

International firefighter exchange programme

Introduction

When to use	This guide sets out what potential exchange partners need to consider, and the general terms, for an international firefighter exchange.
Disclaimer	<p>The guide is a reference document. It's intended to provide general information and suggestions for an intending exchange partner to consider. It doesn't provide legal advice and should not be relied on regarding rights or potential liabilities of exchange partners.</p> <p>Any discussion in the guide of matters such as insurance, the deed of exchange, finances and income tax, tenancies, powers of attorney, medical matters or any other matters are of a general nature only. Potential exchange partners are strongly encouraged to obtain their own professional advice (lawyer, accountant, doctor, immigration advisor) about such matters.</p> <p>Fire and Emergency New Zealand accepts no liability for the general information provided in this guide and reserves the right to amend the guide at any time.</p>
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire and Emergency New Zealand operational employees considering an exchange (exchange partner). • Overseas firefighters considering an exchange to New Zealand.
Purpose	<p>The purpose of the international firefighter exchange programme is to improve the practical skills, knowledge and experience of an operational employee by being an active member of an overseas fire brigade.</p> <p>Exchanges are usually not just about exchanging jobs. In most cases, accommodation and possessions are also temporarily swapped.</p> <p>Fire and Emergency New Zealand is a keen participant in this programme and hopes that if you're successful in your application, you'll:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to share knowledge • build international networks • professionally represent Fire and Emergency New Zealand • gain knowledge in specialist areas • gain interesting life experience from living away from home • experience growth in your professionalism and understanding of different organisations and cultures.

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Who can apply

Who can apply	<p>Your fire service is likely to have established criteria for participating in the programme. The endorsement of your fire service is compulsory for your application to be considered.</p> <p>At Fire and Emergency New Zealand, any operational employee can apply for selection to the programme. The employee may only exchange once and must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have had at least four years' paid firefighting experience • hold the rank of Firefighter, Qualified Firefighter, Senior Firefighter, Station Officer, or Senior Station Officer • be fluent in the language of the country you're exchanging to • be able to demonstrate the following attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional firefighting skills. ○ Awareness of global and Fire and Emergency New Zealand issues. ○ Maturity, self-esteem, adaptability and initiative. ○ Ability to use the experience and skills learned on your return. ○ Capability to effectively represent Fire and Emergency New Zealand.
Exchange duties and rank	<p>The exchange involves performing firefighter duties at Firefighter rank and pay.</p> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Officer may apply, but while on the exchange, will perform the role of Firefighter. • Seniority and rank are not interrupted during the exchange. All benefits are retained. <p>Note: See the 'Leave and pay' section for details.</p>
Duration	<p>An exchange is for 6-12 months, but generally 12 months.</p>
To register your interest	<p>To register your interest for an exchange, email the Fire and Emergency New Zealand exchange coordinator at International.FFexchange@fireandemergency.nz.</p> <p>You'll be sent an updated list of interested candidate partners every six months. Refer any questions to your exchange coordinator.</p>

<p>Finding a suitable exchange partner</p>	<p>The process for matching is ongoing and is largely self-directed. It may take you some time to identify a suitable exchange partner.</p> <p>When you have found a potential exchange partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it's important that all aspects of the exchange arrangements are discussed between you and the potential exchange partner, and agreed to in writing • you'll need to get approval from your executive authority.
<p>How to apply</p>	<p>Once you've found a suitable exchange partner, you can apply for selection. Fire and Emergency New Zealand employees will need to follow the steps in How do I: <i>Apply for international firefighter exchange</i>.</p>

