

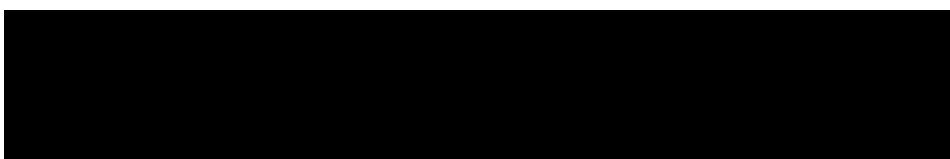


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24 September 2025

Ref: 19103



Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 20 August 2025 to Fire and Emergency New Zealand requesting information relating to annual volunteer reimbursements. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), and our response is provided below.

1. *Can you please advise for each of the last 5 years:*

a. *The total number of FENZ volunteers eligible that year*

Please see the table below for the requested information:

Year	Number eligible
2020	11,144
2021	10,948
2022	11,593
2023	11,689
2024	11,698

Please note these figures include those that are eligible but have not opted-in to receive the reimbursement.

b. *The total annual amount FENZ spent on Annual Volunteer Reimbursements*

Please see the table below for the requested information:

Year	Total amount
2020	\$2,798,480
2021	\$3,004,800
2022	\$3,098,250
2023	\$4,036,348
2024	\$4,067,520

c. The number of volunteers that received the reimbursement that year (or part thereof)

The number of volunteers that received the reimbursement that year since 2020 is as follows:

Year	Number received
2020	9,324
2021	10,014
2022	10,694
2023	10,935
2024	11,051

d. The number of volunteers that were ineligible that year

The number of volunteers that were ineligible for the reimbursement that year since 2020 is as follows:

Year	Number ineligible
2020	812
2021	618
2022	115
2023	160
2024	78

Please note that in 2022 pro-rated reimbursements were introduced, resulting in an increase to those volunteers eligible.

e. The number of volunteers that chose to opt out that year

The number of volunteers that chose to opt out each year since 2020 is as follows:

Year	Number opted-out
2020	83
2021	2
2022	4
2023	15
2024	28

Please note the volunteers who chose to opt out in any given year remain opted out for future years, unless they decide to opt in.

f. The number of exemptions that were approved that year

The number of exemptions approved each year since 2020 is as follows:

Year	Number of exemptions
2021	7
2022	122
2023	6
2024	8

Please note that although referred to here as exemptions, many of these resulted from volunteers advising us of relevant information after initial payments were made, resulting in a recalculation of the amount they receive.

The increase in exemptions for 2022 was due to 115 volunteers who were on leave due to the COVID-19 vaccination mandate and were provided with pro-rated reimbursements, being re-assessed and provided with full reimbursements.

After a thorough search of our records, we are unfortunately unable to provide the number of exemptions that were approved for the year 2020. For this reason, we are partially refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

2. With respect to the Annual Volunteer Reimbursement Policy:

a. Can you please provide a copy of the policy

Please find attached a copy of the Annual Volunteer Reimbursement policy.

b. Can you please define what an “active volunteer” is?

An active volunteer is an individual who is participating in Brigade activities and not currently on leave.

c. Can you please provide the total number of active volunteers, and the total number of inactive volunteers in Fire and Emergency for the last 5 years?

This information in relation to active volunteers is provided in Fire and Emergency’s annual reports, which are available to view on our external website [here](#). For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information requested is publicly available.

Whether a volunteer is ‘inactive’ is not a status we record in our systems. For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist. However, we can apply the inverse of our definition of an ‘active’ volunteer to consider that an ‘inactive’ status is a volunteer on leave which is information that is held albeit challenging to collate. The status of the overall volunteer population, whether active or on leave changes daily, and even hourly for certain types of leave i.e., sick leave.

While we record the daily status of volunteers who are taking leave, to accurately provide the total number across five years is a serious undertaking. For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We have considered whether seeking refinement of this portion of your request, extending the time to respond, or fixing a charge would remove the reason for refusal, and enable us to provide the information, but do not consider it would.

If the status of volunteers who are on leave, and those who are not, is information you seek, and you are willing to amend your request to a more manageable timeframe, and to specified types of leave, then please let us know and we will consider this part of your request anew.

d. Who decides whether a volunteer is active or not?

Unless a volunteer has been placed on leave by their Brigade, Fire and Emergency consider them to be active.

e. Who audits the list of “active” volunteers?

The Brigade leader is responsible for maintaining records as to the status of their members. As part of the annual reimbursement process, data is provided to Districts to validate the status of each of their volunteers.

f. How are “enduring payments” audited and when are the payments stopped?

Once a volunteer has opted-in, they will receive the reimbursement for the current and future years until such time that a volunteer leaves the organisation, decides to opt out, or no longer meets the eligibility criteria. Each year every volunteers eligibility is assessed as part of the annual reimbursement process, which means we are regularly reviewing (or auditing) the relevant information.

g. For the last 5 years, have any payments been made to ineligible volunteers, if so how many? Have these payments been recovered?

Payments are made to volunteers who, at the time of the payment, are eligible according to the data we hold and the conditions of the policy. There are circumstances where we receive additional information or data (for example, leavers forms) after a reimbursement is made, which can retrospectively result in a volunteer not meeting the eligibility criteria. It is not a part of our current processes to recover these reimbursements.

h. As the policy applies to all Fire and Emergency volunteers, including volunteers who are also employees or contractors, what is the definition of a Fire and Emergency Volunteer?

The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017 provides the definition of a Fire and Emergency volunteer in subpart 2 (Interpretation), section 6. For this reason, we are refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information requested is publicly available. A link to this section is available [here](#).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

We trust that the information being provided is of assistance. If you require further information, please email officialinformationrequests@fireandemergency.nz

Please note that because of the identified public interest in the information that you have requested, we intend to publish this response (with your personal details removed) on our website.

Nāku noa, nā



Aidan Saunders
Manager, Information Requests

