



Welcome to CFA

Information for Families





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Firefighter (operational) - Operational volunteers respond to a variety of incidents including fires, road accidents and alarms.

Brigade Support member (non operational) - Volunteers in non-operational roles do not fight fire directly yet provide vital support to brigades and communities.

Incident - fire, road accident or other emergency at which a fire truck and firefighters are required.

Appliance - fire truck.

Strike Team - multiple units, often five of the same type of resource that attends an incident together, led by a Strike Team Leader.

BMT - Brigade Management Team - made up of the Captain, Lieutenants, Community Safety Coordinator and Secretary.

General Firefighter - minimum training new members must undertake before they are operational.

Pager - the gadget that goes beep beep to alert members there is an incident.



The thread that
binds us...

We are proud to welcome you

CFA is a volunteer-based organisation working to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies.

Protecting lives and property is our mission and it's the thread that binds all of us: our members, our families and the communities in which we live and work.

While volunteers undertake an extremely important role within CFA, an equally important role is performed by you - the families of volunteers. Your support, understanding and patience ensures they are able to fulfill their CFA duties.

Thank you for sharing your family member with us and the communities of Victoria. Welcome to the CFA community!





What we stand for



From humble beginnings in Geelong and Bendigo in the 1850s, CFA has grown to become one of the largest volunteer-based emergency service organisations in the world.

 [Play video](#)

For more than 170 years we've served our communities, protecting life and property. So when we talk about values, you know they're not just words. **They are what we stand for.**



 **1200+**
Brigades

51,000+
members



28,000+
operational members


Responding to
33,000+
incidents annually

Serving
4 million
Victorians



224,000 KM²

Serviced by our brigades across Victoria





We put

SAFETY FIRST

- We are committed to ensuring the safety of the communities we protect
- We actively pursue zero harm
- We want everyone to get home safe and well
- We have a harmonious workplace
- We encourage discussions on safety matters



We excel through

TEAMWORK

- We work together to achieve our mission
- We openly share information and resources and acknowledge each other's strengths
- We work cooperatively in inclusive teams
- We work collaboratively for the benefit of the Victorian community
- We respect and embrace open communication



We are dynamic and

ADAPTABLE

- We are dynamic and constantly adapting in response to community need
- We are open to the challenge of a changing environment
- We are proactive and make it happen
- We challenge the status quo and recognise innovators
- We learn from each other and our community



We act with

INTEGRITY

- We act with integrity at all times
- We are truthful, open and honest
- We consistently lead by example
- We make transparent and timely decisions
- We speak up if we see something wrong
- We are accountable and will hold one another to account



We

RESPECT each other

- We treat everyone fairly and with respect
- We acknowledge each other's ideas, opinions and contribution
- We welcome diversity
- We show empathy and understanding
- We respect the time of our people

Membership explained

CFA volunteers (and their families) come from all walks of life. They bring diverse skills, knowledge and background to each and every Brigade. We recognise that everyone is different and the way people choose to volunteer is different. This is why there are different types of membership roles people can choose from.



Firefighters

Firefighters (operational volunteers) respond to fires, road accidents and other incidents where risks are posed to life and/or property. They also undertake a broad range of training to attain and maintain the skills to be able to respond safely to fires and other emergencies.

Firefighters can also undertake some or all support role duties (refer to Support Volunteers) as well as vegetation management, equipment and vehicle maintenance and more.

Activity levels and time commitment will vary between every brigade.

Support Volunteers

Support Volunteers (non-operational) don't respond to incidents. They provide vital support to brigades through activities such as community education, engagement and preparedness, administration, finance, communications, fundraising, catering, health and safety, and Junior Program coordination (where applicable).

There is also a range of training opportunities available for support volunteers.



Junior members (aged 11 to 15)

The Junior Volunteer Development Program is available at more than 160 brigades across Victoria and builds confidence and capability through station activities, excursions, camps and championships.

Junior members do not attend any fires or emergency incidents and are not exposed to high-risk activities.

Activities focus on teamwork, leadership, community, safety and hazards. Each Junior Brigade is delivered by a team of Junior Leaders (18+) who have taken on the responsibility for leading the Junior Brigade.

All Junior Leaders hold a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) and all Junior Brigade activities have at least two registered Junior Leaders facilitating activities.

[For further information click >>](#)

 [JUNIORS @ CFA](#)



CFA is committed to being a child safe organisation. Our organisation interacts with children and young people in many different ways and we want to ensure that we are keeping them safe whether we are out in the community or back at the brigade.