General terms

Exchange conditions

<p>Exchange pre-requisites</p>	<p>You must have a minimum of four years firefighting experience at the time of application. Your fire service is likely to have established criteria for participating in the programme. The endorsement of your fire service is compulsory for your application to be considered.</p> <p>If an exchange is proposed between countries with different languages, it's expected you'll have sufficient language skills to be able to operate on a fireground effectively. Competency in an approved bilingual examination may be required as evidence.</p> <p>You must be prepared to obey all lawful instructions given by an Officer of the host fire service or a representative who is legally responsible for giving such instructions.</p>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>You must be a worthy representative of your profession and country. Since participating in an exchange is regarded as a privilege, you must be prepared to conduct yourself in such a way as to bring credit to your organisation.</p>
<p>Changes to your application</p>	<p>You must notify Fire and Emergency New Zealand exchange, in writing, of any change to your professional or personal situation, particularly if this changes your ability to participate in the programme.</p> <p>This also includes application details such as a change of accommodation. Note: New photos must accompany the details of the change, where applicable.</p>
<p>Length of exchange</p>	<p>Fire and Emergency New Zealand generally expects exchanges to be for 12 months. If you're unable to give this length of commitment, you must indicate this in your application and ensure you have discussed this with your exchange partner.</p> <p>You may not be entitled to resume your previous position, or return to your original accommodation, until the agreed period has expired.</p>
<p>Rank</p>	<p>All exchange partners, irrespective of rank with their home fire service, will take the rank of Firefighter for the duration of the exchange. No command and control or managerial duties will be required.</p>

<p>Deed of Exchange</p>	<p>All participants in the exchange, including both home and host fire services, and appropriate associations, will be required to sign a legal Deed of Exchange, setting out the agreed exchange conditions.</p> <p>From that time onward, the Deed is binding and may not be varied by any party, unless agreed by all parties. Indemnities are comprehensively addressed in the Deed of Exchange.</p> <p>Ensure that you understand the clauses of the Deed of Exchange, and how the terms impact on you during the exchange term. It's your responsibility to meet the terms of the Deed of Exchange before you book and pay for travel.</p>
<p>Work conditions</p>	<p>You must comply with the appropriate terms and conditions as determined by the applicable service. These are established in the Deed of Exchange.</p>
<p>Exchange start date</p>	<p>The starting date for an exchange may be coordinated to suit organisational and environmental conditions.</p> <p>Due to weekends, roster arrangements, etc., the starting dates may be different for each exchange partner. Ensure the dates on the Deed of Exchange are suitable to the circumstances of your exchange. This will need to be confirmed with both services before the exchange is considered final.</p> <p>Notify your rosters department about the dates of the exchange.</p>
<p>Reporting</p>	<p>It's important that you're able to articulate what benefit you will get from the exchange, and how this will be applied upon return to your home fire service.</p> <p>It's common that you may be required to submit a detailed report to your home and host fire service following the exchange. In many cases, your home fire service may set a specific task or project to be researched, e.g. specialist equipment, rescue techniques, or paramedical roles of firefighters.</p> <p>It's critical to remain in contact with your home fire service on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Union/ Association membership</p>	<p>You're usually 'adopted' by the host Union or Association as an honorary member for the period of the exchange.</p>

Leave and pay

<p>Entitlements</p>	<p>You'll need to ensure that your agreement with your home fire service includes a commitment for you to return to the position you held before the exchange.</p> <p>Any entitlements used during the exchange, such as sick leave, will be deducted from your leave accruals with your home fire service.</p>
<p>Recreation leave</p>	<p>Leave accrued, for normal award entitlements during the period of exchange, may be taken at a time following the exchange period by arrangement with the rostering department. This should be reported between services at regular intervals.</p>
<p>Pay</p>	<p>You'll remain in the employ of the home fire service, and will receive pay at Firefighter rank, with continuing deductions made, as applicable.</p> <p>Note: The Fire Region Manager has the discretion to maintain an officer on officer pay for the term of an exchange.</p>

Overtime	Overtime payment methods need to be negotiated by the employers of the exchange partners. There are wide variations in opportunities and conditions for overtime between services. This will be addressed in the Deed of Exchange.
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Travel and living costs

