

BRIEFING FOR THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Subject	Meeting with the United Fire Brigades Association (UFBA)		
Date of briefing	21 June 2024	Ref.	BR-24-27
Date of meeting	26 June 2024		
Classification	In confidence		
Priority	☐ Urgent ☒ Non-urgent		

Bryan Dunne
Deputy Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Executive

Supplementary Information

Name	Position	Telephone	First contact
Bryan Dunne	Deputy Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Executive	9(2)(a)	☒
Emma Coats	National Manager, Board and Ministerial Services	9(2)(a)	

Purpose

1. This briefing provides information to support your meeting with the Chair of the United Fire Brigades Association (UFBA), Hon Peter Dunne, and its Chief Executive, Bill Butzbach, at your office on 26 June at 11:00am.

Background

2. The UFBA is a key partner association for Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency). It primarily serves to support volunteer firefighters and operational support personnel.
3. The UFBA has a membership of approximately 14,000 who cover a range of different roles including firefighters, secretaries, treasurers and operational support.
4. Fire and Emergency has a positive and respectful relationship with the UFBA, and regularly provides financial assistance to help its programmes of member outreach, education and support.
5. Key elements of the annual UFBA programmes are its annual conference/hui and volunteer firefighter challenge events, which simulate scenarios firefighters face and test their skills and training. These challenge events are popular and coveted by our volunteers.

Likely topics for discussion

6. The UFBA has informed your office it wishes to discuss:
 - The release on 14 June 2024 of the UFBA commissioned 'Hidden in Plain Sight' report, which places a monetary value on the annual contribution made by Fire and Emergency New Zealand volunteers for the delivery of fire and emergency services in New Zealand;
 - Fire and Emergency's role in ensuring volunteer firefighters are properly trained, resourced and supported; and
 - The UFBA's wider role as an advocate for volunteers, and, in their own words, the need for it to be "recognised and resourced accordingly."
7. Recent UFBA advocacy suggests that representatives may also raise:
 - UFBA's ongoing desire to see greater protection for all firefighters (including past personnel) with presumptive ACC cover (most probably via an amendment to the Accident Compensation Act 2001) for gradual workplace process illness, injury and disease; and
 - A desire to see a broadening of ACC cover to recognise volunteer firefighters under the ACC Act as an 'affected occupational group', as if they were employees, when carrying out Fire and Emergency duties.
8. Additional information about these topics can be found below.

'Hidden in Plain Sight' report and ensuring volunteer firefighters are properly trained, resourced and supported.

9. Enclosed with this aide memoire is a copy of the 'Hidden in Plain Sight' report regarding the value of the contribution of the New Zealand volunteer fire force, prepared for the UFBA by Esperance Capital released on 14 June.
10. Fire and Emergency endorse much of the content and sentiment of the report, however, we don't believe the report adequately reflects the efforts undertaken and the significant investment Fire and Emergency is making to support its volunteers.
11. For example, particular misunderstanding in the report stems from the statement that "volunteers do not receive the same level of uniform, training, fleet or equipment as their paid colleagues."
12. Fire and Emergency resources its frontline personnel – career and volunteers – based on risk, rather than a blanket, one size fits all approach. This results in different levels of resourcing and training across all brigades, both career and volunteers.

13. Volunteer brigades are funded quarterly, according to a set formula. All our people have the uniforms, PPE and other equipment suitable for the tasks they are expected to undertake.
14. It is also important to note that our volunteers are eligible for an annual reimbursement to help offset the cost their travel to and from the station, callouts, participation in community events and other related overheads.
15. The most recent annual reimbursement year of 1 December 20022 to 30 November 2023 saw \$4.03 million paid out in reimbursements to 10,934 volunteers.
16. Also, Fire and Emergency is considered an industry leader for its 'Volunteer loss of income and other costs policy.' This programme reimburses volunteers or their family members for loss of income as a result of attending a course administered by Fire and Emergency or a number of other events covered by the policy.

The UFBA's wider role, and the need for it to be "recognised and resourced accordingly."

17. The relationship between the UFBA and Fire and Emergency is governed through a Transitional and Advocacy Support Agreement (TASA). The TASA provides the mechanism and framework for Fire and Emergency to make grants to the.
18. At its meeting on 31 May 2024, the Fire and Emergency Board agreed to the proposal for the 2024/25 financial year for Fire and Emergency to pay the UFBA up to a maximum grant of \$4,086,289, comprising of funding for core services, the UFBA annual conference and firefighter challenge events, as well as volunteer capability building.
19. This was lower than the increase of 20% sought by the UFBA, but a small increase on the prior year's budget.
20. The UFBA was disappointed it did not to receive a greater funding increase. We explained our rationale for where we settled to them in detail.
21. Fire and Emergency considered the current fiscal environment when deciding on UFBA funding for the 2024/25 financial year, taking into account the UFBA's business plan and also made a modest inflation adjustment.
22. In recent weeks, we received a letter from the UFBA about the advocacy and support services that Fire and Emergency funds. We fund a cap of \$60,000 for advocacy support and UFBA advised that they have already exceeded this cap by \$74,147 in the current financial year due to legal expenditure. As a result, the UFBA requested that the funding cap be raised from \$60,000 to \$150,000. We responded to the UFBA with a message that we do not support the increase, an overspend was not budgeted for, and that the advocacy intended by the fund was not envisaged to be spent on legal fees.

