



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
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Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

On-call firefighter information guide

What is an on-call firefighter?

On call firefighters are a crucial part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as they provide efficient and effective emergency services to the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. They are paid employees of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as they 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 full-time firefighters. This is so they are able to confidently provide front-line response, protecting people and places, and making a difference in their community.



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Who can be an 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, or unemployed.

On-call firefighters need to be:



18-years-old



Want to make a valuable contribution 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, all applicants will have to pass a fitness test and job-related tests (JRTs).

Gender

Anyone can become an on-call firefighter, regardless of their gender or identity. You don't have to be a certain height, shape or weight to become an on-call firefighter. Everyone who applies will have to pass a fitness test and JRTs as part of the recruitment process.

Disability

People who have a disability or impairment can still apply to become an on-call firefighter. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service welcome applicants of all abilities. The Service will consider reasonable adjustments should individuals require additional support.

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.



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Employment

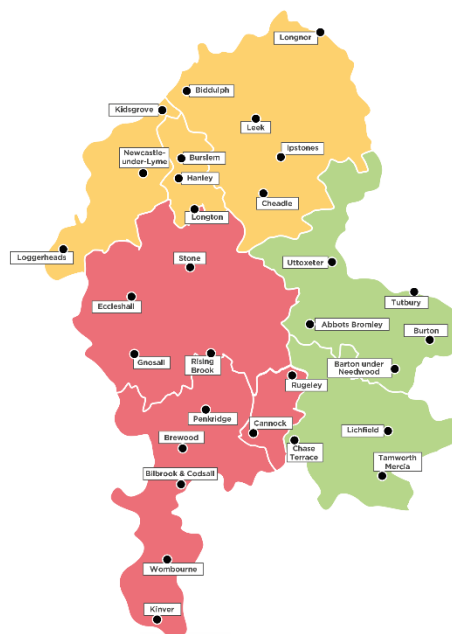
Some on-call firefighters have primary employment and have an agreement with their employers to release them from their workplace to attend an emergency incident. Other on-call firefighters work for themselves or simply have time available to be 'on-call'.

Location

On-call firefighters need to live or work within an agreed travel time (or turn-out time) of their local fire station. 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 are required to commit a certain 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. An on-call firefighter's availability, the hours they are 'on-call', is called a declaration and is agreed between them and the Station Manager during the recruitment process. Their availability can be done on a rotation, for example a weekly or monthly basis, which may be beneficial depending on work and life commitments.



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. Your local On-Call Support Officer is your go-to person with any questions you have about the role, the recruitment process, what the tests involve and how to prepare for the tests. If you have a disability or impairment, they will be able to advise and ensure reasonable adjustments are considered and if applicable, are in place right the start.



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 your On-Call Support Officer.





Stage 4: Fitness test

This will be carried out by the Service Fitness Advisor and will involve a bleep test completing 20m shuttle runs to level 8.8.



Stage 5: Job Related Tests (JRTs)

These are physical tests that you have to complete within a specific time and imitate 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 follow instructions.
- Casualty evacuation – this test aims to test your upper and lower body strength as well as your co-ordination.
- Confined spaces – this test is designed to test your confidence, agility and stamina while working in these conditions.



Stage 6: Pre-employment checks (medical assessment, DBS 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.

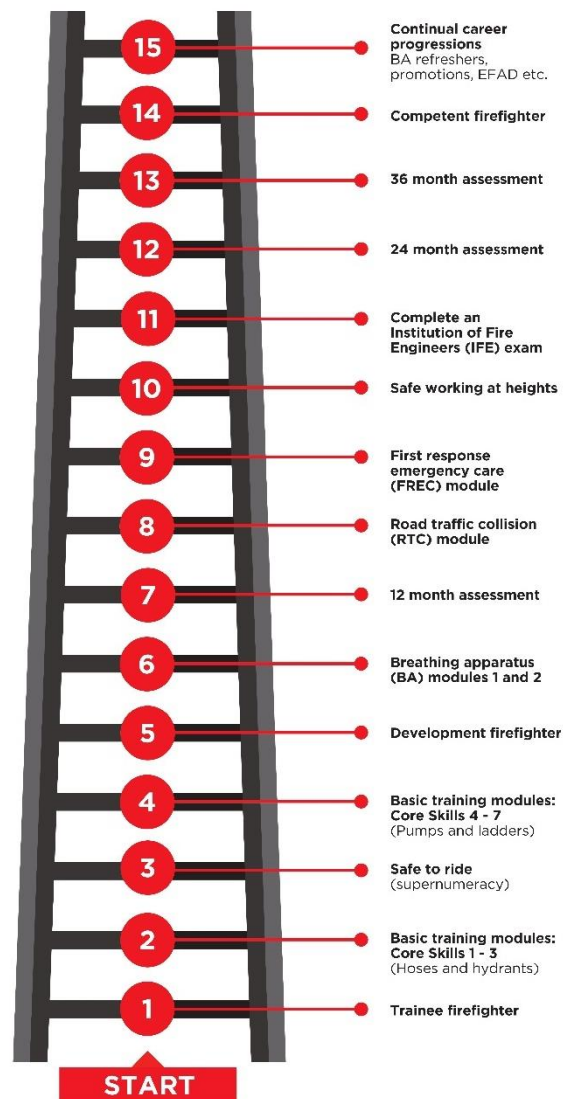
- Vision test – your standard of vision will be assessed. The minimum standard of corrected binocular vision required is visual acuity of at least 6/9. Also, any uncorrected visual acuity of 6/18 would be accepted providing you have full corrected vision 6/6. Near vision is also assessed and you should 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

