

Driving RFS Vehicles

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this service standard under Section 38(1) of the *Emergencies Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

Purpose

This service standard describes the use of ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) vehicles by ACTRFS members.

Scope

This service standard applies to all ACTRFS staff and personnel from the ACT Rural Fire Service brigades, as defined in the Emergencies Act 2004.

Background

ACTRFS vehicles should only be used for official ACTRFS purposes, including community education and engagement activities, except where approval has been obtained from the RFS Chief Officer or their delegate as described in 1.1.1 Proper use of RFS Property and Equipment Service Standard.

The responsibility for driving safely and according to the road rules always rests with the vehicle driver.

Responsibilities

Brigade Captain	Manages Brigade RFS vehicles. Develops arrangements for non-incident use of RFS vehicles for the brigade in compliance with this service standard and others, including 1.1.1 Proper Use of RFS Property and resources and 1.1.3 Community Ed and Non-fire Ops Activity. Endorses members to drive RFS vehicles.
Brigade Training Officer	Manages annual brigade authorised driver competency checks and rostrum.
Vehicle drivers	Must be members of the ACTRFS or ESA. Must hold the appropriate licence category.

	<p>Must drive responsibly, safely and in compliance with the road and parking rules (except when undertaking Emergency Response Driving, see SOP 2.2.15).</p> <p>Must comply with National Heavy Vehicle Regulation requirements, where appropriate, in compliance with 2.2.4 Managing Fatigue SOP.</p>
<p>ACTRFS Director, Operations</p> <p>ACTRFS Senior Operations Officer</p> <p>ACTRFS Operations Officer</p> <p>ACTRFS Duty Officer</p> <p>(ACTRFS Duty Officer to be contacted after hours)</p>	<p>Arranges vehicle maintenance during an incident where an IMT is not established.</p> <p>Ensures ESA workshops are contacted to arrange vehicle roadworthiness inspections after every incident of damage or collision.</p> <p>Arranges periodic vehicle maintenance and ensures faults are rectified.</p> <p>Ensures vehicles are correctly registered.</p> <p>Ensures fuel cards in vehicles are updated as required.</p> <p>Handles resolution of traffic and parking infringements as required.</p> <p>Advises Brigade Captains of all non-operational use of vehicles initiated by RFS HQ or ESA.</p>
ACTRFS Membership Support Officer	Holds records of drivers' licences.
Assistant Director, Membership and Engagement	Helps resolve issues with driver attitude and behaviour.

Service standard

Requirements for drivers

To drive an ACTRFS vehicle, the driver must:

- hold an appropriate category licence
- at all times abide by any conditions associated with their licence
- be a member of the ACTRFS or ACT ESA
- provide a copy of their driving licence to the RFS Membership Support Officer.

Learner licence holders

- Class C learner licence holders are not permitted to drive ACTRFS vehicles.
- Members holding a full Class C licence, seeking to upgrade to a LR/MR/HR/HC licence are permitted to drive RFS vehicles under the supervision of a member holding an

appropriate full unrestricted licence. When undertaking supervised driving, “L” plates must always be displayed.

- Learner licence holders are not permitted to undertake Emergency Response Driving. See 2.2.15 Emergency Response Driving SOP.
- Learner licence holders are not permitted to drive on or from a fireground or incident site.

Provisional and Probationary licence holders

- Provisional & Probationary class licence holders are permitted to drive RFS vehicles, with the approval of their Brigade Captain, the Director, Operations or Assistant Director, Membership and Engagement.
- “P” plates must always be displayed for Provisional drivers.
- For the first twelve months of holding a provisional licence, provisional drivers are not permitted to tow trailers with a GVM over 750kg, in accordance with the *Road Transport (Driver Licencing) Regulation 2000*.
- Provisional licence holders are not permitted to undertake Emergency Response Driving.
- Provisional licence holders may only drive on a fire ground or incident site under the direct supervision of an appropriately classed driver.

Licence conditions, suspension, cancellation

Drivers of ACTRFS vehicle must advise their Brigade Captain and ACTRFS immediately of any change to their licence conditions or status that legally prevents them from driving the vehicle.

Holders of the following classes of licence must discuss their application to drive RFS vehicles with their Brigade Captain and the Assistant Director, Membership and Engagement or the Director, Operations, who will assess each application on its merits:

- Any class of licence where the holder is returning from a period of licence disqualification by a court.
- A restricted licence issued by a court that authorises the holder to drive only in the course of his/her employment, or in other specified restricted circumstances.

