

HUMAN RESOURCES

Eyesight Policy

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South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

EYESIGHT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue is committed to the Health & Safety of the Workforce; this includes the care of employees' eyes.
2. There are various posts within the organisation where eye protection and prescription lenses (aids to vision) are both required to perform the duties of the post as well as fulfilling legislation.
 - The Medical and Occupational Evidence for Recruitment and Retention in the Fire Service produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (September 2004) sets the visual standards for uniformed personnel. (This document is currently under review)
 - The Health & Safety Executive Display Screen Regulations (DSE Regs.)(1992) includes clear guidelines for the care of user's visual standards.
 - The Driving Standards Authority (DSA) and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) sets clear standards for drivers of all categories of vehicles.
3. Where protective eye wear is deemed necessary following risk assessment these may need to be to prescription standard e.g. workshops, fire ground.
4. For clarification Aids to Vision for the fire ground should be worn for all fire ground/emergency calls, all exercises and operational training, they are not a requirement for LGV driving – DSA regulations would apply.
5. This policy applies to all employees of South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue & should be read in conjunction with the associated documents listed below:
 - Health & Safety Manual
 - Display Screen Equipment Regulations (1992)
 - DSA and DVLA Guidance
 - The Visual Standards for Recruitment and Retention of Fire fighters (Currently under review)
 - British Standards Personal Eye Protection Specifications & Optical Testing Methods
 - SYFR SOP Driving- Managing Occupational Road Risk
6. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership¹, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental

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status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason, either directly or indirectly

BACKGROUND

7. There have been various changes particularly in the visual standards for firefighters over the past several years, whilst Display Screen Equipment and Driving standards have remained static.
8. This policy aims to clarify issuing and funding of various prescription aids to vision.

LEGISLATION

9. The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) imposes a duty on all employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees, including if required the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The same act requires that employees take steps to safeguard their own health and safety, as well as that of others. All employees should treat safety equipment issued with respect and wear PPE as instructed.
10. The Equality Act 2010 states that it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in the arrangements made for determining who should be offered employment, the terms on which the disabled person is offered employment or by deliberately not offering the disabled person employment. In many cases having a visual disability does not adversely affect an individual's general health and ability to achieve the required visual standard. Where such a judgement is required an occupational health, medical or optical practitioner should be consulted to make a decision based on accepted standards.
11. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006) state that an individual's age should not be used to make any judgements about their abilities, again where such judgement is required this should be through an occupational health, medical, optical consultant.

PRE EMPLOYMENT

12. All operational staff will undergo a full visual and optical assessment as part of their pre-employment medical. This will be assessed by the Medical Officer (MO) within the Medical and Occupational Evidence for Recruitment and Retention in the Fire Service guidelines (Currently under review)

¹ The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private organisations. For further information on the Partnership, see www.dignityatwork.org

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13. All staff who are required to drive (including operational staff commencing or renewing LGV licences) will undergo a vision test within the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and if deemed necessary will be referred to an optician. All staff should be aware of and comply with the guidance contained in the SYFR SOP Driving – Managing Occupational Road Risk.
14. All staff covered by the DSE Regulations will on commencement of employment undergo a vision test within the OHU again with referral to an optician if deemed necessary. This will be repeated at regular intervals or as soon as practicable after a DSE user has made a request.
15. Where test results indicate that vision is defective at the relevant intermediate distance the user will be informed and referred on to the approved optician for a full sight test.
16. Staff whose work will require the use of safety glasses will also undergo a vision test within OHU and if necessary referral on to the approved optician.

DURING EMPLOYMENT

17. All operational staff as part of their statutory 3 yearly medical will undertake a vision test: with referral to an optician should they subsequently fall below the accepted visual standards for the fire ground or they have/report concerns regarding their visual standards in fire ground situations. The vision test will include assessment at intermediate distance (DSE User). Staff who carry out LGV or PCV driving must undergo the statutory medicals required for Group 2 licence, carried out by either Occupational Health or their own GP. This medical is to the DVLA standard and is carried out at five-yearly intervals after the age of forty-five and annually after the age of sixty-five.
18. All staff that drive fleet vehicles are able to request a vision test every 2 years with referral to an optician if necessary. They should also be aware and comply with the guidance in the SYFR SOP Driving- Managing Occupational Road Risk
19. All staff covered by the DSE Regulations will be eligible for a vision test every 2 years with referral on if deemed necessary.
20. All remaining staff can request a vision tests through OHU.

