



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – VOLUNTEERS

COVID-19 Information updated: 3 December 2021 11.00am

On 17 November 2021, the Chief Health Officer issued the [Fire and Emergency Services Worker \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No 2\)](#) under the *Public Health Act 2016*.

The [directions](#) specify COVID-19 vaccination requirements on fire and emergency services (FES) workers – the definition of which includes volunteers – before they can access fire and emergency services sites. Please see [Schedule 1](#) of the directions for a full list of people who are defined as fire and emergency services workers.

These measures have been put in place to address the risks posed by COVID-19 and the close interactions that FES workers have with vulnerable groups and the general community to limit the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that we can continue to provide critical services to the community.

The directions mean that all volunteers need to have received their first vaccination by 31 December 2021 and be fully vaccinated by 31 January 2022, if they wish to enter a fire and emergency services site.

To provide further assistance DFES has developed a series of Frequently Asked Questions. These will be updated regularly as required.

Am I required to be vaccinated?

Yes. The [directions](#) from the Chief Health Officer restrict access to fire and emergency services sites by all people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19.

What is a fire and emergency services site?

The directions define a fire and emergency services site as:

- A fire or emergency service incident area
- DFES premises
- Volunteer brigade, group or unit premises (including a vehicle, vessel or aircraft)
- Local government premises
- DBCA premises.



Why am I required to be vaccinated to enter a fire and emergency services site?

FES workers are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 and represent an essential workforce for which the Chief Health Officer considers vaccination is justified on public health grounds.

Transmission of COVID-19 in fire and emergency sites, due to the role we play in responding to critical and life-threatening situations, our exposure to the broader community and our interactions with vulnerable communities, has the potential to cause serious illness in volunteers, your families, and members of the community.

Vaccination significantly reduces the risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19 and helps reduce the rate of transmission.

When do I have to be vaccinated by?

You must have received your first vaccination dose by 31 December 2021 and your second dose by 31 January 2022.

How can I get a vaccination?

You can get vaccinated at State-run COVID-19 clinics, at participating GP respiratory clinics, pharmacies, or Aboriginal Medical Services. For more information please visit, [Roll up for WA](#).

Why do I need to provide evidence that I am vaccinated?

Under the [directions](#), FES workers, which includes volunteers are required to provide evidence of vaccination in the form approved by the Chief Health Officer.

DFES is required to collect and maintain a record of the vaccination status of FES workers and volunteers. Unvaccinated personnel are restricted from entering fire and emergency services sites.

How can I provide evidence that I am vaccinated?

The Chief Health Officer has approved an Australian Government COVID-19 vaccination digital certificate, or your Immunisation History Statement, as [evidence of your vaccination](#) status.

Once you have obtained your certificate or statement, you can provide to DFES using these options:

1. **Upload** your certificate on the [Volunteer Hub](#). The Hub is a secure site and once complete, your vaccination status will be visible in your personal profile.



If you are a first-time user please contact your nearest regional office for assistance with access or registration.

If selecting the upload option, please use these compatible web browsers: Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge and Apple Safari.

2. **Email** a PDF copy of your certificate to covidcert@dfes.wa.gov.au. To ensure your certificate is processed you must include:
 - Your full name
 - Volunteer ID number
 - Name of your Brigade, Group or Unit.
3. Once processed your vaccination status will be visible on your personal profile in the Volunteer Hub.
4. **In person.** Take a copy of your certificate to your nearest regional office; or provide a copy to your DFES Supervisor.

Your Brigade, Group or Unit may coordinate a collection on behalf of your team. See your BGU leader(s) to see if this option is available to you.

***Important:** When obtaining your certificate from the MyGov / Medicare site, please save the PDF and store in a location easily accessible to you.

What if I have received a vaccination but don't have a MyGov account?

You can still obtain evidence of your COVID-19 vaccination:

1. Call 1800 653 809 (National COVID Hotline) to request a copy of your certificate. Please note: This can take up to 10 working days to complete.

How do I get access to the Volunteer Hub?

