



# **On-Call Firefighter information guide**





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# What is an On-Call Firefighter

- An On-Call Firefighter is a person employed by a fire and rescue service who is 'on-call' to respond via a pager to a range of emergencies.
- On-Call Firefighters are paid for their services; they are trained to the same level as a wholetime (fulltime) firefighter and learn all they need to know about emergency situations as well as additional personal skills. People from different part of the community serve as On-Call Firefighters.
- An On-Call firefighter can be in full or part-time employment, working for themselves, studying at college or university, or not currently employed.



**They have everyday lives and jobs, until their pager sounds - then they become professional firefighters.**

# Who can be an On-Call Firefighter?

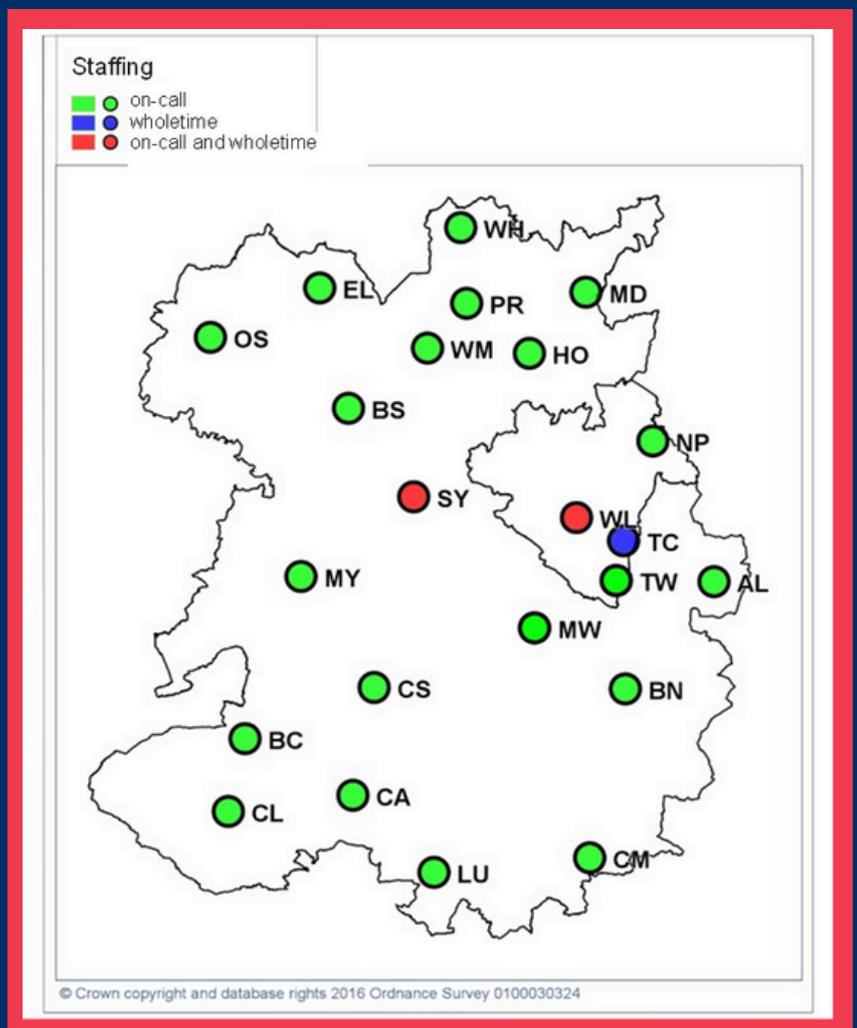
As long as you are 18 years of age before training starts, have a good all-round level of fitness and you pass the entrancetests, you can be an On-Call Firefighter. There is no upper age limit.

You also need to live or work within 5 minutes' travel time of the fire station. We can't predict when you will be called out so you need to have flexibility in your work or home-based activities.

Many employers will release On-Call Firefighters from their workplace to attend an emergency incident. Some On-Call Firefighters are self-employed, work from home or are home-makers so they are able to respond. Whatever an On-Call Firefighter is doing, if their pager sounds, they need to be able stop what they are doing and report immediately to their community fire station

Firefighters require a certain level of eyesight to enable to them to carry out their role – it doesn't have to be perfect but there is a minimumrequirement. You have to meet a requiredstandard of vision when applying to join. For safety reasons, only soft contact lenses are acceptable.