For further information click the button below

 [CHILD SAFETY @ CFA](#)

Younger members (aged 16 to 17)

Volunteering with CFA allows young members to develop new skills while giving back to their communities. They can serve in firefighting or support roles, but consent form must be signed by a parent or guardian.

If firefighting, a younger member will always be accompanied by a fully-qualified and experienced adult. We discourage younger members from attending potentially traumatic callouts such as car accidents and they are not allowed to take part in strike teams.

We have dedicated counselling and child safety teams available to support all our members. We encourage you to speak or meet with the brigade captain to discuss the roles and support available to younger members in the brigade.

Before joining, make sure you talk as a family about:

- Balancing CFA with other commitments like work and school.
- How they will get to and from the brigade day or night, at short notice.
- The incidents and experiences they may be exposed to.





WE PUT SAFETY FIRST

CFA takes the safety of all our members very seriously and we encourage all our brigades to take a Safety First approach to all the activities they undertake.

Firefighting is inherently dangerous, so before any new member can respond to a callout, they must complete specific training called General Firefighter. This ensures members have the knowledge and skills to safely carry out duties on the fireground

Generally this training is undertaken within the first six months of a person joining CFA – and will also result in new members being issued with a pager.

Members will continue to gain new skills and knowledge throughout their membership, which they will be able to apply not only to their role within CFA but in their work and personal life. For example, first aid, enhanced driving skills and leadership skills.



**CFA takes the
safety of all our
members very
seriously**










GETTING THE CALL



A CFA firefighter could be paged to a wide range of incidents. These callouts can happen any time of the day or night and can be as short as 30 minutes or take many hours. CFA responds to more than 33,000 callouts per year.

The number of callouts varies between brigades and locations.

EVENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	APPROX. INCIDENT LENGTH
 ALARM	Any activation of an alarm at a premises that is remotely monitored by an alarm monitoring company.	False alarm: 30 mins
 GRASS & SCRUB FIRE	Any fire involving grass, scrub, trees or vegetation.	False alarm: 30 mins Actual fire: 2 hours +
 INDICENT	Any incident where there is no fire. This includes car accidents, hazardous materials spill or leakage with no ignition.	False alarm: 30 mins Actual incident: 1 to 2 hours
 NON STRUCTURE FIRE	All fires outside a structure, including storage yards, vehicles, trains, rubbish and liquid fires.	False alarm: 30 mins Actual incident: 1 hour +
 RESCUE	Any event where there is the possibility of someone being physically trapped in need of extrication, such as motor vehicle accident, trench or industrial accidents.	No one trapped: 30 + mins Rescue required: 1 hour +
 STRUCTURE FIRE	All fires involving or inside a building or structure, including houses, outbuildings, ships, hotels, shopping stores.	False alarm: 30 mins Actual incident: 2 hours +
 STRIKE TEAMS	A coordinated deployment of members either within Victoria or interstate to assist to assist with major bushfires. Strike Teams are generally pre planned - allowing members to check their family and work commitments before volunteering to go away to support other communities.	3 to 7 days

Let's hear from **families**

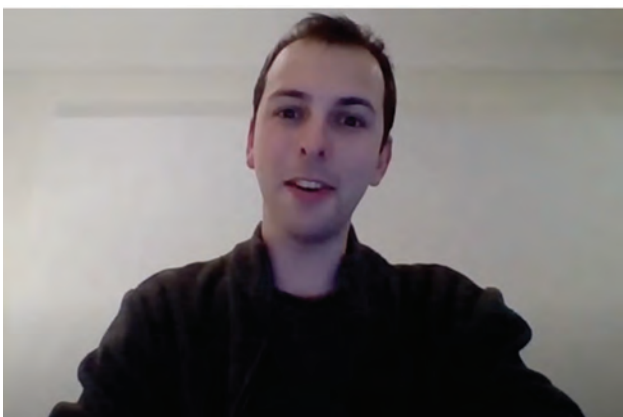
Let's hear from some of the families of our CFA members. You can also talk to the brigade captain, other members or their families.



Rhiannon: Daughter of a volunteer



Benita: Wife of a volunteer



Nathan: Son of a volunteer



Read Subi's story:
Mother of a volunteer

Get connected

We encourage families to connect with the local brigade and its members. This may be through participating in brigade social events, such as annual dinners or end of year BBQs, community events, linking in with brigade social media pages etc. This creates strong bonds and support networks and lets you know that you are also a big part of the CFA community.