If you do not currently have access to the [Volunteer Hub](#), or you have forgotten your password, contact your Volunteer Management Support Officer in your regional office.

How will my vaccination information be used?

DFES will only use this information to maintain a record of your vaccination status. There is an obligation for DFES to collect this information and maintain its security.



What happens if I do not provide vaccination evidence?

If you do not provide your vaccination evidence by the due date, it will be presumed that you are unvaccinated therefore you will be subject to the same restrictions as an unvaccinated person.

What if I choose not to be vaccinated?

Unfortunately, you will not be able to undertake any part of your volunteering role that requires you to enter a fire and emergency services site after 31 December 2021.

Failure to comply with the [directions](#), without reasonable excuse, is an offence and may result in fines to the individual.

I am a Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) volunteer. Do I have to provide my vaccination status to my local government?

Under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, local governments are responsible for establishing and maintaining Bush Fire Brigades, therefore local governments are required to collect and maintain a record of the vaccination status of BFB volunteers.

All submission options offered by DFES are also available to BFB volunteers.

Can I be exempted from getting the vaccine?

Permanent and temporary exemptions are available on medical grounds from the Australian Immunisation Register or on a limited and temporary basis from the Chief Health Officer.

Further information on the exemption process can be found in the [Department of Health's Mandatory Vaccination FAQs](#).

FES workers who have been granted a permanent or temporary exemption will need to notify DFES at covid19@dfes.wa.gov.au.

Please note: The exemption process can take up to 7 working days to complete. To avoid needing an additional temporary exemption, please submit your application at the earliest opportunity.

Can I wait until Novavax is available to me?

Yes, however after 31 December 2021, unvaccinated fire and emergency services workers without an exemption, will not be able to enter or remain at fire and emergency sites.



Failure to comply with the [directions](#), without reasonable excuse, is an offence may result in fines to the individual.

DFES career staff are to be vaccinated by 1 December 2021. Can I attend an incident alongside DFES career staff during December?

Yes. Volunteers are required to receive their first vaccination by 31 December 2021.

Will the directions apply to contractors?

Yes, the [directions](#) will apply to contractors working at fire and emergency services sites. DFES is developing a process to assist Brigades, Groups and Units in monitoring contractor's vaccination status. Further information will be provided shortly.

I am a Brigade, Group or Unit leader, how will I know if my team members have been vaccinated?

DFES will be developing a process prior to 31 December 2021 to support Brigades, Groups and Units leaders to understand their members vaccination status.

Where can I get more information?

You can access the [Volunteer Hub](#) for all the latest information. This includes information regarding the directions and how to provide proof of your vaccination status. Further information can be found below:

- For a full breakdown of each industry Group as listed in the Directions, see [Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination information](#).
- To download a one page summary, see the [Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations summary](#).
- [Mandatory vaccination frequently asked questions](#) (Department of Health).
- [Getting proof of vaccination](#).

What if I have more questions?

These frequently asked questions will be regularly updated as the situation develops, however further questions can be emailed to covid19@dfes.wa.gov.au.

Does Section 8c of the Fire and Emergency Services Worker (Restrictions on Access) Direction (No 2) mean an unvaccinated volunteer can respond to emergencies where vaccinated persons are not available?

Section 8c is a standard clause that exists in all directions to allow for the provision of immediate assistance in an emergency ONLY when there is no fully, or partially vaccinated person able to render the assistance.



Section 8c of the Directions provides for absolute worst-case scenario situations where there is no other option than to have unvaccinated individuals respond.

What is the lifespan of the Directions?

The Directions were issued under the Public Health Act by the Chief Health Officer and are not aligned to the current State of Emergency declaration. The Directions will remain in place until the Chief Health Officer indicates otherwise.

I have received an exemption. What additional infection prevention measures or controls do I need when entering or remaining at a Fire and Emergency Services site?

The medical advice provided to DFES indicates unvaccinated persons may have an increased risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19.

To ensure the health and safety of you and others operating close to you, additional protection measures may be put in place to reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19.

Please see your medical practitioner for advice on the best protection measures for you.