This is a map of the stations where we have on-call firefighters.



# What do I get out of it?

The firefighter role is unique. It is unpredictable, exciting and rewarding. As a firefighter you provide a crucial service to your local community as part of a closely knit, professional team.

You will learn lots of new skills, some of which are transferable including leadership management, LGV driving, first aid, trauma care and health and safety qualifications. You will also have a recognised NVQ qualification and the opportunity to gain other sector-related qualifications.

The service also offers chances for career progression. Following successfully completing your 3 year development programme, in line with procedure you are able to progress through to Crew Manager and then Watch Manager in the On-Call duty system.

Being part of a fire and rescue service is a great way of meeting new people – people you work with and people you help. There is a special bond between firefighters that comes from working as part of a team in conditions that can be dangerous or emotive, that helps to bind the team together in a way that few other jobs can.

As an On-Call firefighter, you will receive remuneration for the number of hours you can provide cover for and an hourly rate for attending incidents, training sessions, community safety activities, equipment tests as well as paid holiday. From the start of your employment, you will be able to contribute to a firefighters' pension scheme which the Service will also contribute to.

You can find more information and detail on our website. Links are detailed at the end of this booklet.

# What would the commitment be?

## Personal Appearance

Firefighters are expected to present themselves and dress in a professional manner while at work. We have a uniform which reflects our professional image.



## Availability

You have to be available for a minimum of 60 hours, with availability banding (availability is the term we use for the number of hours and the time of day when you will respond to incidents) varying from 60-130 hours (not including 70 hours). Recruits start at 90 hours whilst going through their training and when officially on the run, their banding will be reviewed every 3 months.

You will not be working for the agreed number of on-call hours, but the service will pay you to be available. 90 hours sounds like a lot, but you can do a lot of it whilst you are sleeping!

Being on-call doesn't stop you from going about your normal life but, if there is an incident where your help is needed during the hours where you are available, you will need to drop everything and get to the fire station within 5 minutes.

## Training

Your training is comparable to that of a wholetime firefighter; the biggest demand on your time will be in the first 4 months when you will undertake your initial training.

- Induction - two days
- Pumps and ladders induction – six days
- Pumps and ladders support evenings – two days
- Water awareness - one day
- Road Traffic Collision (RTC) – two days
- Safe working at heights - one day
- Breathing Apparatus support evening – one day
- BA Initial – ten days
- Haz Mat Initial – two days

In total there is an initial commitment of 27 days. You would then start your development programme which should be completed within three years.

In support of your initial training, you will also continue with your training sessions every week, usually completed at the fire station. The training is between 2 and 3 hours in an evening. These training sessions allow you the opportunity to practice the skills you learn, ensuring that you are ready for action at all times.



## How will this impact on your home life?

It is important that you have the support and encouragement of your partners and families. This support does mean that occasionally the lives of families and partners are affected. The main disadvantages to being on-call are:

- It is difficult to plan spur of the moment activities when you are on-call
- You can be called out in the night
- On-Call firefighters cannot be relied upon to be the sole carer of a child/children when on-call. Alternative childcare arrangements are needed so that you can respond to an emergency quickly.

Being an on-call firefighter does have its advantages too such as;

- Serving and protecting your local community
- Being a positive role model to the community and your family
- Increased confidence
- Continual development and acquisition of new skills
- Ability to assess risk
- Financial reward
- Making close friends and working as part of a close-knit professional team

# How can this benefit my employer?

It is important that you seek permission from your employer if you are planning on responding to incidents during your working hours. They need to know what this will involve and make necessary contractual arrangements. Please ask for an employer's guide if you decide to proceed.

On-Call firefighters are highly trained professionals and you can add value to the organisation you work for, at no additional cost to them.