Insurances and living expenses	All costs for travel, personal and health insurances, and living expenses are your own responsibility. See the 'Insurance' section below for more information.
Travel and visas	Exchange partners are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the cost of return airfares for themselves and their families • make their own arrangements for passports and visas.
Entry visa	Exchanges are dependent on the ability of the exchange partner and family to obtain a visa to the host country. You, and all persons accompanying you, must satisfy, and continue to satisfy, the residency requirements of the host country. You must confirm eligibility prior to submitting your application. Contact your consulate, or the Embassy or High Commission of the country you wish to travel to. This is particularly important for those who have criminal convictions.
Induction and uniform	Costs for induction and uniform will be met by the host fire service.

Insurance

Work-related insurance	You'll need to ensure that your fire service has an employment insurance scheme, e.g. workers' compensation that will cover you whilst working internationally. Exchanges cannot proceed until all work-related insurance details are finalised. Your fire service must arrange and finalise details of all workers' compensation and other insurance that is deemed necessary to protect you during the full term of the exchange. If it's not possible to be covered under your employer's scheme, you must take out personal insurance to cover you in the event of a work-related accident.
Health and travel insurance	Arrangements for health and travel insurance are your responsibility. It's vital that this is organised before the exchange starts.
Home and contents insurance	You should notify your insurance company of your absence. Check that all your normal insurances will cover you for the entire term of the exchange and while you have the exchange partner in your home.

Accommodation

Sole occupancy	When an exchange includes the exchange of accommodation, the exchange partners are generally deemed to have sole occupancy of the property for the full term of the exchange, unless an alternative arrangement is negotiated in writing.
Owner or occupier responsibility	The owner or occupier of the property will continue to be responsible for the insurance and mortgage instalments or rent on the property.
Accommodation suitability	<p>Current photographs of all rooms and the property must be submitted with the application and sent to your exchange partner to help them assess the suitability of the accommodation.</p> <p>Housing features, such as built-in air conditioning, are not standard across all countries. If you have any pre-requisite, then be specific about the housing features you require. Consider your needs carefully and be sure that you can deal with compromises for the length of your stay.</p> <p>Note: Refer to the ‘Living arrangements’ section in this document for more information about things to consider.</p>
Issues with accommodation	Fire and Emergency New Zealand takes no responsibility for the suitability of accommodation. Accommodation issues must be settled between exchange partners.

Living and work arrangement considerations

Introduction	<p>As part of the application process, exchange partners need to communicate and confirm that they’re happy the exchange partnership will work.</p> <p>This programme is designed to offer firefighters the dynamic opportunity to experience a different living and working environment. You should be adaptable and willing to expect the unexpected. However, you also have the right to negotiate an equitable arrangement with your exchange partner that leaves both parties with the sense of fair play.</p> <p>This section provides additional information on things to consider as you work through suitability of accommodation, living and work arrangements.</p>
Living arrangement responsibilities	<p>It’s the responsibility of the exchange partners to satisfy each other’s accommodation needs. Ultimately any arrangement must be balanced. Rushing into any arrangement just to proceed with the exchange can lead to disappointment and resentment.</p> <p>It’s important that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss all arrangements with your exchange partner before the start of the exchange • don’t proceed with the exchange, if the arrangements aren’t suitable • obtain all agreements in writing and lodge a copy with the exchange coordinator.
Exchange partner details form	Use the <i>Exchange partner details form</i> and <i>Memorandum of Understanding</i> to record details of your accommodation and living arrangements to help your exchange partner determine whether arrangements will be suitable.