ACC cover as it impacts firefighters

23. Two ACC-related topics were the subject of UFBA communications with the previous Minister of Internal Affairs and were included in recent media statements alongside the launch of the Hidden in Plain Sight report. They said: "[volunteers] also receive less rehabilitation support, compensation, and health and safety cover when they are injured on duty. ACC does not cover mental trauma experienced by volunteer firefighters on duty, or chronic workplace illness because it is considered in law to be a leisure activity. That fact is astonishing and cannot continue."
24. We briefed the then Minister for Internal Affairs in August 2023 about the UFBA's view that ACC should provide protection for all firefighters with presumptive legislation for gradual workplace process illness, injury and disease, and that ACC should broaden coverage to recognise volunteer firefighters as an affected occupational group, as if they were employees.
25. Our position at that time (and it remains) was that we were broadly aligned with the UFBA on these proposals.

Presumptive ACC cover for gradual workplace process illness, injury and disease

26. In recent weeks, Fire and Emergency received a verbal in-confidence heads-up from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) that they have been asked by the Minister for ACC, Hon Matt Doocey, to provide advice about a range of potential changes to cover settings, including gradual process mental injury.
27. We made a submission to MBIE in May last year about improving mental injury coverage for Fire and Emergency personnel. MBIE intend to provide advice to the Minister in July 2024, and we have agreed to provide some data and other information to inform that advice. We will keep you updated as we learn more about their proposed approach.
28. There are international models to follow, with presumptive legislation for firefighters that develop a range of illnesses already in place in numerous countries, including our close partners Australia, Canada and some states in the United States.
29. We consider a similar legislative amendment tailored to New Zealand to be the preferred mechanism to address appropriate support for exposure to the carcinogens and other toxins that cause the types of cancer firefighters are at risk of getting, among other illnesses, whether in a career or voluntary capacity.
30. Work-related cancer claims by firefighters are currently assessed by ACC's Toxicology Panel of independent clinical experts.
31. Of the claims that have gone to the Toxicology Panel since the tool was developed (all from male firefighters), just over two-thirds have been accepted. Of those that were initially declined, over half have had the decision quashed and overturned.
32. The diseases of claimants range from multiple myeloma, intestinal tract, oral/ tongue, kidney, testicular, bowel/colon and prostate cancer.

ACC lack of cover for volunteers

33. The UFBA has previously requested the Government broaden ACC coverage to recognise volunteer firefighters under the ACC Act as an "affected occupational group," as if they were employees, when carrying out Fire and Emergency New Zealand duties.
34. While there is a mechanism for career firefighters to receive ACC cover for work related diseases such as cancer, or mental injuries such as PTSD, this does not exist for volunteer firefighters except in very limited situations. This is because volunteer firefighters are not recognised as an affected occupational group under the ACC Act.
35. Fire and Emergency does not believe there is a good basis for volunteer firefighters to be treated differently to career firefighters in the eyes of ACC when it comes to recognition and treatment of work-related disease or mental injury.

Recommendation:

The recommendation is that the Minister of Internal Affairs:

- (a) **note** the contents of this briefing.

Yes / No

Minister's comment:



Fortnightly Report

Fortnight ending: 28 March 2025	Priority: Routine
Classification: In confidence	Tracking number: FR-25-5
Recipient: Hon. Brooke van Velden	Action sought: Note the contents of this report
Minister's comments:	

Photo: Our 24 new career firefighters at their graduation this week

Updates

Latest on our savings programmes

Our Financial Reinvestment and Risk Management programme is running to plan. We have completed the underpinning data collection, analysis and modelling, and will now focus on identifying and quantifying cost reduction options and their implications over the next few months. This work will inform the fiscal savings plan due to you in June, which will include financial targets incorporating your requested \$60 million of savings and detailed project plans.

Our current year savings initiatives are progressing well. We have achieved \$4.9 million in savings between November 2024 and February 2025 towards our tactical savings plan target of \$10 million for 2024/25. Additionally, our levy revenue response plan has delivered \$4.7 million in savings between December 2024 and February 2025, progressing well towards the full year target of \$9.7 million. We are confident of achieving both targets.

March levy revenue and market trends

Levy received in March totalled \$41.2 million. That is \$1.2 million less, or 2.8%, than expected. Levy revenue received for the year to date is \$590.4 million, which is \$8.4 million lower than anticipated, an adverse variance of 1.4%.

The commentary below provides an early view about insurance behaviours based on insurance contracts to February year to date.

Non-residential (Commercial) Sector

We're observing several strategies among commercial insurance clients that are reducing levy income. About 80 have switched to first loss or indemnity value policies, decreasing their asset values for levy purposes. This change has resulted in approximately \$3.3 million less levy revenue compared to the previous year. Additionally, some are shortening their policy periods to less than 12 months, while others are strategically adjusting their renewal dates to 30 June 2024 to take advantage of lower levy rates, creating an estimated \$500,000 reduction in levy. Contract works cover has also declined by approximately \$3 million compared to the same period last year.

