



# ***ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS***

## **Information Guide**



**South Yorkshire  
FIRE & RESCUE**

# CONTENTS

What are on-call firefighters?	3
Who can be an on-call firefighter?	4
Our on-call fire stations	5
What's the commitment?	6
What's in it for me?	7
What about my current employer?	8
The impact on your family life	9
The selection process	10
Begin your journey	12



"On-call firefighters represent the pinnacle of public service- local people serving neighbours, colleagues and friends right in the heart of their community. They are central to us providing professional fire cover to the people of South Yorkshire."

Alex Johnson,  
Chief Fire Officer



"Few careers provide you with the benefits of being an on-call firefighter, from unmatched levels of teamwork and camaraderie to life skills which will set you apart from others. If your current job leaves you needing more- on-call firefighting is probably the career for you."

Andrew Strelczenie,  
Head of Emergency  
Response

# WHAT ARE ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS?

An on-call firefighter is someone employed by a fire and rescue service who is 'on-call' to respond to a range of emergencies and to engage with their community. They respond from home, or another place of work, where they have everyday lives and jobs – until their pager sounds and they become professional firefighters.

Put into more general terms, an on-call firefighter could be classed as a part-time firefighter. Part-time or not, though, they are fully trained and experienced people on the front line, saving lives and protecting people. They are exceptional individuals and there is nothing 'part-time' about their commitment.

Our on-call staff come from all areas of the community. For example, they could be stay at home parents, in full or part-time employment, working for themselves, studying at college or university or not currently employed. They are paid for their services, receive thorough training and are taught all they need to know about emergency situations.



## How does it work?

As previously stated, our on-call staff are professional firefighters given full training. The difference between being on-call and wholetime, though, is that on-call staff respond from home or another place of work when their pager sounds. Much like a part-time job, they commit to certain hours and get paid for them.

As an on-call firefighter you would carry your pager when you are classed as 'available' to attend incidents. Then, when an emergency call comes into our control room, a message is sent to your pager by our control operators. Once your pager is activated you must get to your station within five minutes – by car, bike or any other legal and safe means.

## Why do you have on-call staff?

On-call firefighters are a vital part of today's fire and rescue service. They provide an effective, efficient service that gives emergency cover to more than 90 percent of the United Kingdom.

Within South Yorkshire, we have on-call firefighters at stations right across the county. Some provide fire cover to more rural areas, such as Penistone and Stocksbridge. Others help strengthen the fire cover we offer in more built-up areas, such as Dearne and Birley Moor.

## WHO CAN BE AN ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER?

There are lots of people who can be on-call firefighters – they just don't know it. The first criteria is that you must be at least 18 years of age, when your training course starts, with a good all-round level of fitness. There is no upper age limit.

Importantly, to be an on-call firefighter you need to **work or live within a close distance of an on-call fire station** as you must be able to get there within five minutes of receiving a pager alert, driving at normal road speeds.

As we can't predict when you will be called out, you should have the ability to be flexible in your work or home-based activities. When your pager sounds, you will have to stop whatever you are doing and report immediately to your fire station.

As part of the application process you will need to agree a minimum commitment of dedicated time, which could be during the night, at weekends, during the day or a combination of all. Additionally, you must be able to give periods of time in the first few years to undergo essential training.

The hours you commit can be during other work time – providing your employer supports this. Many employers are prepared to release on-call firefighters from their workplace from time to time when their pager alerts them to attend an emergency incident.

There are then a range of personal skills you will need to be a good firefighter.

Courage, understanding, reliability, flexibility, determination, self-motivation, commitment, enthusiasm, the ability to work within a team and of course good communication.

Above all, you will need a real desire to make a positive difference, serve your local community and support our mission to make South Yorkshire safer and stronger – all in line with South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue's values and behaviours.

We have a checklist of non-negotiables that we ask of everyone before they apply. This might be a useful way to tell if an on-call role is for you. To be eligible, you must:

- be eligible to work in the United Kingdom
- be 18 years of age by the time your training course starts
- be able to attend your fire station within 5 minutes
- be physically fit to meet the requirements of the role and medical examination
- be able to demonstrate reading, writing and numerical skills to meet the requirements
- be committed to maintaining and developing new skills

Finally, as an Equal Opportunities employer, we actively encourage interest from all sections of the community and positively welcome applications from women, people with disabilities and members of black and ethnic minority groups who are currently under-represented in our workforce.

