



National Headquarters
Fire and Emergency New Zealand
National Headquarters
Spark Central, Level 7
42-52 Willis Street
Wellington Central
Wellington 6011

Phone +64 4 496 3600

3 February 2026

Ref: 20047

Tēnā koe

We refer to your email of 18 November 2025 to Fire and Emergency New Zealand requesting information regarding funding of volunteer fire brigades.

On 28 November 2025, you agreed to refine the timeframe of your request for data to financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), and our response to each aspect of your request is provided below.

1. Funding Allocation & Budget Structure

- Please provide the annual budget allocated specifically to volunteer fire brigades for each of the past two financial years, broken down by region and by brigade.*

Please find attached, as **Appendix One** to this response, a table showing costs budgeted directly for volunteer stations by station and region. Fire and Emergency budgets for costs related to volunteer brigades in a number of ways which include:

- directly attributed to a specific brigade, which will generally include occupancy, fuel, road user charges, clothing and uniform and Volunteer Brigade Grant budgets
- budgeting for most costs that impact volunteers are held centrally and are not allocated specifically to an individual volunteer brigade. This will generally include budgets for repairs and maintenance of operational equipment and fleet, capital expenditure and learning and development
- for co-located or composite brigades which may also include budgets related to volunteers, however these are not generally split from budgets related to career brigades or other Fire and Emergency functions.

2. *How does FENZ determine its funding model for volunteer brigades? Please supply all policies, frameworks, or internal guidelines used in funding allocation.*

Fire and Emergency has a range of approaches it takes when setting its budget for the financial year. For volunteer stations, budgets are set per station for agreed size and establishment (number of volunteers). Establishment is agreed by the region manager based on the risk profile of the station. This in turn drives several calculations including uniform model and brigade grant calculation.

Non-operational funding is provided to volunteer brigades by way of a Brigade Grant principally for non-operational items not funded by Fire and Emergency. The Brigade Grant policies for natural and built environment brigades are attached as follows:

- Natural volunteer brigade grants – see **Appendix Two**
- Built volunteer brigade grants – see **Appendix Three**

Some costs are station specific, such as electricity usage, rates or property leases. These are budgeted based on historical use and adjusted where pricing is expected to change. Some budgets are based on the number of appliances or support vehicles, for example fuel, road user charges and vehicle licencing. Most costs related to maintenance of station, fleet and equipment is budgeted nationally or at a region/district level.

3. *What portion of FENZ's total annual operating budget is directed to volunteer brigades, and how has this proportion changed over the past two years?*

Fire and Emergency calculates its total budget allocated to support volunteers at \$218.3m for the 2025/26 financial year. This is 25% of our total operating budget. This is a calculation based on costs directly attributable to volunteers or an estimated allocation of budget. Volunteer support costs were \$214.1m (26%) in the 2024/25 financial year. The costs can fluctuate by year based on events such as the biennial regional volunteer conferences or by the number of volunteer payments for significant incidents each year.

Please note, this sum does not include payments made to the United Fire Brigades Association to support their role to advocate for the interests of all firefighters, which includes urban and rural volunteers (both operational and non-operational), paid, defence, and industrial across New Zealand. For 2025/2026 \$3,966,553 excl. GST was approved in funding for UFBA activities.

Regarding figures for the 2023/24 financial year, please note we only commenced calculating the volunteer budget for the Volunteer conferences in this way from 2024/25 so do not have this for 2023/24. To replicate based on the model we used to provide the above figures would be a significant undertaking involving multiple staff dedicated for multiple weeks. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

4. *Please provide any cost-benefit analysis or financial modelling that compares funding requirements for volunteer brigades versus career stations.*

Fire and Emergency has not undertaken financial modelling to compare funding requirements for volunteer brigades versus career stations. 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 does not exist.

In general, career stations will have a higher cost per person for items like uniform and personal protective equipment (PPE), electricity, fuel etc. due to the higher usage.

2. Operational Funding & Expenses

- 5. Please provide a breakdown of both operational and capital expenditures for volunteer brigades (e.g., equipment, PPE, station maintenance, appliances, training, fuel, utilities, communications)(building and maintain).*

Please find attached, as **Appendix Four, Table A** to this response, the requested information for the 25/26 financial year.

- 6. What is the average annual operational cost of running a volunteer brigade, and how does this vary across regions or brigade types?*

The average direct annual operating budget¹ for volunteer brigades for the 2025/26 financial year is \$32,800. Budgets will vary based on a range of factors. The main factors that lead to budgets being above average mainly relate to stations that have high occupancy costs (leased stations, higher electricity and council rate costs etc).

The size of the brigade and the number of calls responded to will have an impact on the size of the budget. The average volunteer brigade budget is slightly higher in Te Hiku and Ngā Tai ki te Puku regions, compared to Te Ūpoko, Te Ihu and Te Kei.

- 7. How much funding was spent on reimbursing volunteer out-of-pocket expenses in each of the past two years?*

We are not able to accurately report how much has been spent reimbursing volunteers for out of pocket expenses as we do not keep records in all of our systems that link payments to a volunteer. 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 does not exist.

We can report on costs that have been reimbursed through our online Volunteer Expense Claims application tool. This includes loss of income, Whānau Support and expense reimbursement claims. Please find attached, as **Appendix Four, Table B** to this response, this information.