Accommodation

Accommodation options	<p>Your exchange accommodation options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange accommodation directly. • Make alternative arrangements by helping each other to locate suitable accommodation for the term of the exchange.
Terms	<p>It's advisable to have a clear understanding of the terms of any property exchanged. Essentially, you're leasing your property for the term of the exchange, in lieu of a monthly fee.</p> <p>Have all agreements and expectations in writing to help avoid misunderstanding. This should clarify maintenance responsibilities, the term of the property exchanges, and other conditions that have been agreed.</p>
Leased or rented property	<p>If the accommodation you are offering is leased or rented, both your exchange partner and your landlord must consent to the exchange.</p> <p>You'll need to consider what will happen if your lease expires in your absence, or the landlord decides to sell the property, or increase the rent. It may be your responsibility to cover the relocation costs and to nominate someone who will help your exchange partner to relocate should this become necessary.</p> <p>You should also ensure that you provide both ample furnishings and appliances, or lease a furnished property.</p>
Household supplies	<p>The house owner should provide the exchange partner with the basic household supplies. These could include, furniture, television, microwave, linen, utensils, washing machine etc. Bikes, sports equipment and other accessories like camping equipment can also enhance the exchange if you're willing to include them.</p> <p>Valued items and family treasures should be stored securely offsite.</p>
Pets	<p>Make sure that you and your exchange partner are absolutely clear about any expectations in relation to caring for pets.</p> <p>It's recommended that, where possible, you make alternative arrangements for the care of your pets so as not to impose on your exchange family's travel arrangements.</p>
Power of attorney	<p>Most exchange partners will appoint a family member or trusted friend or neighbour with power of attorney to oversee their property and assist the exchange partner.</p>

Household expenses and standing costs

Introduction	<p>It's the responsibility of the exchange partners to determine who will pay for what.</p> <p>As a general rule, if the service is metered and billed on a user-pays basis, the user should pay. If the service is part of council rates or property taxes, then the owner should pay.</p>
Owner-pays	<p>Each exchange partner is responsible for payment of their mortgage or rent, insurances, rates, taxes, and water.</p> <p>Where water is metered on a user-pays basis, the costs should be met by the user.</p>

User-pays	Utilities and services such as gas, electricity and telephone should be paid for by the user.
Internet connection	<p>It's recommended that a functional computer and an internet connection be available and maintained.</p> <p>It's suggested that payment for the connection is the user's responsibility, but you will need to negotiate this with your exchange partner.</p>
Repair of household appliances	<p>Because of the variability in age, quality and frequency of use of household appliances, it's difficult to stipulate rules for their repair.</p> <p>It's understood that if an appliance becomes faulty through normal use, it should be repaired to normal working order with the cost borne by the owner.</p> <p>Arrange for a person, family or close friend, who your exchange partner may consult or call for help. Prepare a card of critical contact numbers, including preferred repairers.</p>
Personal belongings	You should make arrangements to insure the personal belongings you will take with you on the exchange, as the owner's insurance is unlikely to cover those items.

Locality and environment

Local area	Provide information about your town/city. In particular, identify any challenges, e.g. travel times, cost of petrol.
Shopping	Provide some preliminary information about shopping in the local area, e.g. opening hours/days, availability, location. It's a worthwhile idea to send local papers and catalogues to your exchange partner so they can get an indication on the prices of food, clothing etc.
Weather and clothing	<p>Provide information on local average temperatures and cover issues such as wind chill or humidity so that your exchange partner can decide what clothing to bring.</p> <p>Make sure that your exchange partner has a realistic idea of the environment they'll be living in.</p>
Network of contacts	<p>The transition will be easier if your exchange partner is made to feel welcome. Appoint someone to welcome them to the area and provide support, where necessary.</p> <p>Coordinate a network of friends, family and baby-sitters that might be an asset to your exchange partner. Leave a list of phone numbers of people who can be contacted and encourage these people to extend invitations to the exchange family.</p>

Work

<p>Fire Service</p>	<p>Make a detailed list of information your exchange partner might require for employment.</p> <p>Send documents such as an annual report, strategic plan and staff magazine to your exchange partner. Outline any unique qualities of your fire service so they can fully understand issues that are currently taking place.</p>
<p>Support person</p>	<p>Ensure your fire service has appointed someone to offer support, and help and guide your exchange partner through any politics of the working environment.</p>