There are lots of ways to keep up to date with what's happening across broader CFA, including the following official channels:



What's on
at CFA



Contact a
Brigade



CFA
Digital Library



My
CFA





WE ARE

IN THIS TOGETHER

“

Our whole family is involved. Whether it's Sunday BBQs, birthday and Christmas parties, there's always something fun for the family to do. We even have a Facebook page for local members.”

”



ETHER

We've got
your back



“I’ve made lifelong friends at the CFA and so have the kids. Being around people who understand what it’s like to have someone in the CFA makes a big difference. So come along to some events, it really is the best part of being a brigade family.”

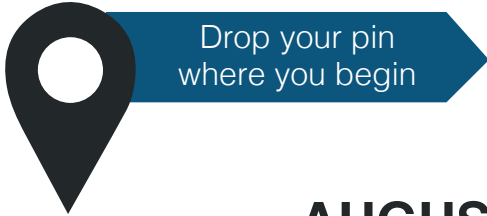


[Click for more stories](#)



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A CFA VOLUNTEER

Some families have been part of the CFA for many years. It all starts with your first year. It's a journey.



Drop your pin where you begin

AUGUST



- Home Fire Safety

SEPTEMBER



- Pre Summer Training

OCTOBER



- Pre Season
- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams

JULY



- New BMT Start
- Home Fire Safety

JUNE



- Home Fire Safety



Learn about your CFA



Work through your Volunteer induction program



Understand your CFA obligations



Get familiar with processes, procedures and systems obligations

The first 6 months

MAY



- Brigade Elections*

APRIL



- Annual Meeting
- Good Friday Apology
- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

ALL YEAR ROUND

- Training
- Meetings
- Events & Activities
- Community Engagement
- Operational Response

SEPTEMBER - MARCH

- Community Engagement Bushfire

part of the CFA for generations. It all only gets better from here.

OCTOBER



- Summer Training
- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

NOVEMBER



- Pre Summer Training
- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

DECEMBER



- Bushfire Season
- End of Year Brigade Events
- Strike Teams*

5 months



Complete your General Firefighter



Complete your Probation requirements



Discover your development opportunities



Identify your pathway

JANUARY



- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

FEBRUARY



- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

MARCH



- Bushfire Season
- Strike Teams*

/Elections
peal
*.



* indicates an activity may occur but is dependent on brigade and fire season

Support for members and families

As a partner or family member, it can be hard to understand what your loved one has experienced. People cope with challenging experiences differently. Sometimes, people are not affected at all by events.

However, if someone is affected, often it's the people closest to them that notice. Some changes might include:



Sleep routines



Eating and drinking



Interactions
with family, friends and colleagues



Physical wellbeing
like headaches, weight, dreams, nausea, sweating/trembling



Routines
like exercising, hobbies and activities



Emotions
like distress, short-tempered or withdrawn

If you notice any changes like this, try some of the ideas from the [Take Action](#) section, over the page. And always remember, you're not alone. We're here to help with support and services.

Sometimes challenging experiences can contribute to the development of mental health issues such as:

Depression

Depression video

Anxiety

Beyond Blue resource

PTSD

Black Dog Institute resource

Click the buttons above for more information.

SELF CARE

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Families and caregivers of members also need to look out for their own wellbeing. It's important that you take steps to care for yourself. CFA also has lots of support and services available to help you. Some things that you can do to maintain good mental health include:

- Look out for any changes in yourself and your family
- Make sure you get enough sleep and exercise, and avoid using alcohol or drugs
- Use simple stress reduction tools like deep breathing
- Talk to your family and friends about how you feel
- Know your boundaries and when to get help for your family member - it's not all on you
- Access CFA support services, your GP or other mental health professionals.



Peer Support is a free program for members and their families, made up of CFA volunteers and staff who are trained to support someone who is having a tough time. Whether it is someone to talk to when you are struggling, helping you to get to and from medical appointments when no-one else is available, or linking someone into specialist support. These are all examples of how we take care of each other. Members of the Peer Support Program are trained to link people into the other support services and professionals we have, and can support you every step of the way.

▲ [Play video: Peer Support Program](#)

Together we are strong





take action

It's important to be proactive in reaching out; don't wait for an issue to get worse. If you need support, check out your options on the right. Or, if you have someone you are worried about the below steps may help.



1 ASK AND LISTEN

- Make sure you're in a good headspace, and make sure there's time, privacy and no interruptions. Gently let them know you've noticed changes and explain why you are concerned.

"I've noticed that you're not yourself lately. How are you going?"

"I've noticed you're not sleeping well lately. Is everything alright?"

"You seem a little distant and less talkative. Are you okay?"

"I've noticed a change in you since your last callout. Want to talk about it?"