Residential Sector

In the residential sector, we're seeing fewer insured households than anticipated. While our projections expected levies from approximately 1.3 million residential buildings, actual collections indicate about 100,000 fewer insurance policies. This shortfall likely results from a combination of households choosing to forego insurance coverage and a slowdown in new residential construction.

Motor Vehicle Sector

The motor vehicle sector presents a mixed picture. Commercial vehicle insurance is performing slightly better than expected with year-to-date growth at 9.7%, surpassing our projected 8.8%. However, private motor vehicle insurance shows a significant volume reduction, with the levy shortfall corresponding to approximately 200,000 fewer insured private vehicles.

Collective bargaining with the New Zealand Professional Firefighters' Union

The New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) completed its presentation of claims on 11 March 2025, totalling 196 claims.

Bargaining continues this week, with the Fire and Emergency bargaining team presenting our formal responses to the NZPFU's claims. The presentation will be based on the overarching themes in the individual claims. Our focus is on progressing shared priority areas, considering many factors including our financial position, practicality, and impact on workforce and work programmes.

We are committed to maintaining momentum in these discussions. Before the 10 - 11 March 2025 bargaining sessions, our team wrote to the NZPFU Secretary emphasising the need to progress beyond claim presentations and shared a proposed roadmap for the March and April bargaining sets. The next sessions are scheduled for 8-9 April 2025.

Exercise Maikuku

Fire and Emergency New Zealand will lead Exercise Maikuku in May 2025, a national wildfire response exercise designed to test and strengthen interagency coordination in the event of large-scale fires. Exercise Maikuku represents a National-level exercise that incorporates multi-agency response and coordination, aligned with the National Civil Defence Exercise Programme.

The exercise will simulate two significant wildfires occurring simultaneously in Queenstown and Riverhead (Auckland), testing local, regional, and national emergency response capabilities across multiple agencies.

Running from 13–15 May 2025, Exercise Maikuku will involve Fire and Emergency's Incident Management Teams, Regional Coordination Centres, and National Coordination Centre, along with other emergency response partners. The focus will be on coordinated interagency response, situational awareness, public information management, and early recovery planning.

The exercise will also inform the National Exercise Programme ODESC systems exercise later in the year. Agencies involved will have the opportunity to contribute to scenario planning to align with their own priorities.

We will keep you informed as the exercise approaches and advise of any implications for you and your office.

Speed limit consultation

We have provided a submission to NZTA on proposed speed limit reversals. Our submission relates to two areas (Taranaki and Nelson/Marlborough) where we have data to support keeping the current lower speed limits. We did not comment on the speed limit reversals proposed in other parts of the country.

Inclusion of Fire and Emergency greenhouse gas emissions data

Fire and Emergency submitted greenhouse gas emissions data for the 2023/24 financial year to the Carbon Neutral Government Programme lead in December 2024 as required by direction under the Crown Entities Act.

The Ministry for the Environment is now preparing a dashboard for the Minister of Climate Change that includes a summary of Fire and Emergency's data alongside all other Carbon Neutral Government Programme participants. This summary includes to-date emissions reduction from our 2018/19 base-year of 17%, and our low confidence that we will meet the 21% reduction target for this financial year.

24 new career firefighters have graduated

This week Fire and Emergency New Zealand welcomed 24 new career firefighters at a graduation ceremony held at the National Training Centre in Rotorua.

During their 12-week training programme, the recruits developed critical emergency response skills, including fire suppression, vehicle extrication, and hazardous substance management. These skills were demonstrated to family and friends at the ceremony.

The graduates will now take up positions across the country, strengthening Fire and Emergency's frontline response. Thirteen will be based in Auckland, eight in Wellington, one in Nelson and two in Southland.

The top recruit award was presented to Tracey Barclay, a former aviation rescue firefighter with the Royal New Zealand Air Force, in recognition of her leadership and excellence throughout the course.

Type 3 appliance order confirmed

We have now placed an order for 14 new Type 3 fire appliances with Emergency One (UK) Limited. These vehicles form the first production batch under the contract established through the Next Generation Type 3 procurement project.

Type 3 fire appliances are Fire and Emergency's standard frontline fire trucks used in the major metropolitan areas. They carry a full crew of firefighters and are equipped with essential firefighting and rescue tools, including a water pump, a 1,300-litre water tank, and breathing apparatus.

The new appliances are expected to be delivered in the second quarter of 2026. Their arrival will significantly modernise the Type 3 fleet, improving reliability and ensuring our frontline crews have the necessary equipment to respond effectively to emergencies.

Most recent pulse survey results are in

Our second pulse survey of the year considering diversity, inclusion and cultural capability has been completed. Overall satisfaction remains high, with 86% of respondents enjoying working or volunteering at Fire and Emergency, and 81% would recommend us as a great place to work or volunteer.

The results will be included in our next six-monthly Eke Taumata report to you.

Coronial inquiry wellbeing plan established

The Wellbeing Team has been working with the Legal team to develop a wellbeing plan for Fire and Emergency personnel involved in the coronial inquiry of the Auckland Floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. Many of our people involved in the response to these weather events will now be required to relive these potentially traumatic experiences. The plan is intended to support the wellbeing of our people involved in the coronial inquiry. We are focused on ensuring our people feel supported and there are measures in place to reduce the risk of psychological harm. Our people will be made aware of the range of options to best suit their wellbeing needs.

