incident can be handled using normal procedures or constitutes an emergency in terms of the State DISPLAN. Such decisions will be made by Local Emergency Operations Controllers (LEOCon), District Emergency Operations Controllers (DEOCon), or the State Emergency Operations Controller (SEOCon), as appropriate.

3 Mobilisation within NSW

- 3.1 The *Major structure collapse sub-plan* details four stages of USAR Task Force mobilisation:
 - Alert stage,
 - Stand by stage,
 - Call out stage, and
 - Stand down stage.

Alert stage

- 3.2 On being informed by the SEOCon of an alert, the Response Coordinator at Sydney Operational Communications will:
 - notify the Director Operational Capability;
 - notify the Manager Rescue Section;
 - facilitate activation of the Major Incident Coordination Centre (MICC), if not already activated, and ensure that all necessary notifications are made;

- ensure that liaison officers are appointed at the relevant District Emergency Operations Centres (EOC);
- ensure that a USAR reconnaissance party is deployed; and
- place a USAR Task Force on stand by.

Stand by stage

3.3 On being informed by the SEOCon of a stand by, the Director Operational Capability will:

- ensure that the USAR Task Force is assembled and ready for deployment; and
- ensure that a Fire and Rescue NSW liaison officer is in place at the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC), Sydney Police Centre.

Call out stage

3.4 On being informed by the SEOCon of a USAR call out, the Director Operational Capability will:

- ensure that a USAR Task Force is deployed; and
- ensure that logistics support and ICS are in place to support the USAR deployment.

Stand down stage

3.5 On being informed by the DEOCon to stand down, the Director Operational Capability will:

- ensure that the USAR Taskforce is de-mobilised; and
- arrange for debriefs.

4 Mobilisation to other States and Territories, or internationally

4.1 Requests for mobilisation to other states and territories, or outside Australia, will be made by Emergency Management Australia to the SEOCon, who will confer with the Minister and Commissioner.

4.2 Such Task Forces may include personnel and equipment from other agencies and fire services within Australia which have a USAR capability.

Contact Officer: Manager Rescue Section, (02) 9742 7344

File Reference: CHO/04781

In Orders 2001/4, with amendments

Using aircraft

1 Application

This instruction applies to the use of helicopters or fixed wing aircraft for Fire and Rescue NSW operations, including:

- transporting teams and/or equipment to incidents
- water bombing
- aerial observation of incidents, and
- support for training or exercises.

2 Use at incidents

An Incident Controller (IC) may authorise the use of aircraft at or for response to incidents within the limits of their delegations in the [Delegations manual](#).

Note: Officers are accountable to the Director Operational Capability for expenditure on aircraft services. When cost exceeds delegation, the request must be referred to the Director Operational Capability.

3 Responding aircraft

The IC must contact the Response Coordinator or the MICC, when activated, to request the response of aircraft to incidents.

The Response Coordinator or the MICC will determine the availability of the shared Fire and Rescue NSW/Police Helicopter or other approved aircraft services.

4 Use for non-emergency activities

Requests to use aircraft for non-emergency activities such as training must be referred to the Manager Counter Terrorism and Aviation for authorisation by the Director Operational Capability.

The cost of using aircraft for these activities must be met from the requesting area's budget.

5 Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Police helicopter

Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Police have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) that sets out the operational arrangements and priorities for the shared use of the Kawasaki BK 117 helicopter. The primary role of helicopter is to support counter terrorism operations through the rapid deployment of:

- tactical operations teams
- forensic services
- bomb disposal resources
- chemical, biological and radiological detection and decontamination resources, and
- urban search and rescue resources.

The use of the helicopter for other emergencies or training is secondary to the counter-terrorism role.

During any Fire and Rescue NSW operations, the helicopter crew will include the Fire and Rescue NSW Aviation Officer who will use the callsign Fire-Air 1 on the GRN talkgroup for the area. If the aircraft remains after the initial attack to support operations it will operate on a talkgroup designated by the IC.

The Response Coordinator or the MICC will liaise with the Police Aviation Support Branch to determine the status, suitability and availability of the helicopter when aircraft services are required by Fire and Rescue NSW.

6 NSW RFS aviation support during total fire bans and S44 declarations

During total fire bans, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) may operate contracted reconnaissance aircraft (RFS aircraft) in urban interface areas to detect or monitor bush and grass fires. These aircraft are staffed by an observer or air attack supervisor and are supported by water bombing aircraft.

RFS aviation support for bush and grass fires within or adjacent to Fire and Rescue NSW Fire Districts may be requested at any time. All costs incurred will be the responsibility of Fire and Rescue NSW unless a bushfire emergency has been declared under Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

The Response Coordinator or the MICC will contact the Fire and Rescue NSW Liaison Officer at RFS State Operations or the Fire and Rescue NSW Manager Bushland Urban Interface to initiate the deployment of RFS aircraft.

