



Working and volunteering

Balancing work and volunteering

The commitment of volunteers is greatly valued, however it is acknowledged that your involvement in emergency operations is voluntary and you are not expected to be available at all times. Nor should you place your employment and livelihood at risk to partake in voluntary duties. The support structure of the whole of Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) allows the flexibility to coordinate the resources needed in balance with the time volunteers are able to commit.

Legislative protections

QFRS volunteers enjoy appropriate protections under legislation. The actual arrangements that apply to you will depend on whether your employer operates under the State or Federal legislation, and includes the *Industrial Relations Act 1999* and the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Both provide protection from unfair dismissal due to temporary absences from work by a member of a Rural Fire Brigade attending an emergency situation. Key aspects of the protection provided under this legislation are that the period of absence from work is reasonable and that some notice and evidence are provided.

With this in mind, the Department of Community Safety (DCS) always encourages its volunteers to negotiate suitable leave arrangements with their employers prior to the need to attend an emergency as a volunteer. These arrangements may be informal, such as a verbal agreement or may need to be made more formally in writing.

Employer incentives

The DCS acknowledges the significant contribution to the community made by employers when releasing staff from work responsibilities to respond to emergencies. Businesses release their staff at their own cost, and an employer must give consideration to the operability of their business when considering employee leave.

As an incentive and in recognition of their support, employers whose staff members volunteer for the DCS are offered an exemption on payroll tax for the hours staff spend away from work serving the community. This exemption recognises the importance of volunteers and the commitment of employers for allowing staff to take time away from work to assist in emergency operations.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact your Area Office.