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Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

On-call firefighter information guide

What is an on-call firefighter?

An on-call firefighter is a crucial part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as they provide an efficient and effective emergency service to the communities of Staffordshire. They are paid employees of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, who provide 'on-call' cover to their local fire station, where they will respond to a range of emergencies and incidents as well as be involved in community initiatives.

On-call firefighters receive the same thorough and relevant training as wholetime firefighters. This is so they are able to confidently provide front-line response, protecting people and places and make a difference in their community.



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Who can be on-call firefighter?

On-call firefighters come from all areas of the community. On-call firefighters can also be in full-time or part-time employment, self-employed, studying at college or university, or a stay-at-home parent or carer.

On-call firefighters need to be:



18-years-old



Want to make a
valuable contribute to
their community



Have a positive
attitude and
willingness to learn



Live or work
close to their
local fire station

Age

On-call firefighters need to be 18-years-old or over to apply and start the process of becoming an on-call firefighter. There is no upper age limit to become an on-call firefighter, but as part of the recruitment process, applicants must be able to pass the fitness test.

Personality

On-call firefighters need to have a positive attitude and a willingness to learn new skills as well as good communication skills. They also need to be reliable, flexible, determined, self-motivated, enthusiastic and be able to work as part of a team. Above all, on-call firefighters require a desire to make a valuable and worthwhile contribution to our communities across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Employment

Some of our on-call firefighters have primary employment and have an agreement with their employers to release them from their workplace to attend an emergency incident. Other on-call firefighters work for themselves or simply have time available to help serve and protect their community.



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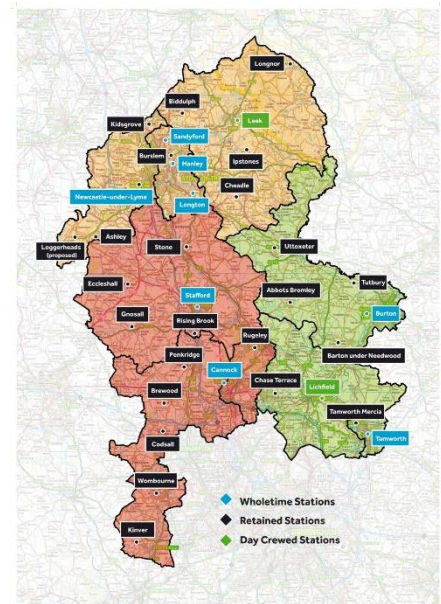
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Location

On-call firefighters need to live or work within an agreed travel time (or turn-out time) of their local fire station so they are able to respond to an emergency from the moment their alerter goes off while driving at normal road speeds. As we can't predict when an emergency occurs, on-call firefighters need to be flexible with their home or work activities because when their alerter goes off, they need to stop what they're doing and go to the fire station immediately.

Our on-call fire stations:

- Abbots Bromley
- Barton-under-Needwood
- Biddulph
- Brewood
- Burslem
- Burton-on-Trent
- Cannock
- Chase Terrace
- Cheadle
- Codsall
- Eccleshall
- Gnosall
- Hanley
- Ipstones
- Kidsgrove
- Kinver
- Leek
- Lichfield
- Loggerheads
- Longnor
- Longton
- Newcastle
- Penkridge
- Rising Brook
- Rugeley
- Stone
- Tamworth Mercia
- Tutbury
- Uttoxeter
- Wombourne



What would the commitment be?

Availability

On-call firefighters need to commit a dedicated amount of time each week to being 'on-call'. This is a minimum of 50 hours a week, which could be during the day, night or weekends, or a combination of all. On-call firefighter's availability, in terms of the hours they can be 'on-call' each week is called a declaration and is agreed with the Station Manager. This is done during the recruitment process and has to benefit the on-call firefighter and the fire station.



Recruitment and training process

Recruitment

There are a number of different stages to the recruitment process.



Stage 1: Expression of interest

You can do this on our website or by contacting your local on-call support officer.



Stage 2: Declaration of availability

The 'on-call' cover you are able to provide to your local fire station will be discussed between you and the Station Manager. It is important to ensure that your declaration and availability is sustainable and benefits both you and the fire station.



Stage 3: Interview

You will be interviewed by the Station Manager and the local on-call support officer.



Stage 4: Fitness test

This will be carried out by the Service Fitness Advisor and will involve a bleep test to level eight.