- Let them go at their own pace, try not to anticipate or assume anything. Repeat back your understanding of what they say. Listen carefully. Remain calm. Don't judge.

2 ENCOURAGE ACTION

- Encourage your loved one to take action and, if needed, help them connect with services like the CFA Member Assistance Program, Peers and Chaplains. You may also encourage them to see their GP, a mental health professional, or a trusted friend or family member who they can confide in
- Create a plan with your loved one to agree on your approach to supporting each other. This could include:

Regular catch-ups with a fellow CFA member who they can talk to and get things off their chest.

After some call-outs there may be extra time spent at the station for an operational debrief. These can be helpful for members to process events as a group to protect their health and wellbeing.

Agreeing on limits at home. What they can and can't talk about at home. What to do if they are stressed or short with the family, like taking a walk.



3

CHECK IN

- Keep the conversation going. If at the time they aren't up for talking, or respond with something like "All good", be persistent. Remind them you're there and open to chatting if they need.
- Keep checking in even after they access CFA wellbeing support services.
- If you agree on actions, follow through with what you've agreed to do and make sure they follow through on their agreed actions.
- Always remind them that you are acting out of love and care for their wellbeing. This isn't 'nagging' and it isn't weakness. It's care that will help them to continue doing what they love.

24/7 Wellbeing Support

 <p>CFA Wellbeing Support Line</p> <p>1800 959 232</p> <p>Press * to be connected to the Member Assistance Program to speak with a mental health professional.</p>	 <p>Lifeline</p> <p>13 11 14</p>  <p>Beyond Blue online chat</p> <p>Click here</p>
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Through the Wellbeing Support Line you can also access Peers, Chaplains and the Organisational Wellbeing Team.

For more information you can also visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/wellbeing. This has information for members and families and allows members to log in to CFA Members Online for more specific resources.

Email contact:
wellbeing@cfa.vic.gov.au

Beyond Blue video ▶



OUR FOCUS

WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS DO



Training

Brigades run regular in-house training to maintain skills and learn new ones.

There is a wide range of online and face-to-face training available to all members to increase their skills and knowledge – from General Firefighter, through to First Aid, Community Engagement, Leadership development and more!



Brigade meetings

Brigades have regular meetings. The frequency varies from brigade to brigade.

These meetings often include new information and any important updates from CFA.



Community engagement and events

Brigades are involved in community engagement, events and activities. This can include education sessions in schools, community preparedness for the summer/winter seasons, fundraising, vegetation management and more.



Strike Teams

During the summer season brigades may provide fire trucks and firefighters to respond to emergencies within their own area, other areas across Victoria, or even interstate. There's a lot of pre-planning that goes into putting together a Strike Team to make sure they are able to respond efficiently and safely if they are called upon.

In very dynamic situations, family members may be away for longer periods of time.



Readiness

Brigades may also conduct regular rosters - to ensure all vehicles, radios and equipment are checked, maintained and ready to go.



WHAT YOU CAN DO



Make a Bushfire survival plan

CFA members may be active during bushfire season. If you live in a bushfire prone area you need a bushfire survival plan that you can follow.

You will need to review your plan to include the possibility that your family member may not be home but out on the fireground helping to protect communities. Ask yourself, what will you do if they are not home.

[Download template](#)



Make your home fire safe

Check out these simple things you can do at home to reduce your fire risk. Make sure your smoke alarms are maintained. As a CFA family, others in the community look to you for leadership, so please make sure you know what to say and have done the right things in your own home.

[Download checklist](#)



Install the Vic Emergency app

This app lets you set a watch zone around your home and will give you emergency information and warnings for fires, floods, fallen trees and other emergencies.

[Install App](#)

Available on

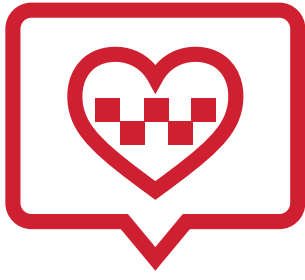


Talk to your children about fires

Children may worry when a family member is out on a fire truck or when there are big bushfires being broadcast all over the news. It is important to reassure children during these hard times to let them know they are safe and to make sure that their concerns and fears are heard.

Use the guide to help you to talk to your kids about their concerns of natural disasters.

[Download guide](#)



FINAL WORD

Protecting lives and property is our mission and the thread that binds us.

But it's our people that define us - members and families like you.

Our brigades are embedded in their local communities and play an important role in our shared CFA mission.

It's the support we have for each other that makes us stronger as an organisation and keeps us all safe.

Thank you for being part of our CFA community.





Welcome to CFA

