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## Procedure 5.04.22 Emergency Services Volunteers and Retained Fire Firefighters

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| <b>Department</b>          | Organisational Development & Governance |
| <b>Responsible Officer</b> | Executive Manager                       |

### Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council has a number of employees who are volunteers with emergency service organisations, including Rural Fire Service (RFS) brigades, State Emergency Service (SES), and Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) in the Shire. These employees, along with other community volunteers, provide a valuable safety service to the community of the Bega Valley and NSW.

Over the years, emergency events including large fire events facing various communities have required support from all available volunteers. Often these volunteers have needed to leave their local area and travel to provide support to communities in other parts of the State. This approach ensures crews have adequate support and relief and these emergencies can be fought with adequate resources. In the event that an emergency event occurred in the Bega Valley RFS and SES crews from across the State would be available to support local volunteer teams.

### Guidelines

Council will provide support for employees who are volunteers with organisations including RFS, SES or VRA as follows:

1. Eligibility for a total of 5 days paid special leave per calendar year to attend major emergency events on presentation of a statement of service from emergency response organisations and up to 10 days for large scale events in the Bega Valley.
2. RFS/SES/VRA volunteering employees must contact Council prior to departure to attend an emergency event to ensure that Council staffing levels can be maintained to allow for consideration of WHS issues.
3. Staff who are on sick leave, have active workers compensation claims and participating in a workplace rehabilitation program or who are otherwise declared fit for selective /suitable/light duties are not permitted to attend emergencies in working hours. This is to avoid risk to the health and safety of emergency service organisation's staff and members of the public.
4. Employee's absent on Emergency Service Leave who undertake volunteer emergency duty will not be covered by Council's Workers Compensation insurance and should ensure coverage by the insurance of the emergency service; and
5. Volunteers and other employees who need leave to protect their own property will have their situation dealt with on a case by case basis by the General Manager.

### NSW Fire Brigade retained fire fighters

Council also has employees who are NSW Fire Brigade retained fire fighters. Retained firefighters receive some payment for their attendance at training, for being on-call and for attending fires and emergencies.

Council will support these employees and their attendance at large bushfire events by providing special paid leave per calendar year for those hours not paid by the NSW Fire Brigade subject to a maximum equivalent of 5 days per calendar year.

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Any local call outs or attendance at local incidents will need to be covered by an application for annual or accrued leave.