

Employers' Information Pack

On-call firefighters



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

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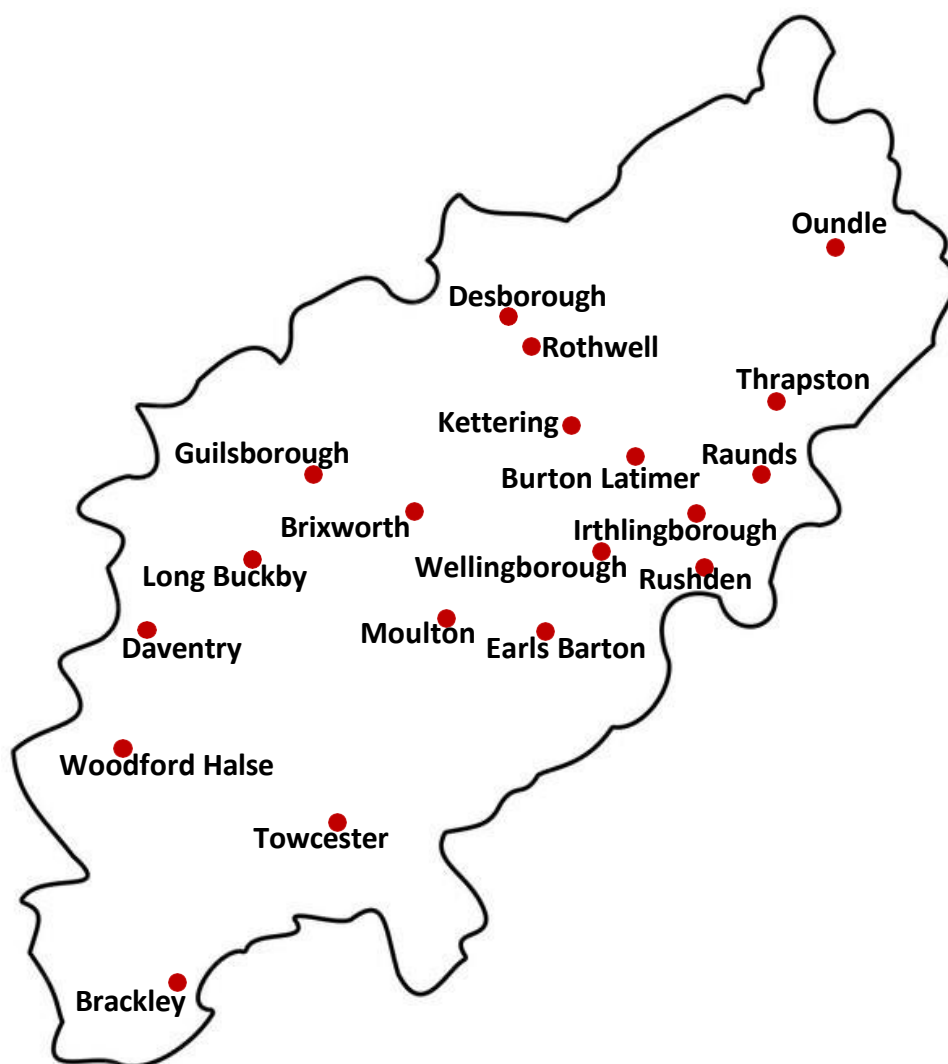


Introduction

This information pack is intended to provide you with an insight into the role of an on-call firefighter. It will also give you a realistic understanding of the benefits and impacts on your business, should you have an on-call firefighter within your staff.

On-call Station Locations

If your business or home are close to any of these on-call fire stations, you may rely on our on-call firefighters more than you think.



What are on-call firefighters?

In some areas of Northamptonshire, there are fewer emergency incidents than others - typically, only 1 or 2 incidents per week. It doesn't make economic sense for taxpayers' money to be spent on full time firefighters in these areas. Instead, Northamptonshire has fire stations crewed by on-call firefighters.

These firefighters are paid and trained members of staff who carry out their day just like anyone else; some work as landscapers, others are bakers, mechanics, factory workers, teachers, and carers. Some are retirees and others provide on-call availability from home. Any profession or circumstance you can think of could be the story of one of our on-call firefighters.

They carry a pager while they are on-call, which alerts them when a 999 call for the fire service is received in their local area. When this happens, they go to the fire station, change into their fire kit, and work together as a crew of professional firefighters, ready to handle any type of emergency.

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.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is committed to offering on-call firefighters flexible contracts and working hours wherever possible to ensure a healthy work and life balance.

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

- Be paid an annual retainer and call-out fees.
- Receive a 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.
- Be trained in risk assessment and health and safety.
- Forge important links with the community.
- Have opportunities for further educational qualifications and skill sets.

Did you know?

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service has a total of 22 fire stations. 14 of these are staffed exclusively by on-call firefighters and 5 have full-time crews supported by an on-call section.

On-call firefighters make up almost one half of all firefighters in Northamptonshire.

How do on-call firefighters already help my business?

