



Volunteers Proudly Protecting the Community



Recruit Information

Change your perspective

The information contained within this booklet is provided to assist you if you are thinking about becoming a volunteer with the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS)

How do I join?

1. Visit our website and complete an online enquiry;
www.rfs.act.gov.au
2. Alternatively phone 6207 8609 to obtain the contact details of your chosen brigade.
3. Meet the Captain and members and collect an application form.

You will need to have your application form signed by either a Brigade Captain or an Executive Member of the brigade before it is submitted.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact our Membership Office on; 6207 9991



www.rfs.act.gov.au



www.actrfs.blogspot.com



ACT Rural Fire Service page



ACTRFS

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1. 5 Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

Step 1: The Decision

Make a decision to join the ACTRFS, visit our website or approach the nearest Brigade for an application form. Here you will have the chance to meet fellow ACTRFS volunteers and have a chat with either the Brigade Captain or an Executive Member. You will be told at this stage whether the Brigade is currently recruiting new members.

Complete all information on the application form and submit it to HQ.

Step 2: Medical Assessment and Criminal History Record Check

As part of the application form you are required to undergo a medical examination with your GP. This information helps the service determine what roles you may be suitable for.

When you complete the application form you are also consenting to the ACTRFS undertaking a criminal history record check. For further information on this process please refer to the application form.

Step 3: Success of Application

If your application is successful, the ACTRFS will advise you by way of a letter within 14 days of the decision. This letter is sent to you and you should pass a copy on to the relevant Brigade Captain.

If your application is unsuccessful you will be advised in writing within 14 days of the decision. You are able to request an interview with ACTRFS staff to discuss this decision within 21 days of the letter.

Step 4: Probationary Membership

If your application is successful then you will become a probationary member for 6 months. As a probationary member you will be required to undertake basic training or assessment prior to being able to attend operational activities.

Step 5: Brigade Endorsement

Once your training is complete and/or at the end of 6 months, the Brigade votes on whether to accept you as a member or extend the probationary period.

If the vote is successful you will receive notification from your Brigade that you are a full member and able to undertake duties as an active member.

2. General Overview of the Organisation

The Emergency Services Agency (ESA) is the government agency responsible for emergency management within the ACT. The ESA provides the administrative infrastructure and support for four operational services, being the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), the ACT State Emergency Service (ACTSES), the ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS) and the ACT Fire Brigade (ACTFB). Through a service agreement, the ACTAS provides paramedics (and doctors from The Canberra Hospital, when required) to crew the Snowy Hydro SouthCare helicopter, and also provides day-to-day operational management of the service.

The ACTRFS and the ACTSES have salaried and volunteer members. The ACTFB manage the volunteers of the Community Fire Units. The ACTAS use only salaried staff.

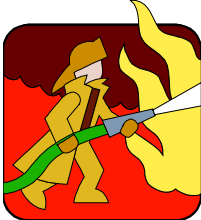
The ESA is responsible directly to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The ACTRFS has eight volunteer brigades, and approximately 400 active volunteer bushfire fighters. The ACTSES has seven volunteer Units and approximately 180 active volunteer members. Four of the ACTSES Units are co-located with ACTRFS brigades.

ACTRFS Headquarters is located at:
9 Amberley Avenue FAIRBAIRN

The postal address is:
ACT Rural Fire Service
PO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

3. Nature of the Work



The type of work carried out by emergency services volunteers can be either exciting or boring, rewarding or frustrating, cold or hot, fast or slow, or as many other variables as you can imagine. A description of some of the roles of ACTRFS volunteers follows.

ACTRFS volunteers primarily assist with the suppression of bush and grassfires in the ACT's rural and remote areas. The ACT's declared fire season is from the 1st of October through to the last day of March each year and this is the period of most activity for our volunteer bushfire fighters. There are, however, many instances of being required for bushfire fighting duties outside of this period and all of our volunteers need to be aware of this.

During bush and grass fire operations, bushfire fighters may have to drag a fire hose around the fire, carry a knapsack (weighing about 20kg) or construct fire breaks using hand tools (hoe or rake like tools, or axes, for example). The time on the fire line can vary from as little as a few minutes, to more commonly 2 hours or more. Occasionally bushfire fighters may spend a shift of about 12 hours at a fire.



(Note: ACTRFS members do not have a role in structural fire fighting, hazardous chemical spills or road accident rescue. These are all roles of the ACTFB).

ACTRFS members have also, on occasion, assisted the ACTSES with storm damage repairs in the ACT.

4. Commitment

As a volunteer joining the ACTRFS you are making a commitment to give your time voluntarily to assist the community. It is difficult to be precise as to the number of hours it will take per week/month as it can vary greatly depending on the number of times you may be activated. Generally speaking volunteers can expect to give up 2 – 3 hours each week for training. You may also be asked to attend community activities.

Brigades may choose to have some of their members 'stand up' at the shed during periods of increased fire danger, allowing for rapid response. The 'stand up' commitment can be from around lunchtime up to early evening. There is also the time required for attending operations; this could be anything from an hour or two, to several days for a single incident.

Volunteers may need to negotiate with their employer for a release from work in the event of an operational call-out during business hours. However, no volunteer is expected to leave work if this is to the detriment of the employer's business.

5. Health and Fitness



The work carried out by bushfire fighters can often be both strenuous and exhausting. There may be little opportunity for a break from the heat and the physical activity required to be undertaken. Only people who have a reasonable level of fitness will be able to cope with this type of work for an extended period of time.

Some less strenuous tasks for volunteers include: brigade administration, radio communications operation, message taking, and provision of welfare services. The fitness requirements of the people doing these tasks may be different to those on the front line; however there is a limit to how many people are required for these types of activities.