When RFS aircraft are deployed to support operations in Fire Districts, simplex 1301 is the primary talkgroup for ground-to-air communication. However, other 1300 series talkgroups can be made available by the IC on request. As callsigns for RFS aircraft will vary, the IC will be advised of the callsign used by the aircraft supporting their operation at the time of its deployment.

See also [Radio communication with the NSW Rural Fire Service](#) on page 112.

RFS aircraft will monitor 1301 and contact the IC on arrival. The aircraft may land for a briefing or to pick up a Fire and Rescue NSW Officer to assist with the aerial operations.

Communication with RFS aircraft is the responsibility of the IC and, if necessary, the IC may approve the Operations Officer, a Divisional Commander or a Sector Commander talking directly with the aircraft to direct water bombing operations and ensure the safety of firefighters.

RFS aircraft may be allocated alternative talkgroups when operating during a Section 44 emergency. Radio communication with RFS aircraft during a Section 44 fire will be managed by the Incident Management Team in accordance with the communication plan developed for the emergency.

The above information should be read in conjunction with *Standard Operational Guidelines* Section 1, *Incident Control System*, and Section 2, *Communications*.

Contact Officer: Manager Counter Terrorism and Aviation, (02) 9265 2766

File Reference: CHO/01426

In Orders 2003/22, with amendments

For safe procedures for working with helicopters, see *Standard Operational Guideline No 15.2: [Safe work with helicopters](#)*.

Accelerant Detecting Canine

Duty Commanders in the gSa and Zone Commanders in the country are authorised to request the attendance of the Accelerant Detecting Canine by contacting the Fire Investigation and Research Unit on (02) 9742 7395 or the respective Communication Centres.

The Canine is based in Sydney, so obvious time delays apply to country responses.

The Accelerant Detecting Canine is trained to locate traces of common ignitable liquids at an incident. This can be of great assistance in the determination of origin and cause of a fire. If fire crews believe that accelerant have possibly been used, then the Accelerant Detecting Canine should be considered as a tool to assist in this determination.

Some of the possible signs of use of accelerant are:

- characteristic burn pattern,
- indication of fire trailers,
- rapid fire development inconsistent with available combustible materials,
- unusual odours, or
- damage to building consistent with a vapour explosion.

The Accelerant Detecting Canine can also be utilised to assist police in the collection of samples, searching around the scene to determine if containers have been discarded, or by determining if a suspect has the odour of an ignitable liquid on their clothing.

It is imperative that the scene is kept secure prior to the arrival of the accelerant detecting canine, and any use of liquid ignitables, such as refuelling generators, be conducted at a distance from the scene.

The Canine Handler has total responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the Accelerant Detecting Canine and has the final say as to whether an incident is suitable for the Accelerant Detecting Canine to search.

Contact Officer: Manager Fire Investigation and Research Unit, (02) 9742 7395

File Reference: CHO/02196

In Orders 2000/2, with amendments

DELAYED RESPONSE

There are a number of circumstances which may cause delayed response, eg:

- making up from a drill
- pump tests
- changing batteries
- changing a wheel on an appliance
- restowing hose and equipment after a fire
- servicing extinguishers and equipment used after a fire
- commitment to a previous call
- servicing SCBA

Breathing apparatus which has been worn must be serviced on return to the station. On those occasions that a Brigade is required to respond to a fire or incident whilst breathing apparatus is being serviced, the Station Commander should inform the Communication Centre that there will be a delay in responding due to the SCBA being serviced. The Communication Centre will then consider response of another station as appropriate. It must be clearly understood that no Brigade is to be taken 'off line' or 'stood down' while sets are being serviced.

The time taken in servicing SCBA after use at a fire or incident is to be considered an extension of the fire or incident at which the SCBA was used. It is no different to restoring or servicing an appliance on return to the station after attending a fire or incident.

The Station Commander has a responsibility to ensure that the appliance and equipment is made ready to respond without unnecessary delay.

On receipt of a call during the time when SCBA is being serviced:

- The call is to be accepted, however, the Communication Centre is to be notified of the circumstances (as it would on any other occasion when delay is incurred).
- On completion of the servicing, the Communication Centre is to be notified that the station is responding.
- Stations deemed to receive an unusually large number of calls, or where calls are known to occur at change of shift on a regular basis have been issued with additional masks to minimise response down time.