Our 'how to survive a house fire' campaign is live

Our house fire safety campaign launched on 24 March and continues through May, focusing on smoke alarms and household escape plans. We've timed this to coincide with Daylight Saving and school holidays for greater public awareness.

We're also developing a campaign addressing the concerning fact that people over 60 account for more than half of preventable house fire deaths. This includes a Wellington pilot encouraging family members and neighbours to help vulnerable people install smoke alarms. All campaign materials direct people to <https://www.fireandemergency.nz/escape>.

New fire safety regulation information on our website

New fire safety regulation information for businesses and landlords is now live on our website: [Building fire safety | Fire and Emergency New Zealand](#). We will promote access to this new information internally and externally.

Possible media this coming fortnight

Auckland Local Advisory Committee Members

This week we have announced the new Auckland Local Advisory Committee members.

ACC Petition

On Monday 17 March, a volunteer firefighter launched a petition for ACC to provide additional cover for volunteer firefighters. The petition is backed by the United Fire Brigades' Association.

At the time of writing the petition had gathered almost 25,000 signatures. We anticipate coverage on this story to continue, particularly after the petition closes on Wednesday 30 April 2025.

Holding lines, attributed to a spokesperson, have been finalised and shared with your office, as have reactive lines for you, should they be required.

NZPFU social media posts

The NZPFU is becoming increasingly active publicly as part of its collective employment agreement negotiations campaign. There have been recent social media posts on the progress of negotiations, Fire and Emergency's new payroll system, and on participating in engagement around culture change. We anticipate media coverage around these and other issues to continue. Holding lines have been prepared.

Planned social media posts

Planned social media posts 31 March – 6 April

Monday: Collaborative post with the Department of Conservation (DoC) about fires on their land

Tuesday: Papakura Volunteer Fire Brigade centenary celebration

Wednesday: Daylight Saving reminder

Friday: Fire season map

Saturday: Daylight Saving

Planned social media posts 7 – 13 April

Monday: Post about mother and daughter volunteer firefighters from Willowby Volunteer Fire Brigade

Wednesday: Urban Search and Rescue structural engineering training video

Friday: Fire season map

Note: These posts are subject to change. We do not always post each day, and some days we post more than once.

Briefings

Briefings under development	Due date
BR-25-03 Briefing for the Minister LSGC Schedule 141	April 2025
NZPFU bargaining: risks and mitigations	April 2025
HRIS/Payroll business case	May 2025
Fiscal savings plan	June 2025
Briefings delivered	Date delivered
BR-25-02 Our Strategic Direction – Ta Mātou Ahunga Rautaki 2025 – 2030	26 March 2025

Draft Cabinet paper consultations

Portfolio	Title	Committee	Comment
Emergency Management and Recovery	Strengthening emergency management: release of discussion document on legislative reform	Economic Policy Committee (9 April)	NEMA consulted with us earlier this year on their proposed policy positions, so we are broadly comfortable with the discussion document.
Defence	Discrete Changes to the Defence Regulatory System – Proposals for Approval	Foreign Policy and National Security (6 May)	The paper proposes some discrete changes to the Defence Act. It includes a proposal to provide civil immunity to members of the Armed Forces for all acts and omissions undertaken in good faith, particularly when assisting agencies such as Fire and Emergency in an emergency or incident response. We have advised that we are comfortable with the proposal.

Upcoming events and announcements

Date	Location	Event	Opportunity
29 March	Papakura City Football Club, McLennan Park, Papakura	Papakura Volunteer Fire Brigade 150 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event. Chief Executive Kerry Gregory is attending.
31 May	Mt Hutt Memorial Hall, Methven	Methven Volunteer Fire Brigade 100 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.
11 October	Te Aroha Fire Station, 14 Koromiko Street, Te Aroha	Te Aroha Volunteer Fire Brigade 125 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.

Noteworthy OIAs due soon

Requester	Topic	Due date	Comment
None this fortnight.			

9(2)(a)



Fortnightly Report

Fortnight ending: 11 April 2025

Classification: In confidence

Recipient: Hon. Brooke van Velden

Minister's comments:

Priority: Routine

Tracking number: FR-25-6

Action sought: Note the contents of this report

Photo: Specialist Water Response team rescuing two members of the public from flood waters in Whangamoa, Nelson-Tasman region during significant flooding in that region last week.

Updates

Latest on bargaining with the NZPFU

Fire and Emergency and the NZPFU continued bargaining discussions on Tuesday 8 April and Wednesday 9 April 2025. These sessions marked days 29 and 30 of the ongoing negotiations.

During previous bargaining sessions, the Fire and Emergency team formally responded to approximately one-third of the 196 claims, focusing on progression, wellbeing, whanaungatanga, and injury/illness matters.

On 8 April, the team addressed the remaining claims, which covered several key themes: leave entitlements, allowances, staffing levels, health and safety provisions, hours of work, overtime arrangements, working parties, consultation processes, salary negotiations, and coverage issues.

The 9 April session involved detailed discussions regarding both the Union's claims and Fire and Emergency's proposals.

The next bargaining session is scheduled for early May 2025.