When driving an RFS vehicle

Drivers must always carry their licence with them when driving an ACTRFS vehicle.

When transporting people, the driver and passengers must all wear fitted seat belts. The vehicle must not carry any more people than there are seat belts fitted to the vehicle. There is an exemption from wearing seat belts when members travel on the back of trucks on a fireground.

All passengers must be members of the ACTRFS, ACT Government employees or being transported for operational or emergency reasons. Exemptions may be provided by the ACTRFS CO for special events, such as charity rides.

Drivers are responsible for:

- driving the vehicle in a safe and responsible manner, in keeping with the ESA Volunteer Code of Conduct
- complying with all road, traffic and parking rules and regulations applicable within the state or territory in which they are driving
- making good any penalty imposed, including payment of fines following an infringement of these rules
- confirming the vehicle is roadworthy, registered, mechanically sound and appropriately equipped before driving
- reporting to the RFS Duty Officer any vehicle deficiencies and/or ensuring they are rectified before driving
- completing the vehicle running sheets and logs
- reporting any on-the-spot infringement for parking or driving an RFS vehicle to the RFS Duty Officer as soon as is practicable
- reporting any suspected red light and/or speed camera infringement to the RFS Duty Officer.

Specific requirements under Heavy Vehicle National Law

All drivers of ACTRFS medium and heavy vehicles must comply with the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) including the Fatigue Regulated Heavy Vehicles provisions as it applies to them.

Under the law, heavy vehicle drivers are required to fill in a diary when working 100km away from their home station. Heavy vehicle drivers are exempt from this requirement under the National Heavy Vehicle Volunteer Emergency Services Work Diary and Record Keeping Exemption Notice 2023 (No.1)

However, drivers of RFS heavy vehicles (GVM 4.5T or above) are always expected to complete a work diary/HVNL logbook and must comply with the fatigue management standards specified in the HVNL

Where driver awake time will exceed 16 hours, the driver must inform the Crew Leader. The Crew Leader will then inform the RFS or the IC who must organise a relief driver or separate transport for the crew from the fire ground to their accommodation. For more information see 2.2.4 Managing Fatigue SOP.

Reporting vehicle movements

All movement of RFS vehicle must be reported to COMCEN by the driver or passenger using the status selection on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) and where required via Radio. Non-fire use must be notified to RFS HQ as described in 1.1.3 Community Ed and Non-fire Ops Activity Service Standard.

Issue and use of fuel cards

Fuel cards are issued to each RFS vehicle.

These should be stored in a secure and accessible location within the vehicle.

Fuel cards should only be used for the vehicle they are registered to. When refuelling, the odometer reading of the vehicle and the PIN number of the fuel card must be provided to the service station console operator.

If the fuel card is inoperable and fuel has been obtained, the member will forward a Claim for Payment and the receipt to the DO for reimbursement.

If a fuel card is lost or out of date, members should notify the ACTRFS DO.

Managing RFS vehicles

Brigades should ensure that vehicles are maintained in a clean condition, ready for operational use. This includes regular checks for:

- general roadworthiness, cleanliness and preparation
- all fluid levels
- tyre condition
- operation of all lights and warning devices.

Any mechanical issues should be reported to the RFS Duty Officer or Director, Operations, who will organise repair by the ESA workshops.

The ACTRFS Brigade Captain is responsible for management of the brigade vehicles. Each brigade is responsible for developing its own brigade arrangements for non-incident use. These arrangements must comply with other ACTRFS policies, service standards and standard operating procedures, especially 1.1.1, Proper Use of RFS Property and Resources Service Standard and 1.1.3 Community Ed and Non-fire Ops Activity Service Standard.

Smoking, drug and alcohol use and carriage, mobile phone use

Drivers must have a blood alcohol concentrate (BAC) of 0.00% and have no illicit drugs in the body while operating an ACTRFS vehicle.

See 1.1.4 Alcohol and Drug Consumption and RFS Activities SOP.

Alcohol may only be carried in an ACTRFS vehicle with the approval of the RFS Chief Officer or where the alcohol was received in accordance with the ESA's *Authority Guidelines Relating to Donations as a Gift or Present*. (See the ACT Public Sector Management Standards 1 – Ethics.)

Smoking is not permitted in ACTRFS vehicle.

Drivers must not use a mobile device while the vehicle is moving

Driver behaviour and attitude

All drivers must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and ensure that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.

Drivers must comply, as far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given to them by an authorised person.