In Orders 1987/20, with amendments

CALL OFFS

Rescue call offs

Firefighters attending rescue incidents involving the response of an accredited rescue unit are reminded that the *State Rescue Policy*, Section 2.17 states:

The senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue incident is responsible for ensuring that appropriate rescue assets are in attendance. Where the senior police officer present at the scene of the rescue incident is aware of information which changes the initial rescue response requirements, he/she should issue directions to VKG RCO to change the rescue arrangements accordingly. The senior police officer present at the scene of the rescue incident may call-off rescue units, after it is determined, in consultation with the senior ambulance officer present, that no extrication or specialised support requirements exist. In the absence of on scene police, the VKG RCO may down grade a rescue unit's response from urgent duty to normal driving conditions on advice of the senior ambulance office present at the scene. Responding units are to acknowledge the changed arrangements.

Fire and Rescue NSW personnel on scene at a rescue incident do not have the authority to call off responding accredited rescue units, including those from Fire and Rescue NSW. In instances where there is no NSW Police Officer on scene, the Incident Controller can recommend that the responding rescue unit be called off.

In these circumstances, the Incident Controller should inform the relevant Communication Centre (ComCen) of such a recommendation along with the reasons for the recommendation. The ComCen will then contact the NSW Police Rescue Coordinator. The NSW Police Rescue Coordinator will then assume responsibility for calling off the responding rescue unit based on information from the Incident Controller.

When recommending that an accredited rescue unit be called off, the Incident Controller should consider the following:

- Occupants of motor vehicles involved in accidents, while not physically trapped, may be confined as a consequence of injuries; therefore the responding rescue unit may be required to attend to provide support or access for Ambulance officers on site.
- Appropriate consultation with other emergency service personnel should take place before recommending the call off of a responding rescue unit.

If any doubt exists relating to whether a person is trapped or confined by injuries, the rescue unit should be allowed to continue its response to the incident.

Contact Officer: Manager Rescue, (02) 9742 7344

File Reference: CHO/06874

In Orders 2005/24, with amendments

FIREFIGHTERS ASSISTING AT INCIDENTS WHILE OFF DUTY

1 Occupational health and safety considerations

In accepting or requesting the assistance of an off duty firefighter, the Incident Controller makes Fire and Rescue NSW liable for the actions of that firefighter.

Before a firefighter assists at an incident while off duty, the firefighter and the Incident Controller of the incident shall consider the occupational health and safety implications of the firefighter's participation. Factors to consider include:

- the risk to the firefighter and the other members of the team;
- the availability of protective clothing and equipment; and
- the training and capability of the firefighter.

2 Offers to assist at Fire and Rescue NSW operations

When a firefighter off duty voluntarily offers to assist the Incident Controller at an incident where Fire and Rescue NSW is in attendance, and the Incident Controller accepts the assistance, a permanent firefighter can apply to be credited with consolidated leave for the number of hours engaged in fire fighting operations. A retained firefighter can apply to be paid for authorised duties under Clause 6.6 of the *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2008* or, if on leave, can apply for a recredit of leave.

3 Requests to assist at Fire and Rescue NSW operations

When a firefighter is off duty, and their services are requested by the Incident Controller at an incident where Fire and Rescue NSW is in attendance, and the firefighter agrees to assist, a permanent firefighter can apply for overtime at the rates given in the *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Permanent Firefighting Staff) Award 2008*. A retained firefighter can apply to be paid for authorised duties under Clause 6.6 of the *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2008* or, if on leave, can apply for a recredit of leave.

4 Recall to duty

When a firefighter is recalled to duty under Clause 28 (1) of the *Fire Brigades Regulation 2008*, a permanent firefighter will be paid overtime in accordance with Clause 9.5 of the *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Permanent Firefighting Staff) Award 2008*. A retained firefighter on leave will have the leave recredited in accordance with clauses 10.6 or 12.8 of the *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2008*.

5 Applications for payment or leave

Applications for payment, consolidated leave or recredit of leave must be made in writing to the Duty Commander or Zone Commander and be accompanied by an explanation of the circumstances. The Duty Commander or Zone Commander shall verify the claim with the Incident Controller.

6 AIRS reports

When an off duty firefighter has assisted at an incident, the details of the assistance shall be recorded on the AIRS form and the reasons why the assistance was required given in the notes section.

7 Assisting at incidents where Fire and Rescue NSW is not in attendance

A firefighter off duty who voluntarily assists at an emergency incident where Fire and Rescue NSW is not in attendance is acting as a civilian. Fire and Rescue NSW is not liable for their actions. If injured at such an incident, firefighters cannot assume that they will be covered for workers' compensation; but they may submit an application for compensation along with proof of the occurrence of the incident and their attendance. Where possible, the proof should be provided by a Police or Ambulance Officer or other responsible person in attendance. The claim will be considered by the Commissioner and, subject to his satisfaction, by Fire and Rescue NSW's insurers.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Operational Personnel, (02) 2965 2869

File Reference: CHO/01949

In Orders 1998/16, with amendments

MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

Policy on memorandums of understanding and similar agreements

1 What is an MOU?

An MOU is a document that sets out each party's expectations of the other, without recourse to legal remedy if either party fails to fulfil those expectations. It sets out the guiding principles by which the parties wish to conduct their dealings with each other.