## OUR ON-CALL FIRE STATIONS



- **Askern** – Moss Road, Askern, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 0JX
- **Birley Moor** – Moor Valley, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S20 5FA
- **Cudworth** – Tumbling Lane, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S71 5SA
- **Dearne** – Manvers Way, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 5DN
- **Penistone** – Sheffield Road, Penistone, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S36 6HN
- **Rossington** – West End Lane, Rossington, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN11 0PQ
- **Stocksbridge** – Manchester Road, Stocksbridge, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S36 1DH

# WHAT'S THE COMMITMENT?

## Training

The first commitment you must make is to your training. This is comparable to that of a wholetime firefighter and the first 12 months, during which you will be carrying out basic training, will be the biggest demand on your time. In total you will be expected to complete 30 days of training within roughly a one year period, covering a range of things:

- Introduction, pumps and ladders – seven days from Saturday to Friday
- Breathing apparatus phase one – five days including a weekend
- Breathing apparatus phase two – three days over a weekend
- Fire tactics – four days over two weekends
- Road traffic collision – four days over two weekends
- Hazardous materials – one day on a weekend
- Working at height – two days over a weekend
- Trauma care – four days over two weekends

You will then be required to attend training sessions (commonly held in the evening) each week for four to six hours at your fire station for essential training and maintenance of fire and rescue equipment. This is standard for the duration of your career.

There could also be times when you may need to attend additional training sessions and training courses to acquire new, essential knowledge and skills. All of this training is paid.

## Availability

The next commitment you make is to being available for incidents. When we talk about availability, we mean how many hours you agree to be on-call and when those hours are (during the day and/or evenings and/or weekends). We ask that you are able to provide 50 hours of availability a week and, whilst you will not be working for all these hours, this is when we pay you to be available for calls. Lots of these hours can be done whilst you sleep!

Being on-call doesn't stop you from going about your normal life but, if there is an incident where your help is needed, you will need to drop everything and get to the fire station within five minutes. Staff on your local station are the best people to speak to about how this works.

## Incidents

The number of incidents that on-call firefighters attend varies between community fire stations - you could be called out only two or three times a week for an hour at a time. You can visit our website – [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk) – to see more details about the average salary and number of calls at each station.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

The job of being a firefighter is quite unique. It can be unpredictable, exciting and rewarding – you will get the satisfaction and respect that comes with providing a crucial service to your local community as part of a tight knit, professional team.

You will learn new skills along the way such as firefighting, wearing breathing apparatus, road traffic collision procedures and fire safety. There are opportunities to learn other transferable skills, too, such as leadership, large goods vehicle (LGV) driving, first aid and trauma care and health and safety qualifications.

Additionally, once you have successfully completed your initial training, there may be further opportunities to gain specialist skills and qualifications such as specialist operations or appliances, training, coaching and mentoring and project management.

You will be part of an organisation that is very visible to the public and, as such, upholds the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion. You will also have promotion opportunities as your career progresses, with scope to become one of our highly trained incident commanders.

Joining a fire and rescue service is a great way of meeting new people – both the people you work with and those in the community who you help. There's a special kind of bond amongst firefighters that comes from working together as a team in conditions that are sometimes dangerous and emotive. This helps bind the team together in a way few other jobs can.

As an on-call firefighter you will receive pay based on your hours of availability, plus an hourly rate when you attend incidents, weekly training sessions, training courses, community safety activities and carry out equipment maintenance. Average annual salaries are detailed on our website – [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk).

### Holiday

You will be entitled to four weeks paid leave, and after five years' service, this entitlement increases to five weeks.

### Pension

From the start of your employment you will be able to contribute to a firefighter's pension scheme, which the service will also contribute to.



# WHAT ABOUT MY CURRENT EMPLOYER?

It's 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. We have developed a specific guide for employers which can be found on our website – [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk).

Ultimately though, on-call firefighters are highly trained professionals and you can add value to the organisation you work for, at no additional cost to them. There are a wide range of benefits, including:

- Recognition from South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue which can be used to promote their business and demonstrate corporate social responsibility
- Additional personal skills for you such as leadership, teamwork, quick thinking, problem solving, taking responsibility, communication and keeping calm
- Emergency skills for you including incident command, first aid and trauma care, dealing with hazardous materials, as well as health and fire safety knowledge
- Education, qualifications and new skills – our on-call firefighters are encouraged to gain nationally recognised qualifications that are often transferable
- Improved fitness, health and wellbeing – we are committed to supporting your physical and mental health meaning you are fitter and healthier

- Large goods vehicle training – many on-call firefighters are trained to drive fire engines which means you will get a LGV license

## Being self employed

Some on-call firefighters are self-employed. At present we employ mechanics, accountants, bricklayers, plumbers, project managers, shop owners and more.

