

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

ON CALL FIREFIGHTER

GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

We are *SFRS*
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CAREERS

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Blue Light Together



WHAT WE DO

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) are the world's fourth largest fire and rescue service committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

You may think that our role is straightforward – to prevent and control fires but, we do so much more than that. We respond to many different emergency incidents including road traffic collisions, rope rescue, water rescue, hazardous materials and flooding as well as assisting our partner agencies to keep our communities safe.

THE ROLE OF AN ON CALL FIREFIGHTER

On call firefighters are a vital part of the SFRS, providing a professional emergency fire and rescue service in remote and rural communities across Scotland. We rely on these dedicated crews to keep Scotland safe.

There are 356 fire stations in Scotland; 240 of which are Retained Stations; 23 are Wholtime/Retained Stations and 42 are Volunteer Stations (inc. 9 Community Response Units, located within the Scottish Highlands).



WHY EMPLOYERS ARE IMPORTANT TO US

Our on call firefighters are invaluable to the SFRS and we rely on the partnerships we build with local employers who allow their staff to be released from their normal work arrangements.

We understand that every business is different. We know that releasing an employee to become an on call firefighter is an important decision. It could not happen without your agreement and you need to know how it would work for you to make an informed decision and feel confident about supporting your community in this way.

We have developed this guide to help employers understand more about the role, the benefits and the reality of what impact it will have on their business. We appreciate that they are first and foremost your staff member but are available on call for the SFRS. If you need any further clarity, please contact SFRS.OnCallFirefighterRecruitment@firescotland.gov.uk.

THE EMPLOYER COMMITMENT

Our aim is to ensure that everyone is fully aware of the commitment required.

We encourage on call firefighter applicants to discuss the potential impact of being on call on their primary employer and that they discuss this with you at any early stage.

We would encourage you to think about the approaches you could take to support your employee in fulfilling this role - consider the number of hours they are looking to commit to, and establish any business impact. You may have sufficient flexibility to enable your employee to be released at any time, or you may not be able to commit to the consistent hours. It is important that you consider how attending incidents outside of their working hours may affect them, and in turn you. By having these considerations, you can make a more informed decision on supporting your employee.

Your employee will be required to complete our recruitment process, which could mean time away from their work commitments. Generally, they will need one day to attend for fitness and practical selection tests and a further day to attend a medical appointment, should this fall within their normal work hours.

Once employed, they will require to attend 2 training courses to gain essential core skills. With your support, we aim to have trainees complete these courses within the first 12 to 24 weeks of employment;

- a 2-week initial basic training course,
- a 2-week Breathing Apparatus (BA) Training Course.

They will require to attend the weekly training session and will undertake further training over the following three years. It is the individual's responsibility to keep you up to date with their training dates, especially if it has the potential to impact on their primary employment with you i.e. they require to take leave.

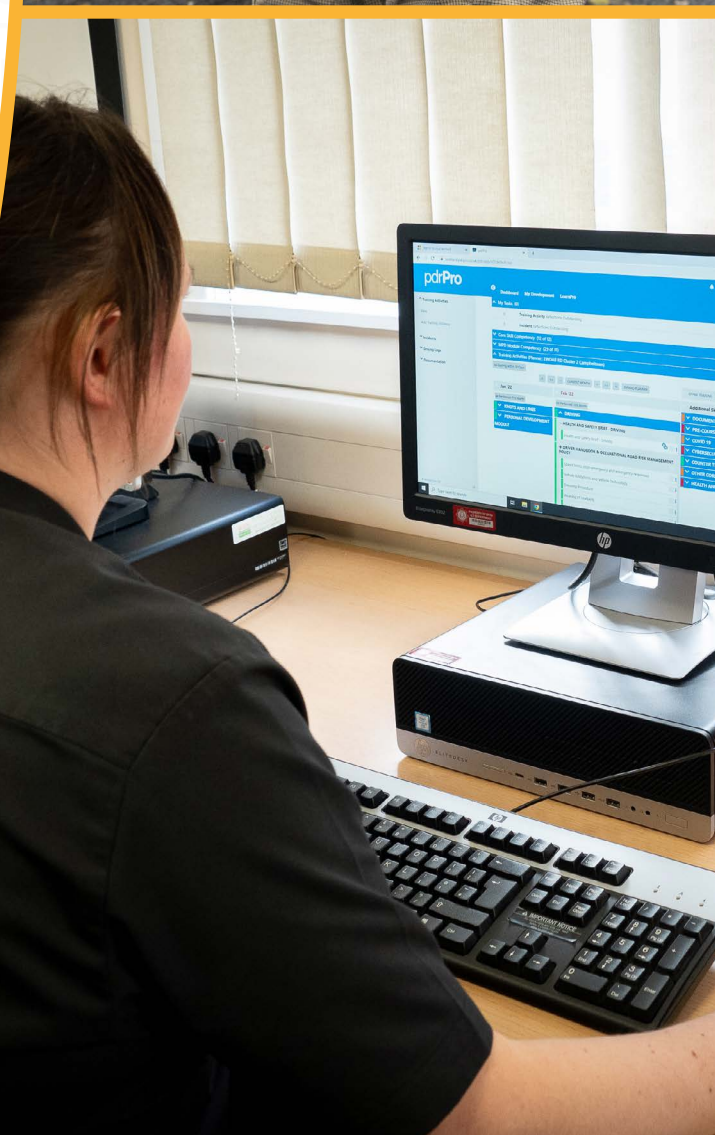
With the changing nature of society, one of the main problems we encounter is that many people live and work a significant distance apart. As a result, many on call community fire stations are well crewed during the weekends and evenings, but not during the day. This can lead to the fire appliance being unavailable to attend an incident in its own area and whilst a fire appliance (from another area) will always respond, time is always of the essence in an emergency. Allowing one of your employees to respond during the day could make the difference.