Fire and Rescue NSW uses MOUs, rather than contracts, when a legally binding agreement is not necessary or appropriate (that is, when there would never be an intention or requirement to sue the other party for breach of the MOU).

Fire and Rescue NSW calls such non-legal agreements memorandums of understanding but they may have other names such as statements of joint intent, letters of intent, joint protocols or memorandums of arrangement.

2 Where to find an MOU

A [list of MOUs and similar agreements](#) that Fire and Rescue NSW has entered into is available on the Specialised Operations site on the Intranet.

3 Creating and managing MOUs

MOUs must be created and managed in accordance with the [Recommended practice for memorandums of understanding and similar agreements](#), available on the [Recommended Practices page](#) of Station Portal.

Contact Officer: Manager Information Coordination, (02) 9265 2971

File Reference: NFB/06965 In Orders 2010/19, with amendments

NSW Rural Fire Service

The [Memorandum of understanding between the NSW Fire Brigades and the NSW Rural Fire Service](#) provides an overall framework for cooperation and joint operations involving both fire services.

It is available on the Intranet under Specialised Operations.

Contact Officer: Manager Bushland Urban Interface Section, (02) 9742 7348

File Reference: CHO/01578 In Orders 2005/23, with amendments

MUTUAL AID

Mutual Aid Agreements

In order to reinforce the co-operative principles established by the Memorandum of Understanding between Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, both services have agreed to encourage Fire Control Officers and Zone Commanders to discuss the need for local Mutual Aid Agreements. It should be noted that the agreements are not mandatory, and it is therefore important that a high level of communication is maintained between the services whether or not an agreement is in place.

A Mutual Aid Agreement is a document which outlines co-operative arrangements between the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW on a local Government area basis. The agreements are intended to ensure that every community is provided with the best possible response to incidents.

Agreements should include information relating to:

- Mutual Aid Zones for automatic joint response to certain types of incidents
- Significant Assets Register identifying community assets which may require joint fire service response
- Joint response arrangements to structure fires, bushfires, and other incidents
- Command and control arrangements in accordance with the MOU
- Safety
- Receipt of calls and dispatch of resources
- Joint training arrangements
- Joint Consultative Committee
- Dispute resolution arrangements

The Fire Services Joint Standing Committee has prepared a document titled [Guidelines for the Preparation of Mutual Aid Agreements](#) and also a [model Mutual Aid Agreement](#), to assist Fire Control Officers and Zone Commanders. Copies of these documents are available on the Intranet under Specialised Operations. Enquiries regarding the process of developing the plans should be referred to Fire and Rescue NSW's representatives on the Review Sub-committee of the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee.

In Orders 1997/23, with amendments

Requesting Rural Fire Service response to Mutual Aid Zones or significant assets

Mutual Aid Agreements on a local government area basis between Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service may include Mutual Aid Zones and also identify significant assets where joint fire service response is recommended under specified circumstances. In some areas Mutual Aid Zones or significant assets have been established within Fire and Rescue NSW Fire Districts where a joint response by Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service occurs under certain circumstances, for example bush and grass fires during total fire bans.

When information about Mutual Aid Agreements has been entered into the dispatch system, Communication Centre Operators will automatically respond both services in accordance with agreements, and the dispatch printout will include the information that the Rural Fire Service has been notified. However, because of the timeframe required to enter more than 100 Mutual Aid Agreements into the computer aided dispatch system, Communication Centre Operators will not always be automatically advised of the existence of a Mutual Aid Agreement.

If the crew of a responding appliance:

- knows that the Rural Fire Service should be responded to an incident in a Fire and Rescue NSW Fire District under the terms of a Mutual Aid Agreement, and
- there is no indication on the dispatch printout that they have been responded,

the Officer in Charge of the appliance should send an informative message with the Code 1 to the Communication Centre requesting Rural Fire Service response. On receipt of such a message, Communication Centre Operators must immediately notify the relevant Rural Fire District.

The Rural Fire Service will be promulgating a similar instruction regarding Fire and Rescue NSW Mutual Aid responses into Rural Fire Districts.

Contact Officer: Assistant Director Preparedness and Response, (02) 9318 4353

File Reference: CHO/01578 and CHO/02592 *In Orders 2001/8, with amendments*