INDIVIDUALS NOT ACHIEVING STANDARDS

21. Where it has been identified that a member of staff requires DSE or safety glasses, these will be ordered and purchased by SYFR.
22. Should an operational employee fail to meet the visual unaided standards for the fire ground by OHU; referral will be made to an approved optician for further assessment and measurement in order for Aids to Vision to be supplied.
23. On receipt of the results from the optician: a decision will be made, taking into

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account the individuals concerns, as to whether fire ground aids to vision are to be ordered.

24. If aids to vision are deemed necessary 2 pairs of fire ground glasses and 2 pairs of BA inserts will be ordered by the OHU. All ancillary equipment (frame, BA mask bags etc) along with instructions for use will also be provided.
25. Should a member of staff who fulfils the DSE requirements fail to meet acceptable standards; they will be referred for a vision test at the opticians. Where the optician feels they need glasses for near or far vision as well as VDU (intermediate distance) the employee must fund their own glasses. However, if the vision at both near and far distance is acceptable and does not need correction but for intermediate distance they do, then the organisation will provide and bear the cost of one pair of VDU glasses.
26. All staff that drive for the organisation including their own vehicles will be entitled to both an eye assessment within the OHU and a referral to the opticians if deemed necessary, the cost being borne by the organisation but provision of any glasses required to meet the driving standards must be borne by the individual. Staff driving LGV do not need to wear safety glasses/aids to vision but must be able to satisfy DSA regulations for LGV driving. All staff should be aware and comply with the Guidance in the SYFR SOP Driving- Managing Occupational Road Risk
27. Employees requiring reading glasses to see map books etc. are able to wear their own glasses whilst in the vehicle, but these should not be used on the fire ground.
28. Any support staff who require prescription glasses and where risk assessment has identified that safety glasses are required will be referred to the optician safety glasses to their prescription will be provided funded by the organisation.

SUN GLASSES AND NIGHT VISION GLASSES

29. When deemed necessary for driving, employees own sun/night vision glasses may be worn but operational staff must not wear sun glasses on the fire ground, except when operating the ALP, or in the case of Instructors the use of anti glare glasses when undertaking water rescue training is allowed. In these cases the glasses will be provided by the organisation.

CONTACT LENSES

30. Soft disposable contact lenses may be worn on the fire ground by operational staff.
31. However employees opting to wear contact lenses must ensure that they have also been issued with prescription fire ground glasses and BA inserts, which must be carried in case of an emergency.

EYE CONDITIONS OR INJURY

32. Should any employee develop an eye condition or sustain an injury to their eyes they will be assessed by the OHNA or the MO to ascertain whether they are able to

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continue in their current post, whether adjustments are required or their post modified.

ROLES

33. Occupational Health (OH) will:

- Provide initial visual screening of employees' eyes with a suitable vision test for pre- employment, on commencement, or on a 2 yearly/3 yearly basis dependant on the employees' role
- Will refer if necessary to an approved external optician
- Will order necessary aids to vision for dispatch to the individual
- Will arrange for upgrades or repairs as necessary
- Will keep copies of results in individual's confidential OH records.

34. Opticians will:

- Provide OH with written results and prescriptions for all staff referred to them
- Will supply as per arrangements any safety or VDU glasses required for staff

35. External Providers will:

- Provide on order 2 pairs of BA inserts and 2 pairs of fire ground glasses as per prescription supplied to them – including all necessary extra's e.g. A frames, cleaning cloths, cases
- Upgrade, repair or replace glasses as necessary.

36. Individuals will:

- Contact OH if they have concerns regarding their vision, even if not routinely due
- Attend appointments as scheduled with both OH and Opticians if required
- Ensure completed forms are sent to the OHU after opticians appointments
- Use and wear any aids to vision provided as instructed
- Take care of any aids to vision – not tamper with any safety features and should an accident occur inform OH as soon as practicably possible in order that a repair or replacement can be attended to
- Attend only opticians contracted to SYFR – staff should have first attended OH for

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a consultation and assessment as the organisation is unable to reimburse any individual who attends and pays for a vision test or prescription without prior approval from OH.

37. Managers will:

- Ensure employees issued with aids to vision use them correctly.

**If you require any further guidance on this document, please contact
Human Resources / Occupational Health Unit**