



On-call firefighter Information for employers







Contents

Who are on-call firefighters?	3
What is an on-call firefighter?	4
Could you release an employee?	5
Work-Life Balance	6
Bringing you value	7
Frequently asked questions	8
Useful links	10
I'm interested – who do I contact?	10

Who are on-call firefighters

On-call firefighters could be full-time parents, office staff, manual workers or, indeed, any profession you can think of. But, while on-call firefighters are ordinary men and women, they do an extraordinary job for the UK fire and rescue service and they are integral to keeping their local fire stations crewed and protecting their local communities.

On-call firefighters provide emergency cover to over 90 per cent of the UK. There are over 14,000 on-call firefighters in England, protecting our small towns and rural communities.

On-call firefighters are invaluable to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. They head to their local fire station only when needed in an emergency. They are paid and are trained to deal with emergency situations ranging from putting out fires in buildings to providing emergency care to those who are suffering as a result of an emergency incident.



What is an on-call firefighter?

An on-call firefighter is someone who responds to a range of Fire and Rescue service jobs, these range from emergency calls, working at open days, carrying out work within their local communities and acting as an ambassador for the fire service. When they get a call, they become professional firefighters. Full training is provided on an ongoing basis therefore, previous experience is not required.

An on-call firefighter could be called out two or three times a week, for a few hours at a time. The on-call hours are based around people's availability and other commitments.

Being an on-call firefighter means individuals becoming part of a close knit team, gaining a new range of skills, earn additional money which fits around existing jobs and commitments, whilst making a difference within the local community.

On-call firefighters who are planning to respond to incidents while at their place of work may be required to have a signed agreement from their employers confirming that they can be released from work when called. Therefore, it is important that employers understand exactly what the role involves, and the commitment required. We will be able to supply data to support this.



Could you release an employee?



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.

As an employer you may have sufficient flexibility to enable staff to be released to attend emergency incidents at any time when someone is at work. However, we do realise that some employers do not have the capacity to commit to consistent hours for release out of their primary role. Your local fire and rescue service will be able to discuss the alternative possible options available to support on-call firefighters in your employment. For example, flexibility to enable on-call firefighters to attend scheduled training.

They are first and foremost your staff member, but are available on-call, to help and protect the local community when needed.

This information guide aims to provide you with enough information to decide if this is something you could consider doing for your community. We can discuss this further with you if you need more information.

Work-Life Balance

For most on-call firefighters, the best part of the role is combining an exciting and rewarding contribution to their community with the challenges of their primary role.

UK fire and rescue services are committed to offering on-call firefighters flexible contracts and working hours wherever possible to ensure a healthy work and life balance.

They would get some important personal benefits too. In return for their commitment, they will:

- Be paid an annual retainer and call-out fees – many on-call firefighters earn between £5000 and £7000 per year.
- Receive a wide range of training in how to problem solve, assess risk, and work systematically as part of a team and individually.
- Receive first aid and trauma care training.
- Can also be trained in risk assessment and health and safety.
- Forge important links with the community.
- Have opportunities for further educational qualifications and skill set.



Bringing you value

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 such as first aid and trauma care, added problem solving and risk assessing skills.

- **Personal skills:** such as leadership, team work, quick thinking, problem solving, taking responsibility, communication skills and keeping calm in difficult situations. Being a firefighter also requires commitment and self-discipline.
- **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. They are trained on an ongoing basis to maintain and develop these skills.
- **Educational 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 employers through better productivity levels and improved motivation.
- **Improved fitness health and wellbeing:** fire and rescue services are committed to supporting their staff in both physical and mental health, giving the employer of an on-call firefighter an employee who should be fitter and healthier in both workplaces.
- **Motivated, committed employees:** on-call firefighters tend to be committed to the community they serve, which means that they are more likely to be dedicated, caring and long serving members of staff.
- **Highly trained and skilled employees:** on-call firefighters must be able to deal with a whole range of situations. They never

quite know what they might find when they respond to an emergency, so they are more likely to be able to cope with the ups and downs of working life.

- **Large Goods Vehicle Training:** many on-call firefighters are trained to drive fire engines, which includes obtaining a Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) licence. They also receive Emergency Fire Engine Driver training this is like an advanced driving test in that it raises their awareness of road conditions.

Additional benefits of working with Cheshire Fire and Rescue could include:

- **Certification that employers can put up on their website showing they support Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.**
- **A certificate/chapter that can be displayed at the office of the employer showing their commitment to the community**
- **Discounted courses at the Service's training centre for supporting businesses.**

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

Because on-call firefighters aren't based at fire stations but operate on standby, they're only called out when needed.