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Stage 5: Job Related Tests (JRTs)

These are physical tests that you have to complete within a specific time and are scenarios that you are likely to face in the role. They aim to assess your level of cardiovascular and muscular strength as well as endurance with elements of manual dexterity. These include:

- Ladder lift – this aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.
- Ladder climb – this test aims to test your confidence with heights.
- Equipment carry – this aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.
- Equipment assembly – this test is designed to assess your manual dexterity, co-ordination and ability to listen to instructions.
- Casualty evacuation – this test aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.
- Confined spaces – working in enclosed spaces is required when working as a firefighter. This test is designed to test your confidence, agility and stamina, all while working in these conditions.



Stage 6: Online written assessment

You will have to complete some written tests including basic Maths and English.



Stage 7: Pre-employment checks (medical assessment, DSB check, reference check, kit measurements)

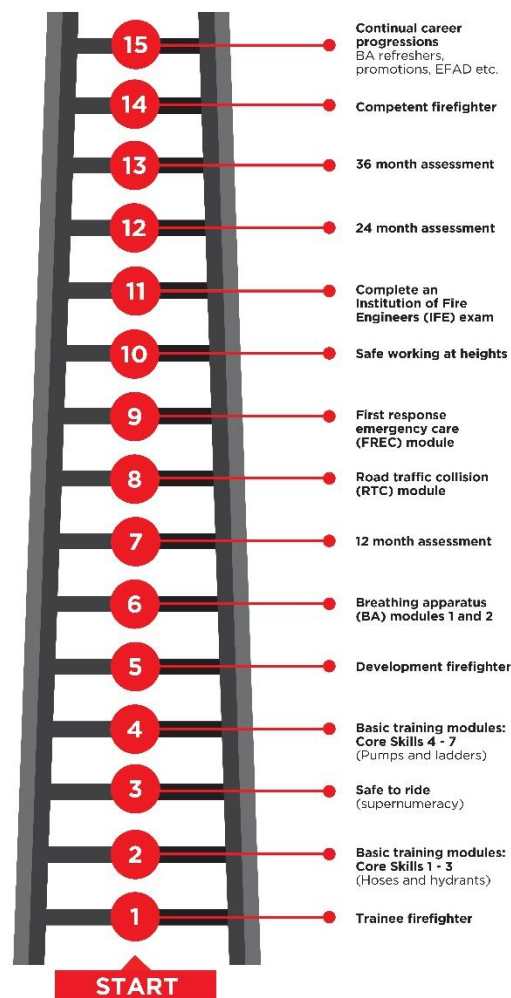
These include a health assessment at our Occupational Health Unit. The medical assessment will take approximately two hours. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire covering your medical history before being subject to a series of different tests:

- 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 when 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 test – your standard of vision will be assessed. The minimum standard of corrected binocular vision required is visual acuity of at least 6/9. Also, any uncorrected visual acuity of 6/18 would be accepted providing you have full corrected vision 6/6. Near vision is also assessed and you should have the ability to be able to read N12 at 30 centimetres which is seen as the absolute minimal standard. If you have colour vision deficiency, the severity will be assessed with further testing.

Training

Following successful appointment after the recruitment process, on-call firefighters are given full training to ensure they can provide effective and efficient service at an emergency. This initial training will see them embark on a 36-month training programme. This is a programme that all on-call firefighters have to complete before they become full-competent and qualified on-call firefighters. However, throughout their training, they will be able to respond to fire and rescue incidents. The three-year training programme will be spread over weekdays and weekends:



In addition to this training, on-call firefighters will also be expected to attend weekly training sessions (also known as drill sessions) at their local fire station. Drill sessions will occur once a week between two-three hours with all the crew at that station. These training sessions allow you the opportunity to practice the skills you learn, ensuring that you are ready for operational incidents at all times.

How much will I get paid?

On call salary

On call firefighters receive 18% of a wholetime firefighter pay, based on 100 hours per week of cover, and a disturbance fee of £4.24 each time you respond to your alarm when not on positive activities. You will receive hourly rate for positive activities such as, attending drill periods, incidents and routines. You could earn anything between £300 and £900 a month depending on how many incidents your station has.



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Advantages and disadvantages

The role of an on-call firefighter is unique. While it is unpredictable, it is also exciting and rewarding. As an on-call firefighter, you will be a crucial part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as well as your local community.

Being part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue service means you will meet a range of new people, be able to build relationships and work as a team. Together, you will be helping people in their time of need and making a difference to their lives. You will also be able to build relationships with partner agencies and the local community.

