

# EMPLOYER INFORMATION FACTSHEET

*Community based volunteers at the forefront of a safe and resilient NSW*



## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE NSW SES?

The NSW SES is responsible for preparing communities for severe weather and responding to incidents as a result of floods, storms and tsunamis. The NSW SES also assists NSW Police and other emergency services in searches for missing persons and land based rescue incidents.

## WHAT DO NSW SES VOLUNTEERS DO?

Unit Volunteers are united by our mission of saving lives and protecting communities. Their primary responsibilities are in flood, storm and tsunami emergency response, and undertake specialised training to respond in the following roles.



**Storm Response:** NSW SES volunteers respond to requests for assistance from residents whose properties have been impacted by severe storm damage, and require emergency assistance. Tasks may include temporary roof repairs, to cutting down and clearing fallen trees.



**Flood Rescue:** NSW SES flood rescue operators assist in the rescue and evacuation of people and animals caught in floodwaters. NSW SES flood rescue operators are highly trained in various flood rescue techniques in swift water and flood boat rescue.



**Road Crash Rescue:** NSW SES is the largest provider of Road Crash Rescue (RCR) in country areas. These accredited RCR Units undertake specialised training to ensure currency and capability is maintained throughout NSW, to attend motor vehicle accidents and rescue injured persons.



**Vertical Rescue:** NSW SES Vertical Rescue Operators are located at Units along the east coast of the State and in areas with popular recreational climbing areas, mining facilities and industrial complexes. Vertical Rescue Operators use their specialist skills to rescue people/animals trapped at heights and depths, often in challenging environments such as a cliff face, mineshaft, grain silo, cave, or drain.



**Land Search:** NSW SES Unit Volunteers are provided with specialised training to support the NSW Police Force in searches for missing persons, often in challenging terrain and conditions.



**Alpine Search and Rescue:** NSW SES based in alpine areas assist the NSW Police Force in Alpine Search and Rescue tasks. NSW SES Units are equipped with specialised snowmobiles and alpine equipment to assist in searches for missing persons, often in difficult, snow laden terrain.

## HOW CAN EMPLOYING A NSW SES VOLUNTEER BENEFIT MY BUSINESS?

NSW SES volunteers are highly trained and skilled individuals. All NSW SES volunteers are required and encouraged to participate in a variety of training programs and activities. The NSW SES is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and the majority of training undertaken by volunteers is linked to national qualifications and are recognised outside of the NSW SES. If your employee is a NSW SES volunteer your business will benefit from their enhanced skills and competencies including:

- Leadership and decision-making skills
- Organisational and project management skills
- Improved ability to handle stress and cope under pressure
- Problem solving and analytical thinking
- Confidence, team work skills and a willingness to take on additional responsibilities
- Experience dealing with hazardous and challenging situations
- Ability to understand and comply with complex policies and procedures
- Enhanced Work, Health and Safety awareness
- Experience in dealing with the public and community
- Technology based skills
- First aid training

The NSW SES is a reputable organisation, with a proud history and trusted reputation. Your association with the NSW SES may bring other benefits to your business, including:

- Improved company image within your local community
- Increased morale, loyalty and job satisfaction among employees
- Demonstrated commitment to being an employer of choice
- An opportunity to demonstrate work/life balance for employees
- An effective way for employers to contribute to social capital, volunteerism and local community spirit
- Building networks through collaboration with others local employers

*NSW SES volunteers respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round.*

## RELEASING EMPLOYEES DURING WORK HOURS

As an employer you can make a significant contribution to your community by releasing NSW SES volunteers from work responsibilities to respond to emergencies as they arise.

Leave arrangements may include only releasing employees during quiet times, flexible work practices, time in lieu, using personal leave, rostered days off, unpaid leave or implementing a special leave agreement such as emergency services leave.

The NSW SES encourages volunteers and their employers to negotiate leave arrangements in advance, be it a verbal or written agreement.

