

SECURITY SCREENING PROCESS

Information for Applicants

Background

The NZFS has a number of statutory powers as well as a position of trust and integrity in public perception. For these reasons there is a need to provide general safeguards to the public over who represents the Fire Service in an employment or volunteer capacity. Also, in light of the agreement with Police to share technology and information, there is an additional need to assure the Police (and the public of New Zealand) that Police information is appropriately safeguarded.

Taking into account these factors, the Chief Executive/National Commander has approved an approach for the management of these risks by introducing a "Security Screening" policy, which relates to the checking of prospective employees and volunteers for criminal and traffic convictions, and other relevant information (called the "criminal activity check"). These procedures are designed to assist the NZFS to make appropriate appointment decisions in respect of people who do have convictions and to ensure community trust in those representing the Fire Service is well founded.

These procedures have been developed in accordance with the privacy legislation, which requires:

- Individuals to give their permission for the checks to be conducted;
- NZFS to use the information only for the purpose that it was obtained; and the Fire Service to safeguard the privacy of that information.

As a part of the application process you will be given an authority form, which you must complete and sign.

OVERVIEW

This form authorises the NZFS to undertake the criminal activity check.

If you do not give permission to conduct the check, your application may not proceed any further.

It is not intended that all people with criminal records be barred from being appointed to vacancies in the NZFS. There are convictions that may have no bearing on a person's employment; and in exceptional circumstances, even those people with convictions that place them outside the NZFS's established employment guidelines may still be given consideration for appointment.

Process

The NZFS will forward your authority form to the Police Security Screening section, where the staff will search the police database, and report any information held or deemed to be relevant to your application, to our National Headquarters. Human Resources Unit will assess whether or not the information provided by Police will impact on the appointment decision.

If you are deemed unsuitable but the Chief Fire Officer or Manager still wish to appoint you the Chief Fire Officer must make a special request to the Fire Region Manager for reconsideration. The Human Resource Unit will provide further details to the Fire Region Manager. The Fire Region Manager will make the final decision in consultation with the Human Resource Director on your suitability for appointment.

Decision

Information provided by the Police, and assessed as part of your application will include:

- A.** Confirmation that you have no criminal convictions.
- B.** Confirmation that you have criminal convictions and a printout of those convictions.
- C.** Notification in the view of Police, you are deemed unsuitable to work with vulnerable members of the community (such as children, older people or those with special needs).

Where only notice A is received you will be assessed as suitable.

Where only notice B is received Human Resources Unit will assess your convictions against our criteria to determine your suitability.

Where notice C is received you will be assessed as unsuitable.

Information Storage

Detailed information regarding criminal convictions provided by the Police will be stored by the NZFS. This may be used for reasonable purposes associated with your employment. Information that you have been screened and whether you were assessed as suitable or not suitable will be maintained.

Human Resources Unit will not release any police information to a Chief Fire Officer or selection panel. The only information that the Chief or Panel will receive will be advice that an applicant is within the criteria or not.

Viewing your own conviction

Under the Privacy Act you are entitled to see a copy of the conviction recorded against you. If you would like to do so you should contact the department of courts in your local area.

GUIDE ON SUITABILITY REGARDING CONVICTIONS

The following information is provided as a guide to those who have criminal convictions and are unsure if this will prevent them from being a member of the NZFS. It is not a definitive list of convictions and should therefore be used as a guide only.

A. Conviction for Arson

Applicants who have been convicted of arson in the last 7 years or have received a custodial sentence for arson at any time will be deemed unsuitable to join the New Zealand Fire Service.

B. Convictions in the last 7 years

Applicants who have a conviction in the last 7 years for any of the following will be deemed unsuitable to join the NZFS.

- Sexual related crimes
- Theft
- Fraud
- Perjury
- Mis-using information
- Other crimes of dishonesty

C. Convictions in the last 5 years

Applicants who have more than one conviction in the last five years, regardless of the sentence, will be deemed unsuitable to join the NZFS.

Applicants who have a conviction in the last five years for which they were sentenced to serve a period of imprisonment are likely to be deemed unsuitable to join the NZFS.

Applicants who have one conviction in the last five years (but it is not for any of the crimes listed under B) and where sentenced to one of the following, are likely to be deemed suitable to join the New Zealand Fire Service:

- A fine
- A community-based sentence
- A period of corrective training
- A suspended sentence of imprisonment
- A court order to come up for sentence if called upon to do so in respect of an offence punishable by imprisonment.

D. Driving-related offences

Parking and speeding offences that result in fines or endorsements will not normally affect security screening.

Applicants for roles that include driving NZFS vehicles who have more serious charges such as careless, reckless or dangerous driving; driving while disqualified; driving without a license; driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, will be considered the same way other convictions are under C.

E. Applicants for Communication Centre positions

Applicants being considered for roles in the joint NZFS/ Police Communication Centers will have a generally higher threshold for suitability than other NZFS personnel.