With any job, there are always going to be positives and negatives. However, the most important part of being an on-call firefighter is that you will be making a difference in your local community and helping people in their time of need. Here are some advantages and disadvantages of being an on-call firefighter:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting your local community• Working as part of a team• Learn and develop new skills• Increased confidence• Save lives and help others• Ability to access risks• Additional income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to plan 'spur of the moment' activities• Disrupted sleep if you get called out during the night• Missed meals and social occasions• Childcare

Home life

Providing 50 hours a week 'on-call' cover is a significant commitment, therefore it is important to have the support from others like family and friends as their lives can be affected too. Being an on-call firefighter means that you may have to respond 'at the drop of a hat' when you're on-call and your alerter goes off.

Being 'on-call' doesn't stop you from going about your daily activities, whether that is working, going to the shop or for a walk for example, as long as you remain close to your local fire station as you will need to respond when your alerter goes off. There may also be occasions such as birthdays, weddings and events that you are unable to attend if you are 'on-call'. There will be occasions where you can book holiday like with any other employment, but that needs to be agreed with the Station Manager or Watch Manager in advance. However, our on-call firefighters are proud to be firefighters and protect their community.

Employers

Many on-call firefighters have existing jobs and have an agreement with their employer that they can provide 'on-call' cover and respond to incidents during their working hours. Some on-call firefighters don't provide 'on-call' cover during work hours but make their employers know that they have 'on-call' commitments.

It is important to have these conversations with your employer and Station Manager during the declaration process to ensure neither employment is impacted by the other. For example, if you finish work at 5pm and are 'on-call' at 6pm, you may not be able to stay at your primary employment longer as you will be required to be within the agreed turn-out time of your local fire station. Similarly, if you come 'off-call' at 6am and start work at 8am, but your alerter goes off at 5:45am and you respond to a significant incident, you may be late for work. Therefore, employers need to know about your 'on-call' commitments and what is involved to make any necessary contractual agreements required.

However, there are many transferable skills that on-call firefighters will learn and develop that can add value to organisations such as;

- Personal skills
- Emergency skills
- Education and qualifications
- Improved fitness, health and wellbeing
- Risk assessment
- Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) training



Frequently asked questions

Becoming an on-call firefighter is a significant commitment. Here are some of our frequently asked questions and answers that may help.

Question	Answer
How often will I be called out?	<p>Being 'on-call' is unpredictable so it's hard to say exactly how many times a week you'd get called out as it varies depending on a range of factors. Some of our fire stations are busier than others depending on their location.</p> <p>In the summer, the Fire Service may be dealing with grass fires if it has been hot and dry. Alternatively, if there has been a long period of rain, the Fire Service may be dealing with flooding and rescuing incidents. No two calls are ever the same.</p>
Is there a height limit?	<p>There is no minimum or maximum height limit to being an on-call firefighter.</p>



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Question	Answer
Do I need any qualifications?	No, but you will need to pass the tests during the recruitment process. Your Maths and English will be assessed as part of the application process although you won't be disadvantaged if you don't already hold the qualifications.
How will I know when to respond to an incident?	When an emergency occurs, on-call firefighters will be notified by an alerter and will need to make their way to the fire station immediately.
Can I go out whilst on call?	<p>Yes, you can go out and go about your usual daily routine but as long as you stay within the local area and have your alerter with you. If your alerter goes off, you will have to get to the station immediately, regardless of what you're doing at the time.</p> <p>If you need to go further afield, you may be able to arrange for an 'off-call' member of your crew to provide cover for you. Though it is important to remember whilst you are 'on-call', you must be fit for duty and cannot drink alcohol.</p>
Will I be able to drive a fire engine?	After you have completed the three-year development programme, you can look to become a driver if the station needs you to.



For more information you can visit our website:
www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/careers/on-call-firefighters



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Who can I contact if I'm interested?

On-call support officers look after our on-call fire stations and our on-call firefighters.

On-call support officer details

Michelle Dudman

Abbots Bromley, Barton-under-Needwood, Burton-on-Trent, Tutbury and Uttoxeter
michelle.dudman@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Rick Pattison

Eccleshall, Gnosall, Longton, Rising Brook and Stone
ricki.pattison@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Darren Thompson

Chase Terrace, Lichfield, Penkridge, Rugeley and Tamworth Mercia
darren.thompson@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Rich Kissman

Brewood, Codsall, Cannock, Kinver and Wombourne
richard.kissman@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Tom Mabley

Burslem, Hanley, Kidsgrove, Loggerhead and Newcastle
thomas.mabley@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Jordan Fallows

Biddulph, Cheadle, Ipstones, Leek, Longnor
jordan.fallows@staffordshirefire.gov.uk



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Useful resources



Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service: On-call firefighters
www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/careers/on-call-firefighters



National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)
<https://oncallfire.uk/>



National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) toolkit
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLATk8H94XOrlzWbzhZrD1oznTvORlaYhE>



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