Driving considered dangerous may include, but is not restricted to, failure to listen to and follow instructions, not being in proper control of the vehicle, driving in a manner likely to cause injury

to persons or damage to property, driving that results in a near miss, or otherwise endangers the safety of the crew or public.

All ACTRFS members have the responsibility to raise concerns when they observe unsafe or dangerous driving in ACTRFS vehicles. A crew leader should acknowledge the concerns of the crew within the vehicle and address this at the earliest possibility.

Crew Leaders should take immediate action if they observe issues – either minor or dangerous – in driving behaviour.

Depending on the nature of the driving issue, the Crew Leader may:

- direct the driving to be modified or ceased
- direct the vehicle to be stopped and change drivers if necessary
- notify and/or involve the Brigade Captain and the DO and ACTRFS Assistant Director, Membership and Engagement
- submit a report of the incident to the Brigade Captain and DO
- recommend driver counselling, retraining and reassessment as necessary.

See the Notifiable Instrument, NI 2011-324: Emergencies (Suspension and Disciplinary Arrangements for Volunteers) Commissioner’s Guidelines 2011 for referral and actions for addressing unsafe driving behaviours.

Vehicle collisions and driving incidents

If an ACTRFS vehicle is involved in a collision or driving incident, the following procedure is to be applied:

1. If responding to an emergency incident, the Crew Leader will use discretion whether to continue on, or to advise COMCEN of the inability to continue and/or to stay and render assistance at the driving incident.
2. Crew Leader notifies AFP and ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS), if required.
3. If not responding to an emergency incident, the driver must stop and safely park the vehicle, as described in the following point.
4. If the Crew Leader decides not to continue on, the driver stops and safely parks the vehicle and exchanges driving incident information with involved persons (at no time is liability to be admitted or assumed).
5. Crew Leader will advise COMCEN of the driving incident with all relevant details.
6. The driver will complete a “RiskMan” online form as soon as practicable after the incident.
7. Crew Leader notifies the DO of the incident, whilst vehicle remains in a safe area adjacent to the incident.
8. DO contacts the ESA Workshop and provides contact number of the crew leader reporting the incident. Crew Leader will then follow direction of ESA workshop staff regarding vehicle roadworthiness and if there is a requirement for a vehicle roadworthiness assessment at the scene.

9. All vehicles must be checked for roadworthiness by ESA Workshops after any driving incident.
10. RFS members are not to perform any repairs on any vehicle unless directed by ESA Workshops (unless for immediate operational readiness or safety requirement)
11. DO notifies the owner of the damaged property, if applicable.
12. DO immediately relieves the driver of the emergency vehicle from driving pending an investigation conducted by the relevant panel convened under the RFS Code of Conduct and AFP as necessary.

If disciplinary action is required, Notifiable Instrument NI 2011-324: Emergencies (Suspension and Disciplinary Arrangements for Volunteers) Commissioner's Guidelines should be applied:

1. The Assistant Director, Membership and Engagement in conjunction with the relevant panel ensures the driver is counselled, retrained and reassessed as necessary and refer the matter to the relevant panel.
2. The relevant panel reinstates the drive or recommends further remedial action.
3. Notify the ACTRFS CO of the outcomes, and a copy of the investigation report for file.


Note that all driving incidents on roads must be reported to the appropriate authority within 24 hours.

Document information

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Rohan Scott	1.0	19/10/2020	First issue
Steve Quinlan	2.0	30/03/2023	Review and update with HVNL Exemption Notice 2023 (No.1) Expires 31 January 2026. Amendments to vehicle collision/damage requirements.

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACTRFS		09/02/2024

Document Owner

Position	Section
RFS Director	Operations

Next review due: 01/02/2027

Related documents

Document name
1.1.1 Proper use of RFS Property and Resources Service Standard
1.1.3 Community Ed and Non-fire Ops Activity Service Standard
2.2.4 Managing Fatigue Standard Operating Procedure
2.2.15 Emergency Response Driving Standard Operating Procedure
3.1.1 Code of Conduct and Ethics of RFS Members Service Standard
3.1.9 Command Vehicle Use Service Standard
ACTRFS Emergency Response Driving Policy
ACT Public Sector Management Standards
Road Transport (Driver Licencing) Regulation 2000
National Heavy Vehicle Law Act 2013

Service Standard 3.1.13 Driving RFS Vehicles

Page 8 of 9

last reviewed 28/07/2023

This is a **controlled** document. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be checked against the document control register prior to use.

Document name
National Heavy Vehicle Volunteer Emergency Services Work Diary and Record Keeping Exemption Notice 2023 (no.1)

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.