

From: Commissioner <Commissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au>

Date: 15 September 2021 at 17:02:09 AEST

To: - ALL STAFF <AllStaff@fire.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Support to NSW Ambulance

Dear all

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to progress, NSW is at the forefront of the response to increasing cases and spread in the community, particularly due to the Delta variant.

FRNSW has so far equipped and responded well to what has confronted the community, but there is more we can do.

Following a request from the NSW Ambulance Commissioner, I have confirmed to him that FRNSW is prepared to provide assistance as they confront increasing caseloads, placing their service and our state under pressure. Two areas have been identified where we can potentially help with their contingency planning and operations.

Advertising Expressions of Interest (EOI) from Fire and Rescue NSW staff to support Emergency Operational driving

The first is the provision of supplementary people able to drive emergency ambulances and assist paramedics. At this stage our capacity to assist remains strong as our workload has not increased during the pandemic to date. We are working with NSW to look at models for what staff support could be provided. FRNSW is considering calling an expression of interest (EOI) from staff who may want to assist. We would look to prioritise staff with an ambulance/medical background as the need potentially increases.

The number of persons required, and their locations is yet to be provided. However, at this stage we would estimate that up to 150 staff may be required to provide coverage for any worst-case scenario, impacting the community of NSW.

Public Access Defibrillation (PAD) Program Pilot

The second area of support is to activate the Public Access to Defibrillation (PAD) program. While we have not agreed or finalised the introduction of PAD on an ongoing basis and some IRC direction has been given, circumstances have changed.

FRNSW has carried out further discussion with the FBEU and will continue to do so. There is however, an existential threat to life across NSW brought on by the pandemic and at times NSW have been over capacity insofar as their ability to meet the response demand. They refer to this situation as Status three (3) alert, which means the demand for ambulance is very high across the metropolitan area. This has only happened twice in their history.

Given the pandemic circumstances, I have agreed that if a situation arises, FRNSW will accept calls of Priority 1A incidents, which present as immediately life threatening situations requiring resuscitation. In these circumstances, early initiation of CPR and defibrillation has a major impact on patient survival.

We are properly equipped, trained and capable of delivering basic life support, CPR and defibrillation to support NSW Ambulance. Both the NSW Commissioner and I have every confidence in the capability of FRNSW crews to deliver to expectations in this regard, as you already do now.

Simply put, in a “Status 3” situation we will save lives and that is our primary calling as an emergency response agency.

My statutory duty as Commissioner is set out in the Fire and Rescue Act 1989.

The Act provides in Section 5A, subsection (3): The Commissioner is authorised to take measures anywhere in the State for protecting persons from injury or death and property from damage, whether or not fire or a hazardous material incident is involved ... And further in subsection (4) (d) ... assist, at their request, members of the NSW Police Force, the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW State Emergency Service or the Ambulance Service of NSW in dealing with any incident or emergency, ...

I have agreed that where Ambulance Status 3 circumstances exist, NSW may notify our communications where our response may be closer and quicker to attend and we will respond accordingly.

In all circumstances an Ambulance will also be dispatched to the incident, however our support will allow NSW to better manage their available resources at these high demand times.

There has simply been no precedent to the circumstances that we are now experiencing and we owe it to the people of NSW to do all we possibly can to assist them through this crisis.

We are talking about people’s lives. Some of them may even be the lives of our own loved ones.

Regards
Paul



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