- 8. Please provide records of any identified funding shortfalls, unmet budget requests, or internal risk assessments relating to insufficient funding for volunteer brigades.*

Fire and Emergency does not keep records relating to funding shortfalls, unmet budget requests, or internal risk assessments relating to insufficient funding for volunteer brigades. We expect any budget pressures to be raised and managed through annual budget and forecasting cycles. 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 does not exist.

¹ excluding centrally held budgets

3. Capital Expenditure & Asset Management

9. *Please supply the capital expenditure allocated to volunteer brigades for each of the past five years, including new appliances, station upgrades, and major equipment.*

Fire and Emergency's capital expenditure is not specifically allocated to volunteer brigades and other areas. However, please find attached as **Appendix Four, Table C** to this response, the estimated capital expenditure associated with volunteer brigades for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years.

Your request for the figures for the 2023/24 financial year based on the model we used to provide the above figures would be a significant undertaking involving multiple staff dedicated for multiple weeks. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

10. *What is the renewal or replacement schedule for core volunteer brigade assets, and how is funding prioritised across regions?*

Investment funding is prioritised nationally rather than regionally. The exception to this are the proactive property maintenance funds which are divided across the five regions. We do not distinguish between brigade types i.e., career stations versus volunteer brigades. 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 does not exist.

11. *Please provide any asset condition reports or audits relating specifically to volunteer brigade appliances, PPE, or station infrastructure.*

We can advise that while there are maintenance logs that may contain some information within scope of this part of your request, the information is not held in a form that can be readily extracted, and doing so would require substantial manual collation. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In accordance with section 18B of the OIA, we have considered whether affixing a charge, inviting you to refine your request or extending the timeframe would enable your request to be answered. However, given the scale of this portion of your request we do not consider that this would mitigate our need to refuse.

4. Grants, Donations, and External Funding

12. *How much funding do volunteer brigades receive from community fundraising, grants, or donations? Please provide totals by brigade for the last five years.*

Fire and Emergency keeps records of community fundraising, grants, or donations received directly by volunteer brigades; however, it would take a significant amount of work to manually collate this information for every volunteer brigade. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

We have considered whether extending or charging would allow us to respond to this part of your request, however, the work required would need to be completed by someone with specialist

knowledge. The diversion from their core role would have an unreasonable impact on Fire and Emergency's operations.

13. How does FENZ account for or incorporate locally raised funds into brigade budgets?

Fire and Emergency does not incorporate locally raised funds into brigade budgets.

14. Please provide any policies or rules governing how volunteer brigades may spend community-raised funds, and any internal audits reviewing the use of such funds.

Please find attached, as **Appendix Five** to this response, Fire and Emergency's capital expenditure and donated assets policy which sets out expectations for purchasing assets from using funds raised by the community.

5. Personnel-Related Costs

15. Please provide total expenditure on volunteer support payments, training costs, travel reimbursements, and any other volunteer-related financial support for each of the past two years.

Please find attached, as **Appendix Four, Table D** to this response, the requested information.

Your request for the figures for the 2023/24 financial year based on the model we used to provide the above figures would be a significant undertaking involving multiple staff dedicated for multiple weeks. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

16. What funding is allocated to volunteer recruitment and retention activities, and how is this budget distributed across districts?

The scope of activities that contribute to volunteer retention is broad. It is built into how Fire and Emergency operates and through the delivery of services to volunteers. However, the following retention specific funding has been identified for the 2025/26 financial year:

- Employer Recognition Programme - \$300,000 (includes signage, events, and Proud Employer campaigns) – is funding that is available for all brigades nationwide and is utilised and prioritised as requests come into the programme, rather than allocated per district.
- National Volunteer Week - \$40,000 (campaign) – is funding for both the Proud Employer and National Volunteer Week, prioritised to maximise reach for our primary audience, generally outside of main centres.

17. Please provide any analyses of the financial impact of volunteer shortages on operational capability.

Analyses of the financial impact of volunteer shortages on operational capability has not been undertaken. 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.

6. Governance, Oversight & Compliance

18. Please provide all internal or external audits, reviews, or reports relating to the adequacy and effectiveness of funding for volunteer brigades.

Internal or external audits, reviews, or reports relating to the adequacy and effectiveness of funding for volunteer brigades have not been undertaken. 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.

19. Please provide copies of any correspondence (emails, briefings, reports) between FENZ leadership, the Board, or the Minister relating to volunteer brigade funding in the past three years.

As you will be aware, we sought to refine this aspect of your request to formal documents and/or to correspondence between ELT and the Board or Minister. You confirmed you would like to receive informal communications such as Teams and SMS/WhatsApp communications and added that communications between ELT members and region staff reporting to the ELT are also to be included.

The scope of persons this now includes for a topic as broad as volunteer brigade funding resulted in us determining it would take a significant amount of work to manually collate this information. For this reason, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

20. Please list any planned changes to the funding framework for volunteer brigades, along with supporting documents such as business cases, consultation papers, or briefing notes.

We can advise that no changes to the funding framework for volunteer brigades have been proposed or approved. 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.

7. Comparisons & Performance Metrics

21. Please supply any benchmarking or comparative studies of funding levels between volunteer and career brigades.

Fire and Emergency has not undertaken any benchmarking or comparative studies of funding levels between volunteer and career brigades. For this reason, we are refusing this portion of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

22. What performance or service-level measures are used to assess whether volunteer brigades are adequately funded? Please provide the most recent assessments.

Fire and Emergency does not currently have performance or service-level measures to assess whether volunteer brigades are adequately funded. For this reason, we are refusing this portion of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

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