Response to your 2025/26 Letter of Expectations

Thank you for sending us your 2025-26 Letter of Expectations. We intend to provide you with a formal response in the coming weeks.

Upcoming Statement of Performance Expectations

We are finalising our 2025/26 Statement of Performance Expectations and will deliver it to the Department of Internal Affairs and Audit New Zealand, prior to DIA delivering it to you ahead of the statutory deadline of 1 May.

New Deputy Chief Executive appointed

Following a competitive international search and rigorous selection process, Fire and Emergency is pleased to confirm the appointment of Megan Stiffler as Deputy Chief Executive Service Delivery Operations.

Megan brings extensive operational and executive leadership experience from across the Australian fire sector, including senior roles with Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, and most recently as Deputy Commissioner Strategic Capability at Fire and Rescue New South Wales. She has led both career and volunteer workforces and has a strong background in strategic capability, community engagement, and emergency operations.

Megan will commence in the role on 28 April 2025, holding the rank of Deputy National Commander. She will undertake a tailored induction to support her transition to Fire and Emergency and life in New Zealand.

Response requested by the Petitions Committee

On 4 March a petition asking that Fire and Emergency proactively release recent incident statistics as well as publish over 30 years of historic statistics was tabled in Parliament and referred to the Petitions Committee. The petitioner is an academic at Canterbury University and believes the data is in the public interest to better understand trends. He cites overseas fire services regularly releasing similar data. The committee has now written to us and asked us to provide a written submission in response to the petition by 6 May. We will respond to the committee by the due date.

Possible media this coming fortnight

Annual Review follow up questions

Following the report from the Governance and Administration Committee into our 2023/24 Annual Review, Radio NZ (RNZ) have made enquiries about our payroll project, KiwiSaver compliance and MAN trucks. A response was provided on 1 April. To date, RNZ have not published a story.

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) petition

On 17 March a volunteer firefighter launched a petition for the ACC to provide better cover for volunteer firefighters. At the time of writing the petition had gathered almost 31,000 signatures. We anticipate coverage on this story to continue, particularly after the petition closes on 30 April 2025. Holding lines have been finalised.

Briefings

Ministerial briefings under development	Due date
NZPFU bargaining: risks and mitigations	April 2025
Savings plan: interim report on progress and approach	Week ending 9 May 2025
HRIS/Payroll business case	May 2025
Savings plan	June 2024
Briefings delivered to the Minister of Internal Affairs	Date delivered
None this week	

Draft Cabinet paper consultations

Portfolio	Title	Committee	Comment
Defence	Discrete Changes to the Defence Regulatory System – Proposals for Approval	Foreign Policy and National Security (6 May)	The paper proposes some discrete changes to the Defence Act. It includes a proposal to provide civil immunity to members of the Armed Forces for all acts and omissions undertaken in good faith, particularly when assisting agencies such as Fire and Emergency in an emergency or incident response. We have advised that we are comfortable with the proposal.

Planned social media posts

Note: These posts are subject to change. We do not always post each day, and some days we post more than once.

14 – 20 April

Monday: Smoke alarm post

Tuesday: “Tiny Influencers” escape plan tile

Thursday: Wellington USAR exercise

Friday: Fire season map/Easter

21 – 27 April

Monday: Electric blanket testing/checks

Tuesday: USAR Base of Operations video

Thursday: Volunteer story – mother and daughters from Willowby Volunteer Fire Brigade

Friday: Fire season map/ANZAC Day

28 April – 4 May

Tuesday: Royal Honours Luncheon

Thursday: Fire stations road trip photos

Friday: Fire season map

Sunday: International Firefighters' Day

Upcoming events and announcements

Date	Location	Event	Opportunity
31 May	Mt Hutt Memorial Hall, Methven	Methven Volunteer Fire Brigade 100 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.
18 June	National Training Centre, Rotorua	Recruit Graduation	You are welcome to attend this event.
11 October	Te Aroha Fire Station	Te Aroha Volunteer Fire Brigade 125 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.

Noteworthy OIAs due soon

Requester	Topic	Due date	Comment
NZPFU	A range of information regarding our engagement with Fairway Resolution, including agreements, contracts and responsibilities.	ASAP	We responded to the NZPFU outlining our decision to grant their request. The information for release will be provided without undue delay.
9(2)(a)	Correspondence between Fire and Emergency, DIA and the Minister in respect of alternate solutions to the fire levy.	14 April	DIA has received an identical request and we have been working together to ensure our proposed responses align where possible. The information in respect of your office and Fire and Emergency was sent for consultation on 4 April.