Transport

<p>Transport options</p>	<p>Give some thought to possible problems of transport, especially in isolated areas when only one vehicle is available to the family. In New Zealand, getting around by private vehicle is the 'norm', with smaller towns having no or little public transport networks.</p>
<p>Should the exchange include vehicles?</p>	<p>The exchanging of vehicles isn't recommended – most past exchange partners who have agreed to exchange vehicles advise against it. However, this is the decision of exchange partners.</p> <p>It's vital that both parties consider all possible consequences before making an agreement on the use of vehicles for the period of the exchange. The fire services are not responsible for managing any dispute over mileage, damage or insurances. See the 'Exchanging vehicle considerations' section below for more information.</p>
<p>Buying or leasing a vehicle</p>	<p>Usually the preferred option for exchange partners is to purchase a vehicle for the period of the exchange and sell it at the conclusion.</p> <p>Discuss costs, makes and models of used vehicles with your exchange partner, as they may be able to help you with your search prior to the exchange. Ask your exchange partner to suggest websites to help you in this process.</p>
<p>Exchanging vehicle considerations</p>	<p>Here is a list of some things to consider and take into account if you are considering exchanging vehicles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The age of the vehicle. The model and make of the vehicle, and therefore the worth, may be quite different between exchange partners. • There are good and bad drivers in each country, and you have no way of knowing the driving skill of your exchange partner. • Exchange partners will usually use their exchange to travel. This is most likely to be done by car, occasionally towing a caravan or trailer. The amount of travel will have a significant impact on the wear and tear of a car, and if this is different between exchange partners, can lead to dissatisfaction. • Depending on where you are based for your exchange, there may be a significant difference in the amount of day-to-day travel, particularly where there is the ability to use public transport. Again, this can cause a rift in the exchange. • Insurance costs may be different for different drivers, along with the excess and the impact on premiums of making a claim. No matter what the skill of the driver, accidents can happen and this has the potential to sour the exchange.
<p>Driver's licence</p>	<p>You'll need to identify if there is a requirement for you to obtain a temporary or international licence.</p>

Motoring associations/ Roadside assistance	The Automobile Association (AA) provide a valuable service in roadside assistance for breakdowns. It's worth providing the details of such services of your home country/state to your exchange partner, and request that they do the same. Some associations have reciprocal privileges.
Comprehensive insurance	Whilst comprehensive insurance is optional, it is recommended when purchasing a vehicle (even more so if you exchange vehicles). It's important to bring a letter from your insurer indicating your driving record as this may affect the premium.

Finances

Financial costs	<p>The fire services aren't responsible for costs incurred. This programme operates as far as practicable on a cost-neutral basis for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.</p> <p>You'll need to carefully consider all financial arrangements for the period of the exchange. Don't rely on your standard income to cover all costs.</p>
Banking arrangements	<p>You'll need to make arrangements to access funds and cover bills. Review the past year's bank statements to ensure nothing has been overlooked.</p> <p>Discuss arrangements with your bank and, where necessary, arrange extensions, e.g. credit card limits.</p>
Exchange rates	Exchange rates can fluctuate considerably. Your most useful source of exchange rate information is the internet.
Taxation	<p>You'll need to investigate with the local taxation authority to clarify the local tax liability. In some instances, you may be able to choose which country you wish to be taxed by.</p> <p>Consult an accountant to determine whether any component of the exchange can be claimed as a tax deduction. It may be useful to provide your exchange partner details of your accountant, if applicable, who can be contacted (at their own expense) to understand any local implications in this area.</p>
Power of attorney	You should consider giving someone power of attorney, if you have any banking, business, property transactions, or other formal arrangements that might require your signature or your personal attention while you're on the exchange.

