



AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE RESERVES AND EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Operation CIVIL ASSIST 2025 Employed Reserve members and call out exercises

What you need to know:

Operation Civil Assist is conducted annually to exercise Defence preparedness through rehearsal of a call out of the Reserves. This means it's not an official call out, but it is exercised like one.

Operation Civil Assist 2025 will be conducted between **17 and 22 October 2025**.

Reserve members will be notified by their unit if they are required for Operation Civil Assist 2025 and all identified Reserve members are required to render defence unless an *exemption* applies.

Does my employer need to release me?

Yes. Your employer must release you to undertake defence service on Operation Civil Assist 2025 unless your employer has received an *exemption*.

Which employers have an exemption?

The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) has directed that Reserve members employed in certain *Worker Group* businesses and organisations are not required to render service on Operation Civil Assist 2025. A list of *exempt* organisations is available at: www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au.

If you are employed by one of these businesses or organisations, you must advise your Chain of Command as soon as possible.

Reserve members employed by a business or organisation that has a *Worker Group exemption*, can still render defence service on Operation Civil Assist 2025, but only if it is supported by their employer in writing.

Can my employer seek an exemption?

Where there are **extenuating reasons**, employers of Reserve members may apply to Defence to have their business or organisation, or a specific employee Reserve member, *exempt* from Operation Civil Assist 2025.

Employer-initiated exemption requests should be made through the ADF Reserves and Employer Support Directorate, by contacting 1800 DEFENCE.

Will my employer pay me while I'm away?

As you will be paid by Defence for your defence service, your employer is not obligated to pay you while you are absent from the workplace unless you are using a form of paid leave.

Example: A Reserve member renders 2-weeks of defence service and elects to use annual leave during the first week. In this scenario, the employer is obligated to pay their employee's wages during the first week but not the second.

What type of leave should I use?

There is no requirement to take any type of paid or unpaid leave while absent on defence service. However, most employment contracts contain provisions that some sort of leave be used. In the absence of an employment contract, during periods of defence service and as a minimum, you may be released on *leave without pay*.

Can my employer direct me to use leave?

No. It is unlawful for an employer to direct you to use any leave (e.g. annual leave) while rendering defence service. However, your employer may agree for you to use leave if you request it. Any request should be considered by your employer in accordance with their leave policy and the provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Will I accumulate leave from my employer?

This depends on the nature of your defence service...

- If you are rendering defence service on **continuous full-time service** (known as CFTS or SERVOP C), then your absence is to be no less beneficial than if you are on *leave without pay*. If *leave without pay* is not defined in your Workplace Agreement or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, you should refer to your state/territory legislation to ascertain whether you will accumulate leave as this may vary state-to-state or
- If you are rendering **other** defence service (i.e. not CFTS), then the period is to be taken as paid service, regardless of whether you are using *paid leave* or *leave without pay*. This means that you will continue to accumulate leave as if you are in the workplace.

Defence service on Operation Civil Assist 2025 will be rendered on Reserve Service Days (i.e. *other* defence service).

What about superannuation?

If you are not using paid leave while absent from your civilian workplace, then there is no obligation for your employer to make superannuation contributions.

What support is available for my employer?

The Employer Support Payment Scheme (ESPS) provides financial assistance to employers of Reserve members who are absent from the workplace on eligible periods of defence.

In order to assist with the costs associated with the absence of the employee Reserve member during Operation Civil Assist 2025, the CDF has modified some of the normal requirements for ESPS.

Your employer can make an application online, via the *ESPS Online Claim System* at, www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au.

Importantly, ESPS support payments that are made to employers, are for the benefit of the employer and it is your responsibility to ensure your employer knows about the scheme.

Where can I get more information?

PH: 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) E: yourCustomer.Service@defence.gov.au W: www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au