FIRE
EMERGENCY

NEW ZEALAND



Fortnightly Report

Fortnight ending: 2 May 2025

Classification: In confidence

Recipient: Hon. Brooke van Velden

Minister's comments:

Priority: Routine

Tracking number: FR-25-7

Action sought: Note the contents of this report

Photo: Photo: Fire and Emergency Royal Honours Recipients received their New Years awards on Tuesday 29 April. From L-R: Paul Burns of Prebbleton – Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, Neville Phillips of Mātaura – King's Service Medal, John Oliver of Ōtāne - King's Service Medal, Harry Carter of Whangārei - King's Service Medal, Ian Pickard of Papamoa – Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit

Updates

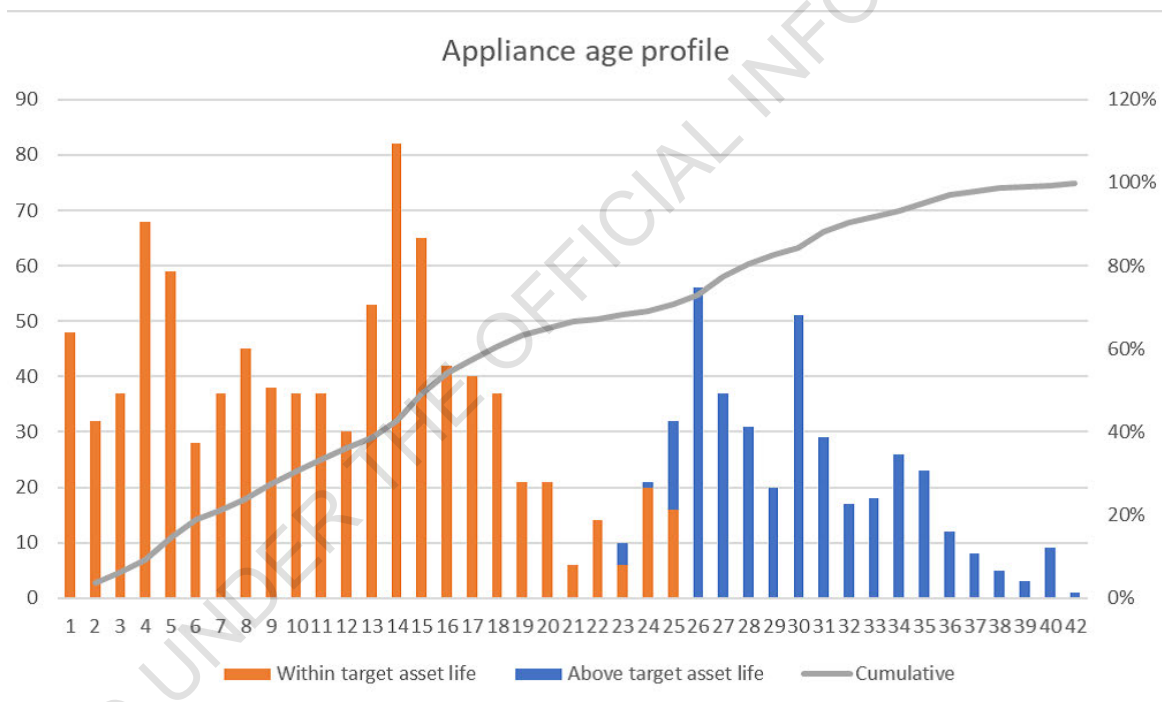
Hillside Road Recycling Plant fire investigations

As you are aware, there was an incident with one of our aerial appliances when attending the Hillside Road Recycling Plant Fire on 24 April. The nature of our work means our firefighters face unanticipated events regularly, which is why we invest in their training and why we have a “Mayday” procedure. The Mayday procedure was successfully utilised at the Hillside Road fire. We are instigating an investigation into the Mayday incident. The Investigation will examine the factors that contributed to the need to use the Mayday procedure. The investigation will cover the operational context, safety, health and wellbeing from a “near miss” perspective and an independent view into the mechanics of the aerial appliance.

We are prioritising the safety, health and wellbeing and mechanics aspects of the investigation which we are aiming to have completed within 90 days of the investigator commencing their work. The full report covering all aspects will take longer and we will inform you as this progresses and when we expect a final report to be completed. The Terms of Reference for the investigation are in the process of being finalised.

Fleet management and planning

In our briefing of Friday, 10 May 2024 (BR 24-20 refers) we set out information showing the age profile of our 1287 appliances. Chart 1 on p.11 of that briefing showed that approximately 30% of FENZ appliances are older than their target asset lives. I’ve included the chart below.



This reflects the fleet that was inherited from the various entities when FENZ was formed in 2017, moderated slightly by 317 appliances purchased or introduced since 2017. The Consultation Document on setting the Fire and Emergency levy for 2026—2029 set out similar information relating to the condition of our stations, appliances, technology and the need to invest in these assets together with training, equipment, and health and safety. The Consultation document said: ““Over a quarter of our fire engines are currently well past their target lifespan. We need to upgrade them so that they can respond when you need them. As we are the national response agency for fire, fire engines are our main type of response vehicle. If we are unable to replace our vehicles at the end of their useful lives or purchase new or more when we need them, we risk them breaking down during an emergency. This puts our people, and you and your communities, at greater risk of harm”. (When Cabinet considered the paper seeking to release the draft Part 3 levy consultation document in March 2024, the Cabinet paper itself referenced the capital costs due to historical poor investment)

As you would expect, we proactively maintain and reactively repair our fleet to maintain optimal possible

performance of the asset. The age of the fleet means unplanned “outages” are not uncommon though.

Current approach to fleet

There are three components to our current approach to fleet replacement. Each was started at a different point in time and recent effort has been to bring them together in a coherent way.