- Personal skills: such as leadership, teamwork, quick thinking, problem solving, taking responsibility, communication skills and keeping calm in difficult situations.
- Emergency Skills: including incident command, first aid and trauma care, dealing with hazardous materials which will assist your business on health and safety, first aid and fire related matters.
- Education qualifications and skill sets: On-Call firefighters are encouraged to gain nationally recognised qualifications and to maintain up-to-date skills appropriate to their role. These can benefit your employer by increasing motivation and productivity levels
- Improved fitness health and wellbeing: fire and rescue services are committed to supporting their staff in physical and mental health meaning that you are fitter and healthier, so sickness levels decrease.
- Highly trained and skilled employees: On-Call firefighters must be able to deal with a whole range of situations. The nature of incidents is very unpredictable so this will help you cope with the ups and downs of working life.
- Large Goods Vehicle training: many On-Call firefighters are trained to drive fire engines so you will get a LGV licence. You will also receive Emergency Fire Engine Driver training which will give you a heightened awareness of road conditions.
- Businesses have found that the benefits offered by allowing their staff to be on-call have far outweighed any inconvenience caused by their employee responding to an emergency.

# I like the sound of it, how do I apply?

There are seven stages:

## 1. Register your interest

Visit [shropshirefire.gov.uk/on-call](http://shropshirefire.gov.uk/on-call) to find out more about the role and a link to the national application form.

## 2. Application form

Tell us why you will be a good candidate and what hours of cover you will be able to provide.

## 3. Interviews

You will have an initial first interview at the station with the Watch Manger. Providing the team are happy you will then have a second stage interview with the Station Manager and HR at Brigade Headquarters.

## 4. Written tests

These are timed numerical and verbal reasoning tests which form part of your Job Related Tests (JRTs).

## 5. Practical tests (JRTs)

We use six national firefighter selection tests, more information on the next page.

## 6. Medical and Fitness Test

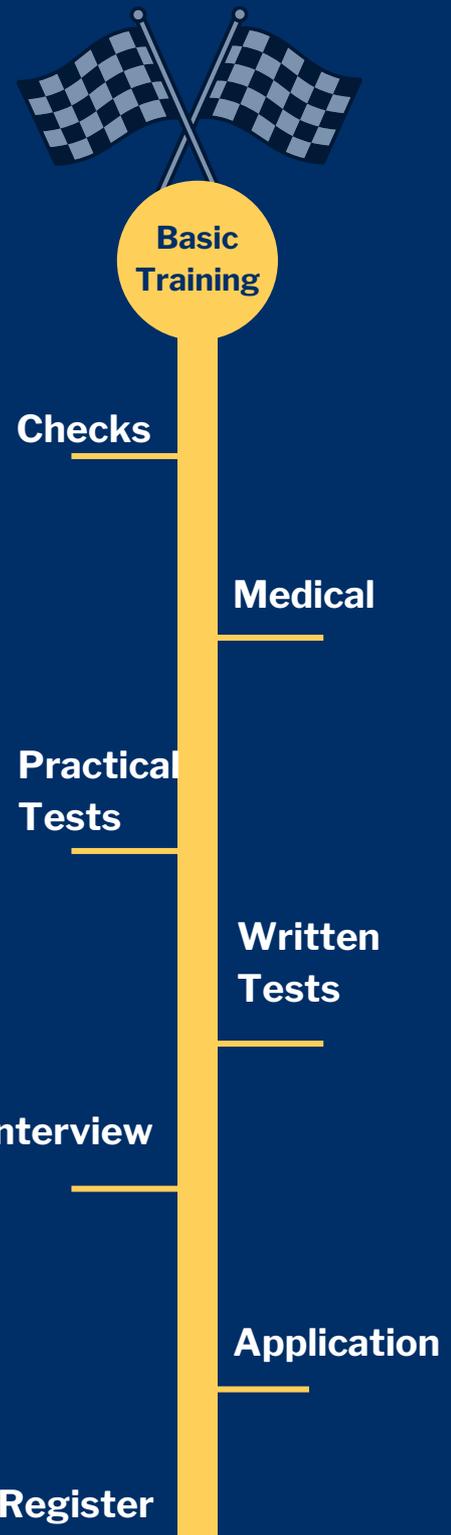
In total this these tests will last around one hour, 40 mintues. This includes seeing an OH Technican and our Fitness Advisor.

## 7. Pre-employment checks

Enhanced check under the Disclosure and Barring Service and references.