If you are intending to become a volunteer you will be required to complete a medical assessment with your doctor. In addition, there is a Fitness for Duty policy for active members. This policy assigns fitness levels to the various functions undertaken by members, and prescribes the fitness testing to be undertaken. Brigades do fitness testing at least once each year.

6. Age Requirements

Some ACTRFS brigades have Cadet members aged between 12 and 16 years. Cadet members undertake various activities to prepare them for restricted membership when they turn 16. Cadet members are **not** involved in fire fighting.

Volunteers may become members of a brigade with some operational restrictions when they are between 16 and 18 years old. A parent or guardian's written consent is required.

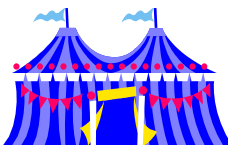
Volunteers 18 years of age or more become full members and their training and experience determine the roles and activities they undertake.

7. Uniforms

As a volunteer member of the ACTRFS you will be provided with sufficient uniforms and protective clothing to allow you to safely do your work. All protective clothing meets Australian Standards.

The initial issue of uniforms and protective clothing is made available free of charge, and free replacements are also provided on a one-for-one basis. This clothing remains the property of the ACT Government and must be surrendered when you leave the service.

8. Community Activities Attendance



Many brigades choose to attend community activities. These can range from local fetes and fairs, through to the Multi-Cultural Festival and Australia Day events. This is seen as a good way of educating the community, and is also an opportunity to promote the services. Brigade members also assist at the ESA display at the

Canberra Show each year. The ESA and the ACTRFS make display material available for these events.

9. Training



The ACTRFS provides training reflecting nationally developed and agreed units of competence. Qualifications gained under these standards are transferable to other States, and some are recognised as professional qualifications by employers. Locally produced learning material (and in some instances material from other States) is used as the basis for providing this training.

As a member you must have attended specified training courses and undergone formal assessment before you can attend certain operations.

Qualifications that you may have gained from other emergency services or related industries or from your professional training may be transferable and recognised in the ACTRFS. A Recognition of Current Competency process will determine what skills a person has that may be recognised. Further information is available at the volunteer brigades, or through the Training Liaison Officer.

10. Compensation

ACT RFS volunteers are covered for compensation purposes while they are at training or operations. This compensation covers any injuries you may sustain during these activities, with all medical and rehabilitation expenses being met by the ACT Government.

People who are in paid employment and who are aged between 16 and 65 years are also covered for wages lost as a result of injuries sustained while on service with the ACTRFS.

11. Brigade Structure

Brigades have an Executive Committee responsible for administering the assets and facilities of the Brigade. The committee is made up of members who agree to undertake additional roles such as President, Secretary and Treasurer etc. These positions handle all administrative matters within the brigade but have no incident or brigade command and control responsibilities.

Each ACTRFS Brigade will have a number of Deputy Captains who have command responsibilities for a number of crew members.

12. Location of the Volunteer Brigades



As a volunteer you may choose to join a brigade that is close to where you live, although this may not be the case. You may like to be close to where you work or to be at a brigade with a workmate, family member, or friend. There is no restriction on which brigade you belong to.

There are Volunteer ACTRFS Brigades at the following locations:

Guises Creek Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Monaro Highway Royalla

Approximately six km south of Johnson Drive, Theodore, on the Monaro Highway

Gungahlin Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Anthony Rolfe St, Gungahlin

Hall Volunteer Bushfire

Loftus St, Hall

Jerrabomberra Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Jerrabomberra Ave, Symonston

Molonglo Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Drake Brockman Drive, Higgins

Rivers Volunteer Bushfire Brigade and SES Unit

Cotter Road, Weston Creek

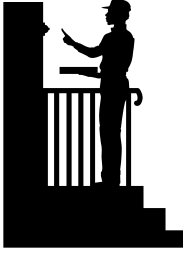
Southern Districts Bushfire Brigade

North St, Tharwa

Tidbinbilla Bushfire Brigade

Paddy's River Road, Tidbinbilla near the Tidbinbilla Tracking Station

13. What's the Next Step?



If you are interested in volunteering with the ACTRFS, please phone 6207 8609 to receive the contact details for the brigade you wish to join. You will then be put in contact with the Captain of the Bushfire Brigade, and invited to come along to one of their regular training evenings. The captain will then issue you with an application form.

As part of the application process, you will be required to undergo a medical check and a criminal record check.

You will need to have your application form signed by either a Brigade Captain or an Executive Member before it is submitted.

14. What if this is not for me?

If you decide that being a volunteer with the ACT Rural Fire Service is not right for you, and you would like to know more about other volunteer opportunities, contact:

Volunteering ACT
Canberra Labor Club
Community Chambers
Chandler Street (cnr Cameron Avenue)
BELCONNEN
Tel: 02 6251 4060
Email: volact@volunteeract.org.au

Volunteers have the last word:

I joined because it was something I have wanted to do since I was a kid. It's great doing something for the community and myself at the same time. Simon

The best thing about being a volunteer is the new friends you make (and the good looking boys!) Amy

I joined because the brigade needed an experienced truck driver and I jumped at the opportunity. The best thing about being a volunteer is the experience and the personal reward of helping someone when they need it most. John

I'd like to make fire-fighting a career when I'm older, and this seemed like a good way to get experience. I really enjoy all the training, and the Brigade's social activities. Ben

I signed up because at 38 I finally worked out I was too old to be playing rugby so I decided to do something useful and become involved in an organisation that made a worthwhile contribution to the community while doing something that I would enjoy. Plus my wife thinks I look good in the uniform! Matt