BENEFITS

Businesses have found that the benefits gained by releasing their staff to be on call firefighters have far outweighed any potential inconvenience caused by their employee responding to an emergency.

On call firefighters are highly trained professionals who can bring added value to your organisation at no cost to you. They gain many useful transferable skills which could be useful in any workplace. These can include:

- **Enhanced Personal skills:** Such as team work, initiative, taking responsibility, communication skills and keeping calm in difficult situations. These skills will assist them in coping with the challenges in a working environment.
- **Emergency skills:** On call firefighters are trained on an on-going basis to maintain and develop first aid and trauma care skills. These skills will assist your business on health and safety, first aid and fire related matters.
- **Improved fitness health and wellbeing:** SFRS are committed to supporting their staff in both physical and mental health. An on call firefighter should be fitter and healthier in both workplaces.
- **Motivated, committed employees:** On call firefighters are committed to the community they serve. They are more likely to be dedicated, caring and long serving members of staff.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to release my employee to attend emergencies if it doesn't suit the company on that day?

No. On call firefighters use our electronic availability system to book available meaning they can be part of the emergency response at that time. If they say they are available, they will be expected to respond. Therefore, it is essential to agree when you have capacity to release staff before they log as available. Your needs as the primary employer will always be a priority.

In most instances your employee should share their proposed availability with you on a regular basis.

How often will my employee be required to attend emergency incidents during work time, and how long for?

SFRS can provide a copy of the annual report of the incidents which we attend in your area. While we are unable to break this down into person specific information, it will allow you to consider the likely implications for your employee and yourself, in terms of incident activity. Please request this through your local station.

Some on call firefighters opt to complete their hours outside of their normal work time i.e. overnight or on weekends. This would mean as a primary employer you wouldn't have to release them to work with us. However, they must declare secondary employment to their primary employer under the Working Time Regulations.

What will it cost me?

There are no direct costs to supporting an employee to be an on call firefighter. However, there may be some indirect costs to your business but we hope the benefits outweigh any inconvenience.

It is important to establish the approach you will take with your employee, you should establish whether any absence is paid or unpaid and confirm this with your employee.

What if my employee is out all night at an incident and is unfit for work the next day? Am I expected to give them paid leave if this is the case?

It is less likely for on call firefighters to remain at incidents for a long period of time. Crews are normally relieved after four hours but even this type of incident is an exceptional occurrence.

What type of training will my employee receive?

All SFRS firefighters go through comprehensive training and development programmes to keep them, their colleagues and the public safe.

They will develop personal and professional skills, certificates and experiences in; risk management, first aid, trauma care, health and safety, LGV training, communication, team working, leadership, self-discipline, all of which they can bring benefits back to the workplace.

How long will my employee be required to take time away from work for training?

On call firefighters require to attend an initial basic training course (10 days - Monday to Friday), followed by a Breathing Apparatus (BA) Training Course (10 days - Monday to Friday).

