



COVID-19 Update

18 March 2020

Fire and Rescue NSW and the Fire Brigades Employees' Union have been working collaboratively over the last few days to ensure that the advice being provided to our staff and members is in the best interest of your health and safety, while maintaining our operational capabilities, in line with the latest advice from NSW Health.

It is acknowledged that the evolving nature of this pandemic is resulting in frequent changes to the advice being provided, however at this stage, all staff should immediately suspend all non-emergency community engagement until further notice.

Additionally, all engagements that are non-emergency related should be suspended. Only activities that are necessary to allow an emergency response should be performed. The following points are also to be adhered to:

- Any member who has any 'flu-like' symptoms is not to attend work and self-isolate. Call your GP or Health Direct 1800022 222 and ask for advice regarding the need for screening for COVID-19 and further isolation. If no screening is advised, return to work when all symptoms have subsided. If your screening test is negative, return to work when all symptoms have subsided. If screening is advised and results are positive for COVID-19, remain isolated for 14 days.
- Any member that has been directly exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 is not to attend work and is to self-isolate for 14 days or until he or she has a negative test result.
- Any member, Permanent or Retained that returns from overseas is not to attend work and must self-isolate for 14 days in line with the Federal Government Directive effective midnight 13th March 2020.
- If any staff/member develops 'flu-like' symptoms whilst at work, they are to immediately inform their supervisor and isolate themselves from other workers. The sick firefighter is to be dismissed immediately and sent home to seek medical advice regarding need for screening and further isolation. Vehicles and equipment should be cleaned in accordance with cleaning vehicles, equipment, stations and work areas as per the Infection Prevention and Control Manual and crew to remain on shift. The station/location and appliances are to be off line while the station is cleaned. Whilst it cannot be guaranteed that this will totally eliminate any chance of infection, we are satisfied, on the current evidence available, that the risk is low and will be no greater than being in a normal public place. This may change as a greater understanding of the virus is gained. If no screening is required, the sick firefighter is to return to work when all symptoms have subsided. Any crew members who were in contact with the sick firefighter, are to remain on shift and self-monitor symptoms. If they develop flu like symptoms, they should self-isolate until the symptoms have subsided as per normal sick leave process.
- If screening is required and the results are negative, the firefighter is to return to work when all symptoms have subsided.

- If the screening test returns a positive result, the firefighter is to remain isolated for 14 days. The supervisor must contact all crew and advise them to remain isolated for 14 days post exposure. When staff members are out in public both on and off shift they are advised to practice social distancing as per NSW Health's advice. Where possible this involves keeping a distance of 1.5m from others.
- All stations/work locations should not receive visitors to the station and only on duty personnel are permitted entry to stations/work locations. If an urgent issue (such as provision of first aid) requires a visitor to enter the stations/work locations, practice social distancing wherever possible and as a precaution, disinfect the area and any utilised equipment afterwards.
- All deliveries should be left outside and staff should avoid signing for deliveries (quote service number). This will minimise contact with couriers. After taking and storing deliveries, wash hands and disinfect as required.
- Random drug and alcohol testing has been suspended.
- Attendance management policy is still in place, however members will not need to produce a medical certificate. Members may be required to sign a statutory declaration regarding their absence. FRNSW and the FBEU will monitor AMP related issues and update this advice as required.
- All stations/work locations need to have an adequate supply of disposable gloves, P2 masks, clear glasses, disinfectants, soap, hand sanitiser and disposable overalls.
- All stations are to have hand sanitising and decontamination stations readily available to all staff members.
- All appliances should have hand sanitiser in the cabin and an adequate supply of disposable safety PPE. (Disposable gloves, P2 masks, clear glasses, disposable overalls.)
- Stations and work locations should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, as a guide we recommend at the start and end of each shift. This should include the interior of vehicles, BAs, keyboards etc. It is vital that we minimise the risk of spreading any illness amongst ourselves.
- Personal hygiene, regular washing of clothing, towels, bedding and other washable material products will help limit any exposure.
- All usual hygiene practices in the gym must be adhered to and social distancing should be applied. This could result in only one staff member at a time using the gym, with all disinfecting procedures completed before and after use.
- When more than one station/appliance is attending an incident and it is not readily apparent that the second and subsequent arriving crews are going to get to work, the second and subsequent arriving crews are to remain in the appliance, contact the IC by fireground radio and only alight the appliance if required.
- Stations/appliances are not to attend other stations and/or other FRNSW locations unless it is in the course of responding to an emergency or other operational requirement such as a standby or move up or essential training.
- Communication centre (Comcen) staff are essential to FRNSW operations therefore all Comcen relievers are instructed to remain in the Comcen even if spare. They should not be performing relief duties or standbys.
- Comsafe staff have suspended all training conducted externally.

Retained stations may consider, in consultation with the zone management team, splitting into groups for essential station duties and response to emergencies. This is to ensure that if a retained crew is exposed, then only part of the crew will require self-isolation.

- Retained drill nights should be changed or adapted to restrict groups to smaller numbers, consistent with the above point.
- FRNSW and the FBEU will continue discussions regarding leave related to the points above, which have been detailed in the State Government's C-2020/01 Employment Arrangements During COVID-19.
- FRNSW and the FBEU will also continue to work together to understand and consider any impact on retained firefighters.
- Training, that is required to maintain operational capability or essential training, must consider alternative delivery methods to face to face. If face to face training is the only method, enhanced hygiene routines must be adopted. This must comply with advice provided by NSW Health department and is further described on the Coronavirus toolkit. This includes but is not limited to:
 - o Confirm the health of all personnel prior to commencement of training
 - o Cleaning of training areas prior to commencement and following completion of training
 - o Personal hygiene during training, such as hand washing, respiratory etiquette and social distancing.

The current Permanent Recruit training will continue for the current class, but we will monitor and review the situation as it develops.

Further updated information is available on the FRNSW Coronavirus Toolkit and any questions may be directed to corona.info@fire.nsw.gov.au

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FRNSW

A/ State Secretary Michael Nairn
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