Many of these people have found that being an on-call firefighter has a positive impact on their business. This is because they have better links with local businesses and their communities and they are well known and trusted by the people in their area.

As a service we do have to promote and adhere to rules and regulations around driving time so, if in your line of work you drive vehicles such as LGVs or buses, we will work with you to ensure you have proper rest periods between your primary and on-call employment.

## THE IMPACT ON YOUR FAMILY LIFE

Without the support and encouragement of their partners and families, on-call firefighters would struggle to carry out their role.

The nature of the role does mean that occasionally the lives of partners and families can be affected – especially when pagers alert in the middle of the night!

We think it's important to be up front and honest about the realities of this rewarding, yet challenging role.

### The main disadvantages to being on-call are:

- It can be difficult to plan spur-of-the-moment activities
- You can be called out in the middle of the night
- You can't be relied on to be a sole-carer or childminder when on-call

### There are lots of benefits to the job, though:

- + You will serve and protect the community in which you live
- + You will be a positive role model within the community
- + You will have increased confidence and develop new skills
- + You and your family will become part of the wider SYFR family
- + You will earn extra money



# THE SELECTION PROCESS

The recruitment and selection of on-call firefighter is dependent on the applicant living and/or working within five minutes of an on-call fire station. The selection process is designed to assess essential criteria and personal attributes required for the role of firefighter, including physical ability, awareness and mental ability. Physical assessments will take place at our training centre. It takes around six months to complete the selection process, with recruitment for on-call firefighters open March and September of each year.

## There are seven stages to the process:

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 progress you onto the on-line tests.

2

**Online tests** – There are five on-line tests to complete. Eligibility, Situational Judgement and Behavioural styles are all carried out at home. Numerical and verbal reasoning tests are carried out at your local fire station. These tests are timed. You will be sent some practice tests to get you in the swing of things.

3

**Fitness test** – You will need to pass either the bleep test to level 8.7 or the 'Chester Walk' test. These are usually carried out at your local fire station.



Please note, our firefighters require a certain level of eyesight to enable them to carry out their role and must meet a required standard of vision when applying to join the fire service. Eyesight doesn't have to be perfect to be a firefighter, but applicants are required to undertake an eye sight assessment as part of the medical.

For safety reasons, only soft contact lenses are acceptable. Should you have any doubts regarding your eyesight we suggest that you book an appointment with your optician and take the information provided to get their opinion.

4

**Practical tests** –

We use six national firefighter selection tests that you can view at [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk). These include a ladder lift, ladder climb, equipment assembly, casualty evacuation, enclosed space and equipment run.

5

**Interview** – You will be interviewed by the station manager, watch manager and a representative from our human resources team.

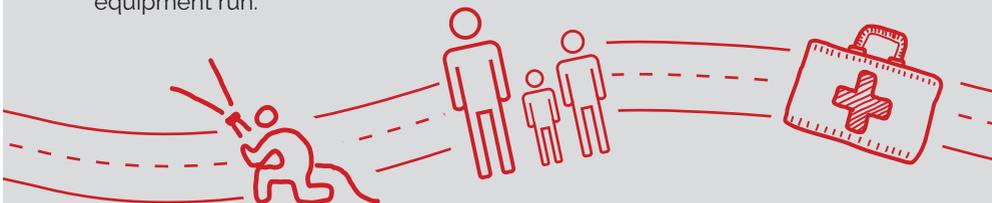
6

**Medical** – You will undergo a service medical that checks your blood pressure and pulse, your height, weight and body mass index, your hearing, your vision, your lung function and a drug and alcohol test.

7

**Pre-employment checks** –

We will pay for an enhanced check from the Disclosure and Barring Service and ask for references.



Further information can be obtained within the On-Call Firefighter Candidate Information Pack at [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk).



## ***BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY***

There are various ways you can start your journey towards becoming an on-call firefighter:

- Visit or call your local station
- Contact us via our various social media channels
- Call our HR recruitment line – 0114 253 2811
- Visit our website and register an interest – [www.syfire.gov.uk](http://www.syfire.gov.uk)