

What I Need to Know

- This policy aims to ensure that volunteers are not placed at risk through exposure to situations (1) for which they have not been adequately trained and (2) for which the appropriate level of personal protective equipment is not available.
- As a general rule, rural fire brigades are not expected or required to engage in internal firefighting. Breathing apparatus (BA) is required only to facilitate search and rescue.
- It is anticipated that Class 1 and 2 brigades will need to develop no more than a basic structural firefighting capability and are therefore not expected to need BA. No urban type turnout gear or BA equipment will be supplied to, or subsidised for, these classes of brigades. Class 3 brigades are expected to develop a defensive structural firefighting capability. Any request for the acquisition of BA capability by a Class 3 brigade will be carefully assessed against that brigade's risk profile.
- In rural fire brigade areas where it is possible for an urban station to service the structural firefighting requirements, the rural brigade will be expected to develop a defensive structural firefighting capability only. It is expected that mutual aid arrangements between the rural and urban brigades will be put in place. In these instances, no urban type turnout gear or BA equipment will be supplied to, or subsidised for, the rural brigade.
- Where it is not possible for an urban station to service structural firefighting requirements within a rural brigade area, consideration will be given to the development of that capability within a rural brigade where the following criteria are met:
 - (a) The brigade's risk profile must be developed and must clearly indicate the need for BA.
 - (b) The Area Director, Rural Operations must make the brigade members aware of the QFRS resource, training and maintenance requirements involved in the development of a structural and BA capability. The brigade must demonstrate to the Area Director, Rural Operations its capacity to meet these requirements.
 - (c) The brigade members must receive training to the appropriate level of competency, both in the use of BA and in structural firefighting; for example, *PUAFIR207A, Operate breathing apparatus* and *PUAFIR202A Respond to isolated/remote structures*.
 - (d) Urban type turnout gear and BA equipment will be issued only with the approval of the Area Director, Rural Operations. At all times, a minimum of four BA sets must be operational – to meet QFRS procedural requirements. Brigades may have to purchase additional cylinders, depending upon refill turnaround times.
 - (e) All QFRS procedures relating to equipment recommissioning, firefighter training and individual competence and currency must be adhered to.

How I do it

- The Area Director, Rural Operations must retain documentation verifying that the appropriate level of competence has been reached and maintained. The Area Director, Rural Operations is responsible for ensuring compliance with the necessary ongoing training, skills and equipment maintenance.
- A brigade that falls below the required competency or equipment maintenance levels may not use the BA equipment with which it has been issued. The Area Director is required to advise the brigade of this in writing and to ensure that the appropriate levels are gained.
 - Four sets of the following equipment will be supplied free of charge:
 - face mask and demand valve
 - backplate and harness assembly
 - pneumatic assembly including manifold
 - all pressure lines
 - pressure gauges

- personal safety line
 - distress signaling unit (DSU)
 - guideline and container (one per brigade)
 - torch (intrinsically safe)
 - stage 1 BA control board
 - any other device directly related to the operation of the set.
- Eight sets of the following personal safety equipment will be issued free of charge:
 - urban style helmet
 - turnout coat
 - turnout over-trousers
 - turnout boots
 - gloves
 - BA is designed to allow fire fighters to work in atmospheres that would injure or kill non-wearers. Use of BA exposes firefighters to risk; firstly, firefighters wearing BA can penetrate into possibly deadly atmospheres; and secondly, the PPE required for BA crews allows closer penetration to the source of the fire, thereby forcing total reliance on individual protective clothing.
 - If the equipment fails through incorrect maintenance, or is used incorrectly by untrained persons, the results can be fatal. The commitment to maintenance and training is onerous and ongoing. Failure to comply will lead to the removal of the equipment from a brigade. More importantly, failure to comply could lead to serious injury or death to volunteer fire fighters.

Reference Materials

- Operations Doctrine – INCDIR 5.4 – Safety Teams
- Area Reference Manual – Business Rule: 5.3.2 Ensure Operational Readiness