Throughout their employment, they attend weekly training sessions to maintain competence in various skill sets.

SFRS aim to reduce the impact on the primary employer by providing any further training during evenings and weekends thereby reducing the time required for training during weekdays.

In total, within the first year, it is likely that your employee may need to take 4 weeks off from work to complete their basic risk critical training.

Are there any restrictions/implications to me or my business whilst employing an on call firefighter?

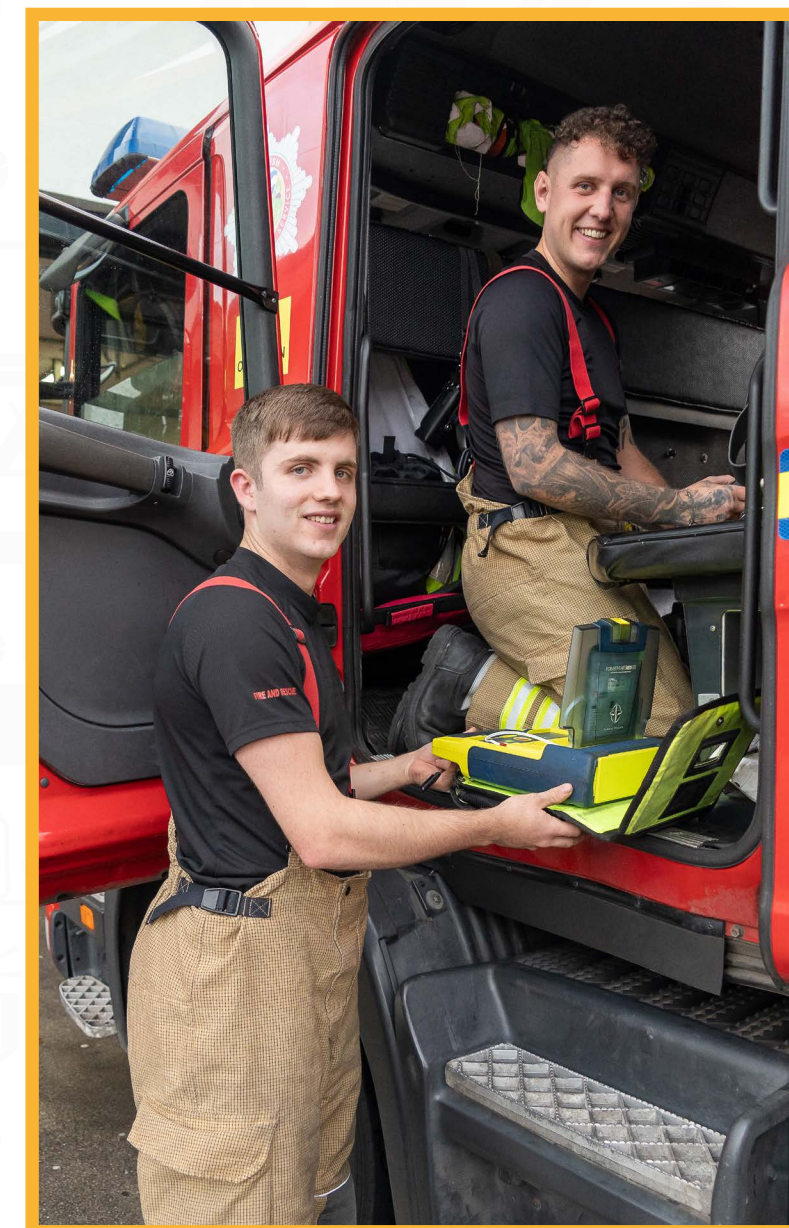
SFRS, like all employers, must abide by legislation i.e. Health and Safety, Working Time Directive, Road Transport Directive etc.

Depending on the number of hours on call firefighters are contracted with their primary employer. They may have to sign an opt-out agreement under the Working Time Directive.

Where an on call firefighter is employed by a haulage company or drives a truck for work, the implications of the EC Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006) must be considered.

My employees are often on call for business. How would this work?

They cannot be on call with SFRS if they are on call with you. As the primary employer, you will always have priority.





CAREERS

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We hope this guide provides you with enough information to determine if this is something that you could consider to support your local community.

If you need any further information, please do contact us at **[SFRS.OnCallFirefighterRecruitment.gov.uk](https://www.sfrs.scot.nhs.uk/OnCallFirefighterRecruitment)**

www.firescotland.gov.uk



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