

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



Friday, 13 December 2024

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO KEEP VICTORIANS SAFE

The Allan Labor Government is making sure our hardworking emergency services have what they need to keep Victorians safe – with a massive funding boost for new trucks, equipment and technology.

Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes today visited the VICSES Fawkner Unit to thank volunteers for their work as they prepare for a high-risk summer, and to announce more than \$250 million to support CFA and VICSES volunteers across the state.

As part of the major funding package, the Labor Government will invest \$70 million to establish a rolling fleet replacement program for VICSES and the CFA – ensuring volunteers right across Victoria will get new and upgraded trucks, tankers and pumpers to keep doing what they do best.

The popular annual Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) will be doubled with more than \$62 million to ensure more volunteers have new or upgraded vehicles, equipment and better station facilities.

Timely, accurate and accessible advice is critical during disasters – that’s why the Labor Government will invest \$53 million in a modernised VicEmergency app and the central database for our emergency services, EM-COP. This will also make sure the app can be translated into different languages, ensuring everyone has the information they need to keep themselves and their families safe.

VICSES units do incredible work – giving up their time to respond to floods, storms, road rescues, earthquakes and landslides.

But more frequent natural disasters and population growth mean Victorians are asking for more from our volunteers than ever before. Between 2009 and 2013, VICSES averaged roughly 20,000 callouts a year – over the last three years they've averaged around 35,000.

This increase in demand means VICSES need to upskill and train more and more volunteers – that’s why the Government will invest almost \$30 million to deliver training and support programs.

Alongside VICSES, our other emergency services are also being asked to respond to increasing and overlapping natural disasters – and with it an increased number of callouts. It’s why from 1 July 2025, the Fire Services Property Levy will be replaced by a new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) – making sure they have the resources they need to keep Victorians safe and to help them recover.

For the first time, this will provide funding for emergency services including VICSES, Triple Zero Victoria, the State Control Centre, Emergency Management Victoria, Emergency Recovery Victoria and Forest Fire Management Victoria, in addition to the CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria.

Every single dollar raised by this new fund will support our emergency and disaster recovery services – helping them to keep communities safe 365 days a year.

Because our emergency services volunteers give our state so much, active CFA and VICSES volunteers and life members will be eligible for an exemption from paying the ESVF on their primary place of residence such as a house or farm – providing even more incentive for Victorians to consider volunteering in our emergency services.

As with the Fire Services Property Levy, the ESVF will be collected by councils and appear on rates notices. The Government will work with councils to support implementation. Further information on the ESVF is available at ddf.vic.gov.au/emergency-services-and-volunteers-fund

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

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“Communities are asking more of their local SES volunteers than they ever have before, which is why we’re giving them more funding, new trucks and the latest technology.”

“Our emergency services put their lives on the line without a second thought. This package is about making sure they have what they need to keep all of us safe.”

Quote attributable to VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch

“VICSES has had some of its busiest years in history recently following several major storms, floods and rescues. This package is a very welcome boost for our hard-working volunteers who give so much to their local communities in times of need.”

Quote attributable to CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

“Today’s announcement sees our brigades and members recognised for the work they do in the community. I’m pleased to see the Government take proactive steps to ensure the sustainability of volunteering.”