

# 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 exactly the same level as a wholetime (fulltime) firefighter and learn all they need to know about emergency situations as well as additional personal skills. On-call firefighters come from all areas of the community.
- 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?

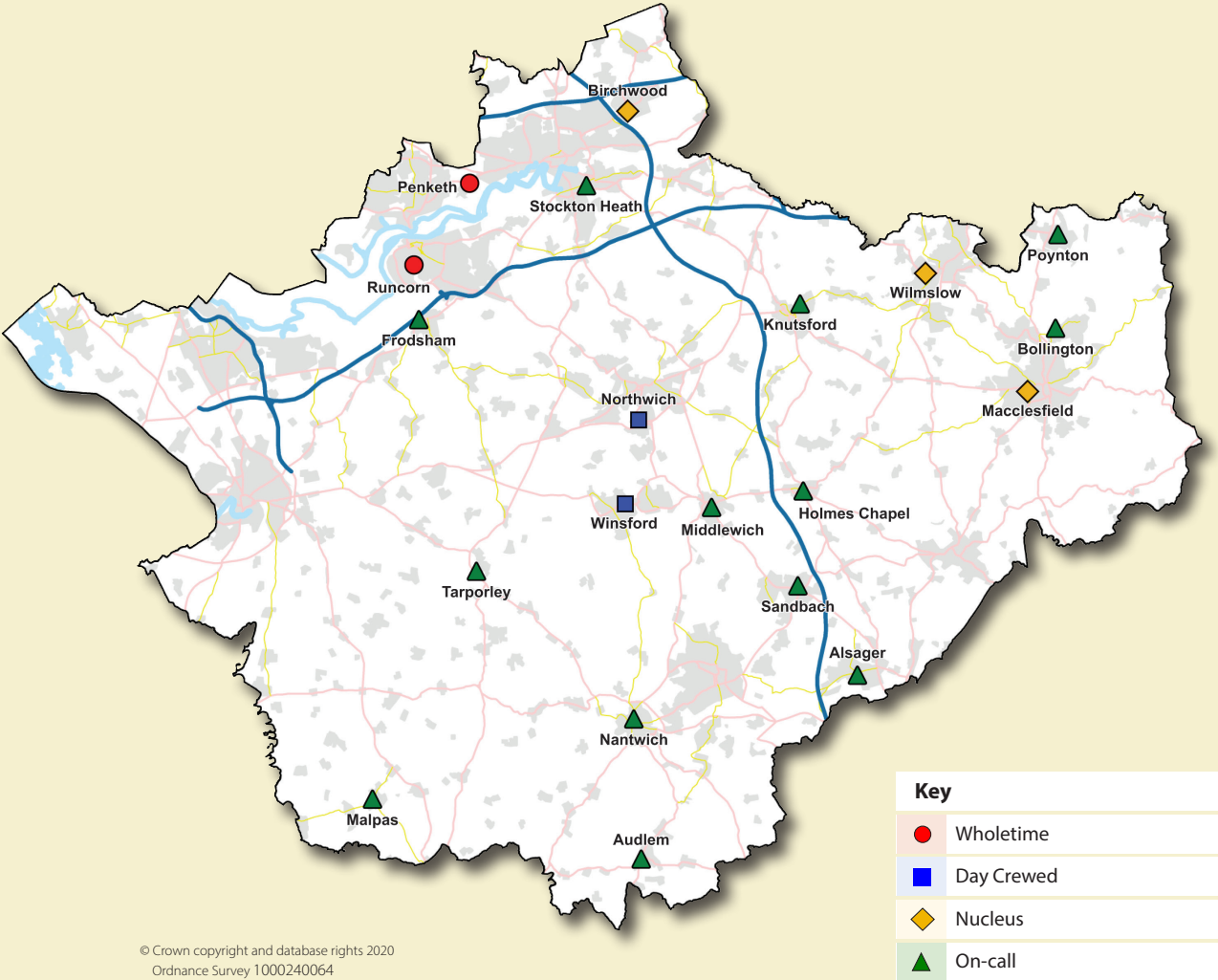
As long as you are 18 years of age before training starts, have a good all-round level of fitness and you pass the entrance tests, you can be an on-call firefighter. There is no upper age limit.

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 alerter 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 them to carry out their role – it doesn't have to be perfect but there is a minimum requirement. You have to meet a required standard of vision when applying to join. For safety reasons, only soft contact lenses are acceptable.

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



# Like what you've read so far?

Read on if you have:

- a desire to make a positive difference and serve your local community
- good communications skills
- courage
- determination
- common sense, understanding
- reliability
- self-motivation
- enthusiasm
- the ability to work in a team

## 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.

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 able to provide a minimum of 50 hours' availability (availability is the term we use for the number of hours and the time of day when you will respond to incidents.) You will not be working for the agreed number of on-call hours, but the service will pay you to be available. 50 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 whole time firefighter; the biggest demand on your time will be in the first 14-18 months when you will undertake your initial training..

- **Module one, pumps and ladders - one week**
- **Module two Breathing Apparatus - two weeks**
- **RTC extrications - two weekends**
- **Hazardous Materials - one weekend**
- **Height Safety - three days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday**
- **Trauma Care - three days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday**

In total there is an initial commitment of 27 days within a possible 300 to 400 days. Time well spent.

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 child care 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 – as a second income you can earn an average of 5K a year**
- **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.

- Your employer will receive recognition from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service which can be used to promote their business to demonstrate corporate social responsibility.
- Personal skills: such as leadership, team work, 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 six stages:

## 1. Declaration of availability

Tell us how many and what hours of the day you can be available to attend emergencies. If the hours you can provide will benefit the station we will send you an application form.

## 2. Application form

Tell us why you will be a good candidate.

## 3. On line tests

These are numerical and verbal reasoning tests which you do at home. These tests are timed. You will be sent some practice tests to get you in the swing of things.

## 4. Practical tests

We use six national firefighter selection tests:

- Ladder lift
- Ladder Climb
- Rural Run
- Equipment assembly
- Casualty evacuation
- Enclosed Space

## 5. Interview

You will be interviewed by the Station Manager, the Watch Manager and a representative from Human Resources.

## 6. Medical

- Blood pressure and pulse
- Checks of your height, weight and body mass index
- Hearing test
- Grip strength test
- **Vision test** (Please note, if you have received laser eye surgery this procedure must have been carried out a minimum of 1 month prior to your medical assessment)
- Lung function test
- Drugs and alcohol test
- VO2 max test

## 7. Pre-employment checks

Enhanced check under the Disclosure and Barring Service and references.



# 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.



# Useful links



Visit [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/jobs/on-call-firefighter-recruitment](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/jobs/on-call-firefighter-recruitment) for:

- Pensions
- Holiday entitlements
- Hourly rate
- Disturbance Fee
- Retaining Fee
- Qualifications
- Courses/skills that you will acquire
- Medical information
- VO2 Max Chester Treadmill test
- Eyesight
- Useful tips for application stages
- Videos of national firefighter selection tests
- Interview techniques



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## I'm interested – who do I contact?



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



## Our Core Values



### Be Inclusive

By acting fairly, with integrity, respect and without prejudice.



### Do the Right Thing

By holding each other to account for ensuring high standards of professionalism in everything we do.



### Act with Compassion

By being understanding and offering help to each other and to our communities with warmth, patience and kindness.



### Make a Difference

By making an impact in our organisation and in our communities in whatever ways we can, for as many people as we can.

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[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)