## Offer of Employment

Once the service is satisfied with your pre-employment checks then an offer of employment will be granted and you will start with the service to complete your induction and basic training.



# National Firefighter physical tests

The selection process consists of several role related physical tests, some of which need to be completed within a specified time. All aim to assess your level of cardiovascular and muscular strength/endurance, with elements of manual dexterity included.

## Ladder Climb

This test aims to test your confidence with heights.

## Casualty Evacuation

This test aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.

## Ladder lift/lower simulation

This aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.

## Breathing apparatus crawl

Working in an enclosed space is sometimes required when working as a firefighter. The test is designed to test your confidence, agility, and stamina while working in these conditions.

## Equipment Assembly

This test is designed to assess your manual dexterity and co-ordination.

## Equipment Carry

This aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.



# How much will I get paid?

The retaining fee will vary depending on the hours of availability banding you are on, the below is a guide.

- **Development retaining annual fee** - £4,558
- **Competent retaining annual fee** - £5,832
- **Development hourly rate** - £13.87
- **Competent hourly rate** - £17.75
- **Claim for turnout** - £5.12 plus one hour

## Medical and fitness test information

The medical lasts approximately one hour and you'll meet the Service's team including an occupational health technician, fitness instructor.

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire covering your medical history and finally, subject to a series of tests including but not limited to:

- **Hearing Test** – you will sit in a sound-proof booth wearing headphones and will be asked to press a button when you hear a range of sounds.
- **Lung Function** – you will be asked to blow hard and long down a hollow tube until all your lung capacity is fully exhaled – a reading is taken and assessed accordingly.
- **General Tests** – you will see the doctor who will test your reflexes and discuss your medical questionnaire with you.
- **Vision tests** – your standard of vision will be assessed.

Your fitness test will last around 30 minutes. The fitness test is designed to test of your level of fitness will be tested and a standard VO<sub>2</sub> of 42.3ml/kg/min.

# Frequently asked questions

## **I drive an 'in scope' vehicle, can I apply?**

The rules cover those driving 'in scope' vehicles. The purpose of the rules is to limit driving time and ensure that proper breaks and rest periods are taken. The rest requirements apply to occasional drivers even if they drive a few hours a day or a couple of hours a week. Although vehicles used by the Fire Service are automatically exempt from the rules, On-Call Firefighters who drive 'in scope' vehicles in their primary employment are not exempt.

## **How often will I be called out?**

On average you'll be called out around 2-3 times a week dependant on your station area. In hot summers you may be very busy with grass fires. Alternative, during prolonged wet periods, you may attend lots of flooding incidents. No two calls are ever the same!

## **Are there height limits?**

There are no maximum or minimum height limits.

## **What will the application form ask?**

The usual things – personal details, work history, qualifications as well as other aspects such as special skills like team working.



### **Do I need any qualifications?**

No, but you will need to pass all the selection tests.

### **What happens if I pass the application form stage?**

Applicants who meet the essential requirements are invited down to station for their first stage interview.

### **What if I have convictions?**

You will be asked to declare any unspent criminal convictions (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) and this information will be considered should you be successful at the interview stage.

### **Can I go out whilst on call?**

Yes, but you must make sure that you carry your pager and that you can still get to the station within 5 minutes. If you need to go further afield you may be able to arrange for an off-duty member of your team to provide cover for you. Please remember whilst you are on call you must be fit for duty.

### **What if I have a disability?**

We value our diverse workforce and actively promote disability equality under the Equality Act 2010. This aligns with our commitment to valuing a diverse workforce and providing the highest possible standards of service delivery. If you have any disabilities, these will be looked in to by an occupational health doctor on an individual basis.

### **What if I can't do the same hours each week/I need to change contract?**

You need to commit to a certain number of hours to get your retaining fee. There will be some flexibility depending on the availability of the rest of the team to change hours of cover. Any change to the agreed cover you provided at appointment will be considered by the service and if it no longer meets the needs of the service your contract may be terminated.

# Useful links



Visit [shropshirefire.gov.uk/on-call](https://shropshirefire.gov.uk/on-call)



Shropsfire



@Shropsfire



Shropshirefire

## I'm Interested - who do I contact?



Email: [recruitment@shropshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@shropshirefire.gov.uk)





**Shropshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

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