They are first and foremost your staff member but are available on-call for the fire and rescue service, to help and protect the local community when needed.

For more information about the role of on-call firefighters please see contact Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on www.cheshirefire.gov.uk.

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to release staff to attend emergencies if it doesn't suit the company on that day?

No. Employees are only available for duty when they book on-call as available. If they say they are available, they will be expected to respond to the call. Therefore, it is essential to agree when you have capacity to release staff before they log in as available. Your needs as the primary employer will always be a priority.

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. It's up to you how you deal with the on-call firefighter absence, some employers do not pay the employee when they are absent, others expect them to make their hours up later. This could be if you have to fill in while your employee responds to an emergency call out or attends training; but we hope the benefits will outweigh the inconvenience.

Will training take place in working hours?

Most training takes place on weekday evenings and at weekends. However, initial training may be a consolidated period encompassing weekday daytimes, usually covering a 15 day period. Any training that must be completed during business hours is planned well in advance to allow employees to make arrangements with employers.

What support is available should I have any questions?

Each on-call station has a management team who will be your point of contact and help support you through the early days of appointing your employee, as well as providing ongoing support and assistance as and when required.

What happens if my employee has been at an incident all night, will they still be in work the next day? If not, am I expected to give them paid leave?

We would not expect this to be a frequent issue, but this is something you would need to clarify with your employee before you agree to release them for on-call duty. If you don't want to pay them for any absence due to the fire and rescue service, then that is your decision.

How long will my employee be away when called out on duty?

Typically, on-call firefighters are called out two to three hours per week, usually for about an hour (over 24 hour periods, some calls may be when they are not working for you). We can provide specific advice but essentially, it's a flexible arrangement, depending on the needs of your business. On-call firefighters can work with the fire and rescue service to agree the cover they wish to provide. Firefighters working the on-call system agree to be available for a certain number of hours. They carry a pager or alerter device and must be able to get to the fire station within a specific time following an emergency call-out during their available hours. Rest assured, your needs and requirements as the primary employer will always have priority. UK fire and rescue services are committed to offering on-call firefighters flexible contracts and working hours to ensure a healthy work/life balance.

Frequently asked questions

What sort of training and development will my staff undergo as part of their role as a firefighter?

All firefighters go through a rigorous training and development programme which is provided by all UK fire and rescue services. They will develop skills in risk management, communication, team working, leadership, self-discipline, first aid, trauma care, health and safety, and much more, and they will bring this training and experience back to their workplace.

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

Firefighters must be well trained if they are going to work safely and effectively in the wide range of operational incidents they have to tackle. We recognise that some on-call firefighters might need to take time off from their primary employment to undertake training. UK fire and rescue services aim to keep the impact on the primary employer to a minimum by providing basic training at fire stations on drill nights and during weekends, reducing the time required for training during weekdays. However, during the first two years of employment on-call firefighters will have to attend essential training of which some will be during weekdays.

What if my employee gets injured while at an incident?

On-call firefighters are trained to a high standard before they become fully operational, so this is a rare occurrence. In the event this does happen, the fire and rescue service offers support services to help firefighters get fit again if they do get injured. For example, local occupational health services and comprehensive physical and psychological rehabilitation arrangements with the Firefighters Charity. All firefighters undergo regular fitness and medical assessments to assure their continual health, safety and wellbeing.

Are there any implications for me or my business as a result of employing an on-call firefighter?

Like all employers, UK fire and rescue services have to comply with current legislation such as the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Working Time and Road Transport Regulations. Depending on the number of hours they are contracted to their primary employer, on-call firefighters may have to sign an opt-out agreement under the Working Time Regulations. If you are a haulage company or your employee drives a truck for work, both you and your employee should be aware of the implications of the EC Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006). Details of any legislation and its impact can be obtained from your local fire and rescue service.

What benefits do I get as an employer for releasing a member of staff to be an on-call firefighter?

The main benefits for employers are listed above. However, many find the biggest reward is the knowledge that their company is undertaking a vital role in protecting the local community. By allowing one of your employees to become an on-call firefighter you know you'll have made a difference every time they respond to an emergency, help save lives and protect people in your community.

Useful links



Visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/jobs/on-call-firefighter-recruitment



CheshireFRS



@CheshireFire



CheshireFRS

I'm interested – who do I contact?



Email: recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk



Call our recruitment team: **01606 36671**



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.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
Clemonds Hey, Oakmere Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2UA
T: 01606 868700

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk