

# Employers supporting SA Ambulance Service volunteers and their communities

Welcome to SA Ambulance Service (SAAS). We thank you for thinking about helping your employees, to volunteer with SAAS!

SAAS values businesses and organisations that allow their employees to respond to emergency ambulance cases during work. Find out more about the important role your employee plays in the local community, what it involves and the benefits for your organisation.

## Volunteers are vital

Our volunteers save lives. When someone needs emergency ambulance care in country communities, it's usually volunteers who respond.

They treat people with chest pain, asthma and other life-threatening medical conditions, and they provide prompt care for people injured in falls, fires and motor vehicle accidents.

SAAS volunteers also provide non-emergency transport service, transferring patients from hospitals to other healthcare facilities. In addition, they are trained to respond to disasters and major incidents.

It's only with the help of volunteers that we are able to provide vital ambulance services across country South Australia.

## Benefits for your workplace

You will have a fully trained ambulance officer in your workplace who has the skills to save lives. Volunteers complete advanced first-aid training and learn the additional skills that ambulance officers need.

### Employee confidence and communication

Volunteering for SAAS gives volunteers many additional and transferable skills that they bring back to your workplace. Through their training and experience they learn to work under pressure, gain confidence and improve their communication skills.

### A personal link with the community

Businesses that support their employees in volunteering show a commitment to working with their local community. Potential benefits include an enhanced reputation, increased consumer loyalty, and greater attractiveness to prospective employees.

Unlike financial donations and in-kind support, helping your employee in their volunteering role allows you to foster a more personal link with the community. You're sharing your human resources with others in need.

### A great place to work

Your employee will appreciate your support in helping them to help others. It shows you care about the community and your staff. This can positively affect their attitude, productivity and job satisfaction.

## How does it work?

Generally, volunteers are placed on an on-call roster. They undertake their normal day-to-day activities unless they are paged to respond to an ambulance case.

When a case occurs, the volunteer will be dispatched via their pager. Cases vary in duration, depending on the nature of the case.

### Volunteering-in-the workplace agreements

It's a good idea to talk to your employee and negotiate arrangements for when they need to respond to an ambulance case. This may be a verbal agreement or a more formal written one.

Some points to consider include:

- How many hours a week can I release my employee to respond to ambulance cases?
- What days of the week would provide the least disturbance to the business?
- Can my employee attend cases outside the local area or only attend local cases?
- What happens if responding to an ambulance case leaves the business unattended?
- Could my employee commence work later than their usual start time if they have responded to a case at night? Fatigue management is a really important factor to consider.
- How and when will my employee provide me with information needed to seek lost wages reimbursement from SAAS?
- How will my employee notify me if they are attending a case which will affect their usual work hours?
- Do I need to make it clear that my employee must return to work if the emergency duty ceases before the end of their normal working hours?

If you would like assistance to prepare a volunteering-in-the workplace agreement, it's a simple process and one of our managers will be happy to help you. Your employee will know who to contact.

## What about night shifts?

Sometimes volunteers are rostered on at night. Volunteers may occasionally deal with long and traumatic cases and may get little sleep.

You may want to discuss night shifts with your employee and agree to a strategy to manage fatigue as part of your workplace agreement. SAAS has an example of a Fatigue Management Policy and can assist you with discussing this. Some employers allow their employees to arrive later to work. In these circumstances, the employer can claim for reimbursement of lost wages.

## Reimbursing lost wages

By maintaining your employee's salary or wage while they are responding to an ambulance case, you are entitled to seek reimbursement from SAAS. Reimbursement will be for the wages you paid your employee while they were attending an ambulance case.

To claim lost wages, you need to submit a tax invoice to SAAS. You will need to include the date and duration your employee was absent from work and the financial value (such as the hourly rate) for that period of time. Make sure you claim as soon as possible, and no later than the end of the financial year in which the claim was incurred. Your employee will advise you where to send the invoice.



## Insurance

SAAS holds insurance for professional indemnity, public liability, personal sickness and accidents. All SAAS volunteers are covered for personal accidents and any claims made against them for civil liability while undertaking their volunteer activities as per the *Volunteer Protection Act (SA) 2001*.

Volunteers who are injured will be compensated and benefits payable in line with the *Return to Work Act 2014*, as if the volunteer were an employee of SAAS.

If one of your employees has been injured during ambulance duties and is unable to perform his or her duties at work, please contact the SAAS Claims Officer on 8371 9243.

## How do current SAAS volunteers and their employers make it work?



### **Peter Cochrane works for Adchem at their Burra production facility.**

Adchem have been very supportive of Peter's volunteering role and genuinely value having a trained first responder on site. There have been a few medical emergencies at Adchem in the past and Peter could help out.

"Adchem know they can claim reimbursement from SAAS for my lost wages, but they choose not to as they value the benefits of having my skills on site."

"I always inform Adchem if I am on call for ambulance duty before I start my shift. I generally respond to local emergencies only rather than completing ambulance transfers which can be time consuming. If I need to attend call outs off-site, I tell another employee who then informs the shift boss. Someone else covers my role until I am able to return. Also, I try to only volunteer for ambulance duty when I know that somebody else at work is available to cover me if I have to leave. It's about finding a balance and not abusing the system and the trust that I've built up with my employer," said Peter.

### **Chantelle Snart is the Senior Records Management Officer and Accredited FOI Officer for the Mid Murray Council.**

"I am able to manage my workload and have flexibility with my hours if there is a deadline to meet. My employers allow me to respond during work time because they know services are limited in rural and remote areas, allowing staff to volunteer and respond from work is keeping the service alive for the community.

My employer claims lost wages reimbursement if I am taken out of the office for hours on a particular case. This is a rarity though. They don't usually claim for smaller cases as it's a service they can give back to ratepayers and community."



"I do an average of three ambulance shifts a week, depending on my workload. I only respond to local/emergency cases in the surrounding area. I don't do transfers during work hours as this will take me out of the office for too long. When the pager goes off I simply screen lock my computer, call into the EOC to acknowledge the page whilst my colleague updates my office status to say 'I'm out'. Then I head across the road to the Ambulance Station, get changed and attend to the case once the full crew is ready. My colleagues will either leave work on my desk or catch up with me once I return," said Chantelle.

## For more information

It's simple and rewarding to be a business or organisation that supports our volunteers and your community. For more information please contact us.

### Volunteer Support Unit

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