



Media Release
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Volunteer Rural Fire Fighters wanted

Planning to create a new rural fire brigade is underway and the Council is looking for volunteers to be part of a new Darfield Rural Fire Force.

Volunteer rural fire fighters play an extremely important role in the community. In the summer Selwyn often experiences hot, dry weather and strong nor' west winds mean that fires can quickly spread and threaten lives and property if they are not brought under control by fire crews.

Selwyn currently has two rural fire brigades located at Arthur's Pass and West Melton.

"All fire callouts are routed to the New Zealand Fire Service who call on the nearest brigade with suitable equipment to respond to calls, says Carrie Lakin, Selwyn District Council Emergency Management Support Officer. "In a large fire, urban and rural volunteer fire fighters often work together to control fires."

Ms Lakin says that volunteer rural fire fighters are provided with ongoing training and protective equipment. "Before volunteers can attend fires they need to complete two days training and receive NZQA rural fire qualifications. Once qualified, most brigades also train for 2-3 hours once a week or fortnight."

"The amount of time volunteers spend attending to fires varies a lot throughout the year. Generally, callouts in winter and springtime are limited while during a hot summer fire fighters can be very busy."

John Doherty is the Fire Force Controller for the West Melton Volunteer Rural Fire Force. He says when he joined the unit he had no previous experience or knowledge of what to expect but learnt a lot of new skills from training in the role. "You always work as part of a team and are only given tasks at your current ability so you are never thrown in the deep end," he says.

"Being part of a rural fire unit is very rewarding and is a great way to mix with others in your community."

Mr Doherty says the role is suitable for both men and women and the local community really appreciate it when local volunteer fire fighters turn up to put out fires and protect their property.

Carrie Lakin says that the Council is hoping to recruit a number of volunteers for the Darfield Rural Fire Force so that the rural Selwyn district area has more capacity to cope with callouts during the busy summer periods that the district is facing. "The time commitment can vary depending on the amount of time an individual has available."

Anyone interested in finding out more about becoming a volunteer can contact the Council on 318 8338 or email ruralfire@selwyn.govt.nz

Ends

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