Some considerations when negotiating emergency services leave arrangements include:

- How many days per year are you willing to allow your employee to respond to calls to volunteer?
- Have you considered a combination of leave to spread the burden of cost – such as annual leave, time in lieu and unpaid leave?
- How will the employee communicate their absence in the event of an emergency?
- Does the employee need to provide documentation as evidence of when they have attended an incident?
- What happens if attending to the incident takes longer than expected?



## ARE THERE ANY FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYERS OF NSW SES VOLUNTEERS?

The NSW SES is unable to offer financial compensation to employers but the NSW State Government provides a payroll tax exemption for wages paid to employees attending emergencies or incidents during work hours. More information regarding payroll tax exemptions can be found at [www.osr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au) under payroll tax exemptions, type 2.

## WHAT IF MY EMPLOYEE IS INJURED WHILE UNDERTAKING EMERGENCY WORK?

All NSW SES volunteers are covered for workers compensation in accordance with the *Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987* for injuries sustained while taking part in authorised NSW SES activities. For more information WorkCover NSW can be contacted on 13 10 50 or [www.workcover.nsw.gov](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov).

## HOW CAN MY BUSINESS HELP THE NSW SES?

Support and encourage your employees to volunteer with the NSW SES:

- Join a local NSW SES Unit
- Become a Corporate Volunteering partner
- Joining a Community Action Team (CAT) in your local area
- Join your local community and become a Spontaneous Volunteer during times of need.

Learn more about volunteering with the NSW SES at: [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au) or call 1800 201 000



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Question 1:** Am I under obligation to release NSW SES volunteer employees to attend an emergency?

**Answer:** No. As the employer you have full discretion and are under no obligation to release your employees. However, during a declaration of emergency operations, employees are protected by provisions in the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*. Under this Act, an employer must not victimise an employee for being absent if the absence was due to taking part in emergency operations as a member of an emergency services organisation.

**Question 2:** How many times will my employee need to attend emergency incidents during a year?

**Answer:** The amount of times your employee needs to attend emergencies is dependent on a few factors including the types of emergencies in their local area. Weather events are cyclic, and some years the Service experiences an increase in storm and flood emergencies, while other years less so.

**Question 3:** How long can an employee's absence typically last?

**Answer:** Your employee may discuss their volunteer role and the magnitude of the incident with you to help you negotiate an arrangement. The amount of time your employee is absent from work is solely dependent on the agreement you have made with them. You could expect your employee to be away for only several hours for a rescue incident such as a motor vehicle accident, or between 1 to 3 days for major flood or storm response.

**Question 4:** How many hours of training will my employee have to attend during working hours?

**Answer:** Where possible the NSW SES provides training outside of normal business hours. Most NSW SES units train for 2-3 hours, one night per week and occasionally on weekends.

**Question 5:** What do I do if my employee is suffering emotional stress following his/her return to work after emergency services volunteering?

**Answer:** The NSW SES has a Critical Incident Support Program (CISP) where trained peers can provide advice and counselling for all volunteers and their families by calling 1800 626 800. The Service also has a network of chaplains and an Employee Assistance Program, which can be accessed by calling the CISP Line.

**Question 6:** How do I manage employee fatigue following a volunteer's deployment?

**Answer:** The NSW SES has measures in place to manage fatigue of volunteers. Fatigue management of individuals and other team members is reinforced in each NSW SES training program. Occasionally volunteer activities may be prolonged, stressful and vigorous and they may need to take some extra time to rest before returning to work. This is to ensure their personal safety and the safety of other staff at the work place.



**Shenaz Khan**

General Manager  
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Westpac Group

"Westpac is proud to support our employees volunteering for the NSW SES. Westpac offers employees volunteer leave, in line with our vision to help communities to prosper and grow.

"We have seen firsthand the benefits that come from volunteering for the community. Our employees have developed valuable teamwork, confidence and leadership skills from their experiences with the NSW SES, aiding their personal and professional development. Volunteer employees also report that their experience has a positive impact on their wellbeing, as they see the benefits of donating their time and skills for NSW communities."

For more information call the **NSW SES** on  
**1800 201 000** or visit **[www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)**