On-call firefighters are trained to the same level of competence as their full-time firefighter colleagues to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service can deliver an effective, efficient and competent service to people and communities across the county. A high level of mental and physical commitment is necessary in order to become a competent firefighter.

Following successful completion of the recruitment process, you will be invited to an Induction Day where you will be provided with information on Health and Safety and what can be expected from the 36-month development programme.

During your development, you must successfully achieve set criteria through practical assessments and written course work. Some of the courses you need to complete include Core Skills, breathing apparatus (BA), road traffic collisions (RTCs) and first response emergency care (FREC), are scheduled across different weekends and weekdays across the three-year period to accommodate different circumstances. These courses vary in duration from 1 day to 13 days.



Course	Duration
Induction Day	1 day
Core Skills 1 – 3	5 days
Core Skills 4 – 7	13 days
Level 1 Road traffic collisions (RTC)	1 day
Breathing apparatus (BA)	13 days
Road traffic collisions (RTC)	3 days
First response emergency care (FREC)	5 days
Safe working at heights	2 days
Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) exam	1 day

As you complete each course, you will be able to demonstrate your newly acquired skill(s) when you attend an emergency incident and this evidence will count towards becoming a competent firefighter. A final assessment at 36 months will determine overall competence in the role as an on-call firefighter. You will then follow a programme to maintain your skills and competence and pursue any career progression you may wish to do.

In addition to this training, on-call firefighters will also be expected to attend weekly training sessions (also known as drill sessions) for two to three hours at their local fire station. These training sessions allow you the opportunity to practice the skills you learn, ensuring that you are ready for operational incidents. Whilst in your first three years as a development firefighter, you will have access to an additional four hours training per week.

How much will I get paid?

On call salary

On-call firefighters are paid a proportion of a full-time firefighter's salary depending on their on-call hours (declaration of availability), number of incidents they attend, training and progression. They receive an hourly rate for positive activities such as attending drill periods, incidents and routines. As an on-call firefighter, you could expect to earn between £300 and £1,000 each month dependant on how many hours give, incidents you attend, training you do, where you are in your development and other activities.





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. You will also be able to build relationships with partner agencies such as other emergency services as well as the local community.

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 assess risks• Additional income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unable to make plans due to having to remain within the agreed turn-out time and the chance of receiving an emergency call• Disrupted sleep• Missed meals and social occasions• Childcare



Home life

Providing a minimum of 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 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'. You will get holiday entitlement based upon your declared hours. This can be used by requesting it in and getting approval in advance from your Watch or Station Manager.

There may be times where you need to 'book-off', as long as it doesn't effect the availability of the fire engine or another member of the crew may be able to cover for you. You can also give more hours 'on-call' than your agreed declaration should you be available, which you will get paid for as normal 'on-call' cover.

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 are an on-call firefighter.

It is important to have these conversations with your employer and Station Manager during the recruitment 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, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue 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 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>



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?	Yes, you can go out and go about your usual daily routine but as long as you stay within the turn-out time 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. If you need to go further afield, you can use some holiday allowance or 'book off'. You can also ask an 'off-call' member of your crew to provide cover for you if it keeps the fire engine available as there needs to be a minimum number of firefighters 'on-call' at any one time to ensure the fire engine is available. Though it is important to remember whilst you are 'on-call', you must be fit for duty and cannot drink alcohol.
Will I be able to drive a fire engine?	You can apply for LGV license after passing your 12 month assessment and then take a Driving on Blue Light course after passing the 36 month assessment.



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

Darren Thompson

Chase Terrace, Penkridge, Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth Mercia, Barton-under-Needwood

Tel: 01785 898693 / 07967 573573

Email: darren.thompson@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

James Stevenson

Burslem, Hanley, Kidsgrove, Loggerheads, Newcastle, Tutbury

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Email: james.stevenson@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Jordan Fallows

Biddulph, Cheadle, Ipstones, Leek, Longnor, Burton

Tel: 01785 898709 / 07967 573522

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Rick Pattison

Eccleshall, Gnosall, Longton, Rising Brook, Stone, Uttoxeter

Tel: 01785 898694 / 07528 983185

Email: ricki.pattison@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Tom Mabley

Brewood, Bilbrook & Codsall, Cannock, Kinver, Wombourne, Abbots Bromley

Tel: 01785 898843 / 07528 983157

Email: thomas.mabley@staffordshirefire.gov.uk



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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