Family and medical

Introduction	<p>If your exchange involves relocating family, their support for the exchange is critical.</p> <p>An exchange can often be more difficult for a partner and any children, being taken away from family and friends, than you. Consider this carefully and discuss your application fully with your partner and children, before submitting it.</p> <p>Families used to busy lives in their home country may find the first few weeks in their new home seem very long. However, with the right kind of preparation, including mental preparation, the exchange year can be a most exciting and stimulating experience.</p>
Medical certificate	A medical may be required before the issue of your visa. Contact the relevant Consulate for details.

<p>Vaccinations</p>	<p>Obtain any vaccinations required by you and your family.</p> <p>Consult the Embassy, Consulate or High Commission of the country you are travelling to, to investigate required vaccinations. Consult your own doctor for advice or suggestions on vaccinations.</p>
<p>Prescription medication</p>	<p>If you or a family member is on regular prescription medication, it's important to confirm that this medication will be available where you are travelling to. Your doctor should type out medical prescriptions in detail, including the generic pharmaceutical title, as the same medication may have a different trade or brand name in the host country.</p>
<p>Health insurance</p>	<p>Contact your health insurance company and ensure that you have comprehensive coverage for those members of your family who are travelling with you during the exchange.</p>
<p>Check expiry dates before you go</p>	<p>Review the expiry dates of any licenses, credit cards, insurance policies, passports or memberships that might lapse in your absence. Resolve these before you go to avoid any issues later.</p>
<p>Employment and study opportunities</p>	<p>Limited opportunities for employment exist for family members when they travel. Limitations may be identified on the entry visa. However, there are always jobs for people with initiative and particular talents. It's advisable to request permission to work or study when you apply for a visa.</p> <p>Taking the opportunity to advance education or taking up a hobby may be an option. Contact the universities and colleges about entry requirements and deadlines for enrolment. Those who intend to apply for admission should bring original transcripts and other records of their present qualifications.</p> <p>Other occupations worth thinking about are voluntary work – either in the community or your child's school, or involvement in local sports, theatrical and music groups, church groups, childcare or other voluntary activities.</p>

Schools

<p>Age of required attendance</p>	<p>The age of required school attendance varies across states and countries. As a rough guide, children aged 5 to 16 are expected to attend school.</p>
<p>Finding a school</p>	<p>If you have children of school age, you may need to decide whether to send them to a school in the public system, or pay for private schooling.</p> <p>Seek advice from your exchange partner to help you with finding an appropriate school for your child/ren. Provide your exchange partner with as much information as possible about schools in your local area.</p> <p>Research prospective schools for your children with your exchange partner, if required. Discuss the types of schooling for your child's age, as types of schools vary across different countries.</p> <p>Don't make any assumptions. Check even the most obvious aspects to ensure there are no surprises. This also applies to preschool and day care facilities.</p>

Enrolment requirements	<p>Ensure you understand any pre-requisite enrolment requirements and fees. Consult with your child/ren’s new school to ensure the smoothest possible transition.</p> <p>Don’t assume your child/ren can move into the space vacated by your exchange partner’s child/ren, even if they are at the same level. Some schools have waiting lists and entry requirements.</p>
Year (grade)	<p>The school year is not consistent in all countries, so you’ll need to decide the year (grade) you want to enrol your child in. Ideally this should be done in consultation with the school of your choice.</p> <p>Contact your exchange partner for the most up-to-date information on school and enrolment procedures.</p>
Schooling costs	<p>Costs associated with schooling vary, so sharing information about how your educational system works in your country will be crucial.</p> <p>Incidentals such as whether uniforms, lunches, school trips, books and learning materials are provided will also vary.</p>

Document information

Owner	Director, People & Capability
Last reviewed	1 July 2017
Review period	Every second year

Record of amendment

Date	Brief description of amendment
December 2015	This guide replaces the out-dated <i>International FF Exchange Fellowship - AFAC Application pack</i> . This guide represents the New Zealand Fire Service general terms for participating in the programme.
1 July 2017	This guide was reviewed as part of the implementation of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017. No substantive amendments to content were considered necessary before 1 July 2017 therefore only superficial updates were made.