The first component is a refreshed aerial strategy. This was a recommendation from the Independent Operational Review into the New Zealand International Convention Centre Fire in 2019, namely for FENZ to “progress the review of its aerial appliance strategy to completion, to include the training of additional aerial appliance operators in the next 12 months.” Progress has been slower than intended, despite utilising a working group with fleet specialists and firefighter representatives. While a draft strategy has been prepared it has not been finalised as it needs to be tested against affordability and against more recent information about future needs.

The second component was a fleet asset management plan for all appliances, not just specialist aerial appliances. Non-aerials make up the vast majority of our fleet and are the most commonly-used appliances by our career and volunteer fire fighters. Given the state of technology at FENZ, assembling basic information on condition, location, age etc has been heavily manual. Nonetheless it has enabled us to have a better overview of current state, such as that set out above. This plan is being finalised and includes operational, maintenance and renewal planning.

The third and most recent component is improving our evidence-informed view of future operating needs. This will enable us to better plan for future capabilities, including numbers & types of appliances and their location. As you will appreciate this may be controversial, not least because it may challenge a replace “like with like” approach to appliances, including aerials, and where they are located.

Other activity

We have supply contracts for our red fleet. We currently have orders placed for 70 new appliances to be delivered over the next two years, including five new aerial appliances to be delivered in the 25/26 financial year. We are confident that those aerials will be fully compatible with the finalised aerial strategy and with our future operating needs.

Levy income update

Levy income for the month up to 28 April was \$42.4 million, a negative variance to our Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) of \$4 million. Financial year to date total levy income is \$635.1 million, which is \$10.8 million below SPE. Options to mitigate lower than expected levy income will be considered by the Board at their May meeting.

HRIS/Payroll update

Our latest Gateway Review for the HRIS/Payroll replacement programme has been completed and we have received the review report. The Programme has received an Amber/Red rating, which is expected at this stage in the development of the Implementation Business Case.

A paper will be provided to the Board at its May meeting on the recommendations and our proposed approach to these. We have also confirmed with DIA that we have an agenda item to discuss the review findings and our approach to the recommendations at our meeting with you on 14 May.

Our You're Cooked campaign wins 2024 Effie Global Best of the Best Awards

Our You're Cooked campaign has won the Government, Institutional and Recruitment category for the 2024 Effie Global Best of the Best Awards. One of only 58 contenders globally, You're Cooked was awarded the Hardest Challenge Effie and the Gold Effie for Short-term Success in 2023.

Our people attend more than 4000 residential house fires caused by unattended cooking each year. It is the leading cause of fires we respond to and causes the greatest injuries. You're Cooked was designed to be unmissable and put fire safety on the radar of our Disengaged audience segment in a way that felt

relevant to them. It is not our job to tell our audience to stop drinking or smoking, but it is our job to stop them from frying afterwards. Through our research we know they are going to cook whether they are impaired or not, so we encouraged them to do so safely by helping them to “stay off the stove.” You’re Cooked has led to a reduction in unattended cooking fires by 8.5% when compared with five years ago. The Effies honour the most effective advertising and marketing communications campaigns and are the benchmark for marketing awards globally.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy launching mid-May

On 13 May we plan to launch our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2034 and supporting Framework, which together guide Fire and Emergency to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation over the next 10 years. These documents have been developed in response to Recommendation 17 in the Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission review (2022) and are being delivered via our Eke Taumata Programme.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy outlines what we aim to achieve and the four organisational (system level) shifts we need to take over a 10-year period. Our Diversity and Inclusion Framework supports delivery of the Strategy by highlighting the key areas we will focus on and the maturity model that will guide our progress.

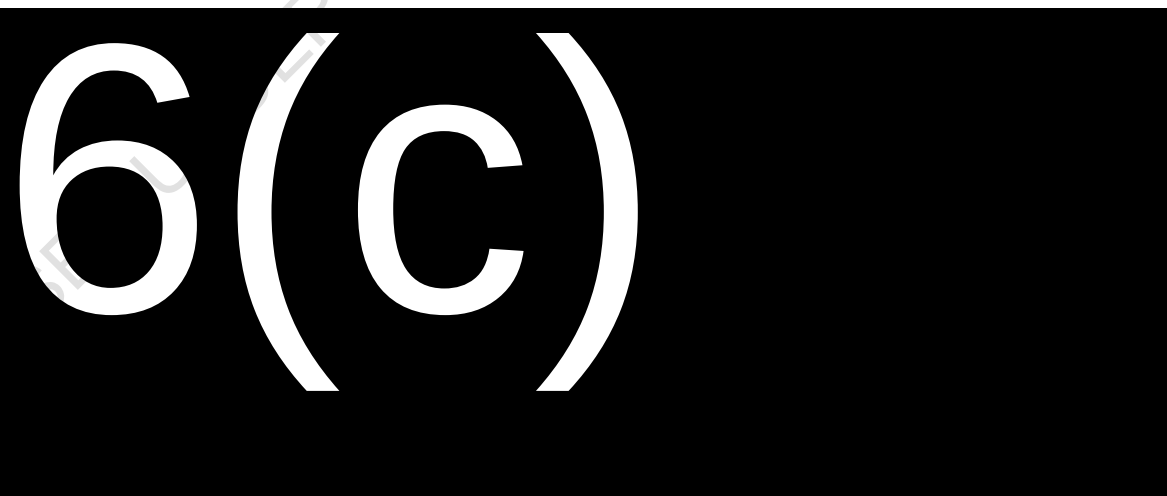
Fire and Emergency makes merit-based appointments and this strategy will support and strengthen that, over time, by broadening the pool of appointable candidates, alongside other initiatives to lift leadership capabilities.

