

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

DEFENCE RESERVES

Defence Reserves help with legislation and policy advice.

DEFENCE EMPLOYER SUPPORT COUNCIL (DESC)

The DESC is appointed by the Minister of Defence and is independent of the New Zealand Defence Force.

The DESC provides:

- Strategic guidance and advice on Reserve employment matters
- Information for both employers and Reservist employees on their rights and obligations
- Recognition for supportive employers through the annual Tohu Awards.

DESC WEBSITE

The DESC website offers information and support for employers, including legislation, news and awards, and practical, downloadable resources.

The site can be found at: www.desc.govt.nz/



VOLUNTEERS EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT 1973

(VEPA 1973 with Amendments 2004)

Do I have to let them go? Yes.

Under the Volunteers Employment Protection Act (VEPA) 1973, you must allow your employee to attend military training.

What if it will affect my business?

If the absence of your employee will lead to “undue hardship” you can apply to have their training postponed. We understand that the commercial environment is tough, and that different situations need different solutions. That’s why we encourage employees to negotiate an acceptable solution with you, their Employer.

How will I know when they have training?

Reservists are required to give at least 14 days notice when requesting release from Employers. Although, the nature of the Defence Force is that things can change so a little flexibility can go a long way.

Will it cost me? No.

Employers are however encouraged to top-up pay where the Reservist’s military pay is less than the normal civilian pay.

Can I terminate their employment? No.

The civil employment of volunteers training with the NZDF is protected by the VEPA 1973, but it’s best for everyone if the support is voluntary. Further information can be found on the DESC website, or by reviewing the VEPA 1973 directly.



RESERVIST EMPLOYER SUPPORT GUIDELINES

Useful things to know if you employ someone who is an NZDF Reservist.

CONTACT US

WEB: www.desc.govt.nz

EMAIL: enquiries@desc.govt.nz

EMAIL: reserves@nzdf.mil.nz

WHO ARE RESERVISTS?

Reservists are part time members of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) who, in addition to their civilian employment, have a parallel career in the military as a member of the Navy, Army or Air Force. Reserve Forces supplement the Regular Force (fulltime members) and often bring specialist expertise such as surgical or engineering skills. Reserves provide the ability for NZDF to rapidly scale where it would be unaffordable and impractical to do so through Regular Forces.

WHAT DO RESERVES DO?

Reserves undergo specialist military training when they join, then complete various courses and training to advance their skills. Reserves are integrated with Regular Forces and routinely deploy to support NZDF operations in New Zealand and overseas.

WHERE DO THEY DO IT?

Reserves are located throughout the country and throughout many walks of civilian employment. The military units they belong to or roles they fill are also varied and nationwide.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A RESERVE?

Reserve Forces are expected to commit to 20 days a year. This service is conducted mainly on weekends (Friday evening to Sunday evening) but sometimes progression courses are held during the week and these courses will benefit you, the employer.

Fitness:

All Reserves are expected to maintain a certain level of fitness. As an employer this ensures you have a fit and mentally sharper workforce.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL

Employers who support Reserves are vital to the effectiveness of the New Zealand Defence Force. New Zealand's military capability, both at home and overseas, depends on the availability of the Reserves.

Without your ongoing support, Reservists cannot get the time off to attend valuable military training and activities. By allowing them to go, you are providing support to the Government of New Zealand.

The Reserves provide invaluable assistance to the NZDF in supporting the Government's responses to emergencies and intergenerational crisis.

For example:

- Civil Emergencies,
- Security and Stability
- Peacekeeping
- Capacity Building operations
- International Humanitarian Assistance
- Disaster Recovery
- Other Government mandated tasks

Employers are encouraged to:

- Grant Military Leave to attend activities
- Develop a Military Leave policy and incorporate it into employees' individual and collective agreements, or in Human Resources policies.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ME?

As an Employer, you can benefit significantly by supporting any Reservist you employ by allowing them time off for training or to serve on operations. This allows them to sharpen work competencies, and the values and skills they gain transfer directly back into your business.

Other benefits:

- Teamwork skills
- Leadership skills and training
- Specialist training
- Communication skills
- Access to a wider employer network
- Improved employee physical and mental wellbeing

THE TOHU AWARDS



2024 Tohu Awards winners, depicted with Associate Minister of Defence, Chris Penk, Chief of Defence Force, Air Marshal Tony Davies, Vice Chief of Defence Force, Rear Admiral Mathew Williams, Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Garin Golding, Chief of Army, Major General Rose King and Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal Darryn Webb.

Employers who provide outstanding support are recognised each year at The Tohu Awards ceremony which is attended by the Minister of Defence, Chief of Defence Force and Chief of Navy, Army and Air Force. The event provides an opportunity to celebrate our wider NZDF community.