National Firefighter Challenge cancelled

Due to the inclement forecast the United Fire Brigades’ Association’s (UFBA’s) National Firefighter Challenge on the Wellington waterfront on 2 and 3 May has been cancelled. As previously reported, this was going to be used by the UFBA as an opportunity to highlight the petition that has been running, seeking to have volunteer firefighters receive the same ACC coverage as their paid counterparts. The UFBA were planning to hand over the petition to Labour MP Camilla Belich at the event. The petition handover has now been postponed. We will let your office know when we hear what is planned for that to take place.

Response to your 2025/26 Letter of Expectations (LOE)

A response to your 2025/26 LOE is being finalised. We expect to send this to you within the next two weeks.



Possible media this coming fortnight

Hillside fire and the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU)

Off the back of the Hillside fire incident reported above, the NZPFU has begun a campaign in the media

attacking Fire and Emergency and calling for Government intervention. This is the NZPFU's first significant public activity since the current round of collective agreement negotiations began. The NZPFU is claiming mismanagement by Fire and Emergency and is calling for faster replacement of our fleet. The media are reporting the NZPFU claims, including NZPFU Vice President Martin Campbell's claims, of mismanagement and long delays within Fire and Emergency, and his and the Green Party's calls for the Government to intervene. Coverage of this incident is likely to continue, particularly when the cause of the fire is confirmed and when an investigation into the mayday incident is completed. Negotiations for the NZPFU's collective agreement will next be held on Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 May and may also trigger activity in the media from the NZPFU.

ACC petition

There continues to be steady coverage of the campaign and petition for volunteer firefighters to receive the same ACC coverage as paid firefighters (covered earlier in this report). Despite the handover of the petition being postponed, it has now received over 35,000 signatures and is likely to result in further media coverage.

Speed limits

We are beginning to receive regular enquiries from regional media outlets about our position on the Government's rescinding of speed limits and what impact that is having on response times. We have holding lines prepared.

Exercise Maikuku

Fire and Emergency will lead a national joint agency emergency exercise between Tuesday 13 to Thursday 15 May with other emergency agencies. The scenario will practice managing two concurrent large wildfires, one near Auckland and the other in Queenstown. The National Coordination Centre will stand up for the exercise.

Briefings

Ministerial briefings under development	Due date
Savings plan: interim report on progress and approach	Week ending 9 May 2025
HRIS/Payroll business case	May 2025
\$60 million savings plan	June 2024
Briefings delivered to the Minister of Internal Affairs	Date delivered
NZPFU bargaining: risks and mitigations	28 April 2025

Draft Cabinet paper consultations

Portfolio	Title	Committee	Comment
Workplace Relations and Safety	Health and Safety at Work (Hazardous Substances) Amendment Regulations 2025	Cabinet Legislation Committee	We are comfortable with the draft regulations and have no comments on the paper. A date for this to go before Cabinet Committee has not yet been advised.

Planned social media posts

Note: These posts are subject to change. We do not always post each day, and some days we post more than once.

28 April – 4 May

Monday: Multi-board safety

Tuesday: Royal Honours luncheon for Fire and Emergency recipients

Thursday: Fire station road trip photos

Friday: Fire season map

Sunday: International Firefighters Day

5 May – 11 May

Tuesday: Sign Language Week

Wednesday: Urban Search and Rescue team exercise

Thursday: Recruitment post

Friday: Fire season map

Sunday: Mothers' Day (volunteer story: mum and daughters from the Willowby Volunteer Fire Brigade, Mid-Canterbury)

12 May – 18 May

Monday: "Metre from the heater" winter fire safety campaign

Tuesday: Post encouraging traffic to get out of the way of responding fire trucks

Wednesday: Urban Search and Rescue team patient extraction video

Friday: Pink Shirt Day

Saturday: Waiheke Volunteer Fire Brigade all female crew

19 May – 25 May

Monday: Electric blanket safety winter fire safety campaign

Tuesday: Winter fire safety

Wednesday: Recruitment post

Friday: Fire season map

Saturday: Sky Tower Challenge

Upcoming events and announcements

Date	Location	Event	Opportunity
31 May	Mt Hutt Memorial Hall, Methven	Methven Volunteer Fire Brigade 100 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.
18 June	National Training Centre, Rotorua	Recruit Graduation	You are welcome to attend this event.
11 October	Te Aroha Fire Station	Te Aroha Volunteer Fire Brigade 125 th anniversary celebrations	You are welcome to attend this event.

Noteworthy OIAs due soon

Requester	Topic	Due date	Comment
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Labour Party	A range of information related to the issue of ACC coverage for volunteer firefighters	6 May (to be extended)	An extension letter will be communicated to the requester soon, due to the volume of material requested and substantial collation required.
Radio NZ	Reports on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	19 May	Information in scope has been identified and is being reviewed.
Stuff	All communications and other information related to the Hillside fire on the North Shore	23 May	Information in scope is being identified for collation.