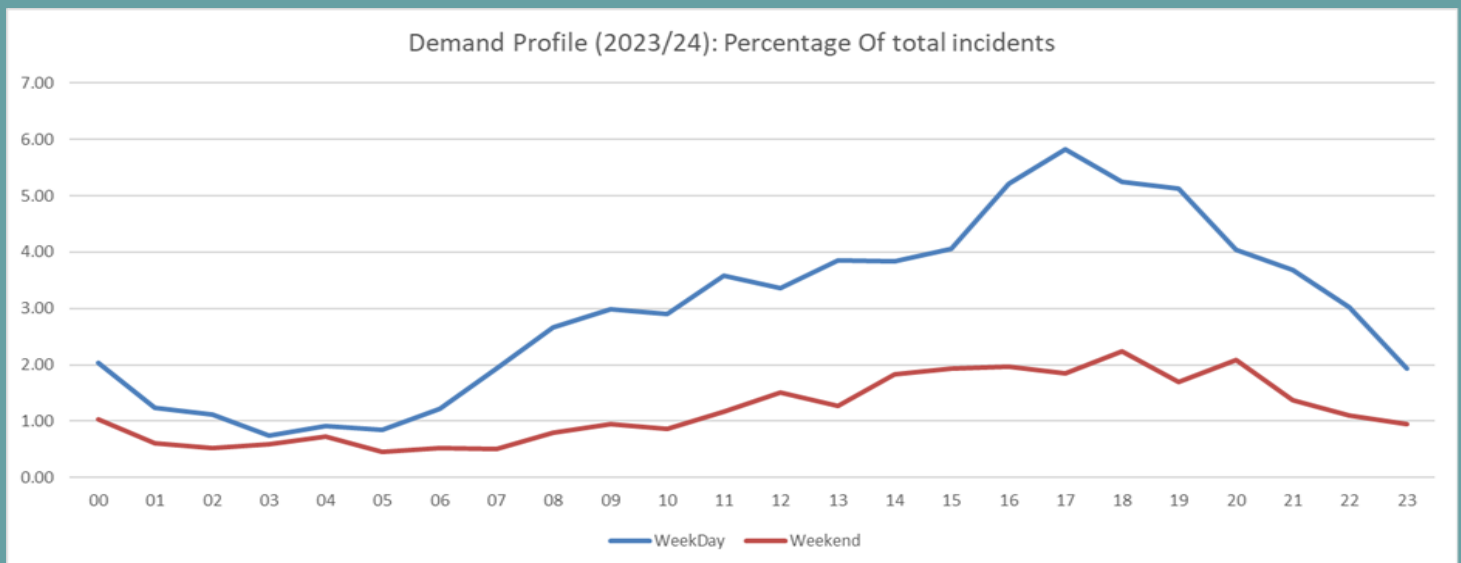
A large portion of firefighters' work is planning and prevention. You might have even had firefighters visit your business to perform site-specific risk information (SSRI) gathering. This allows them to understand the additional risks within their community and be better prepared to respond to an emergency there.

On-call firefighters know a lot about the places they work. Should the worst happen, and a fire occur at your business, a firefighter with working knowledge of the building is invaluable.

Have you ever considered what might happen if there was a fire at your business?

If you had a fire today, and your local fire station didn't have enough firefighters, the next available crew could take longer to arrive, putting your business and employees at greater risk, as well as those of neighbouring companies.

A crew of local, on-call firefighters could prevent an escalation of a fire, limiting its spread and damage, leading to a faster return to 'business-as-usual'.



As you can see from the graph above, over 50% of incidents requiring a fire engine in Northamptonshire occur between 7am and 7pm during the weekdays. Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is having difficulty keeping on-call fire engines fully crewed during those hours. One of the main reasons for this is on-call firefighters being unable to provide cover during their primary working hours.

By allowing staff to be on-call during daytime hours, you and your business will be positively contributing to the safety of your local community by helping us keep more of our fire engines available during peak demand.



How does it work?

Just because your staff are on-call during work, it doesn't mean they'll definitely be called out. They're just on standby to attend an incident should they be needed.

On-call firefighters agree to be available for a certain number of hours per week and carry a pager with them during these hours. When on-call, firefighters must remain within 8 minutes travel time of the fire station.

If they are on-call while at their primary employment, they leave work and travel to the fire station to attend the incident. On-call firefighters are encouraged to keep in contact with their employers during an incident (when it is safe to do so), so employers will know when it's likely to expect them back.

We are mindful of employers' needs and ensure our on-call firefighters consider their primary employment a priority – any on-call hours they can provide us are made in agreement with their managers.

Employer Benefits

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

Personal Skills

Self-discipline, teamwork, quick-thinking initiative, problem-solving, communicating quickly and effectively, and keeping calm in challenging situations.

First Aid

Firefighters learn first aid to a high standard, including use of a defibrillator and trauma care. This can help keep other employees safe, but also contributes to legal obligations for first aid cover, cutting the cost of training.

Manual Handling

All firefighters receive manual handling training from RoSPA-trained instructors (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). This teaches them the correct principles to be adopted when lifting or moving items to prevent injury.

Health and Safety

Risk assessment and hazard perception are all part of training for firefighters. This enables them to support health and safety officers in meeting their obligations and improve the safety of all your staff.

On-call managers undergo an IOSH course (the chartered body for Health & Safety Professionals) in risk assessment and health and safety.

Large Goods Vehicle (LGV)

Firefighters can receive LGV training to drive a fire engine. They also receive emergency response driver training (ERDT), which is like an advanced driving test, in that it raises their awareness of road conditions and anticipation.

Motivation

Staff that are able to fulfil their ambitions and potential are happier and more productive at work. Firefighters are highly motivated to carry out their role and this motivation will help them in everything that they do.

Commitment

Being a firefighter takes commitment; no one takes the role lightly. Committed firefighters are committed people.

Leadership

We consider all our firefighters as leaders. However, those that progress through managerial roles, will be given specific leadership and management development, providing them with skills and confidence to lead effectively.

Fitness and Wellbeing

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is committed to the physical and mental wellbeing of its staff, including 3-yearly medicals and an annual fitness test. This means they will be fitter and healthier in both workplaces.

Enhanced Reputation

Allowing your employees to become on-call firefighters shows your business:

- Is different from its rivals.
- Is involved in, and cares for, the needs of the community.
- Encourages the ambitions of its workforce.
- Shows sincere corporate social responsibility.

Primary Employment

We rely greatly on the partnerships we build with local employers, and their commitment to allowing their staff to be released during their normal working day.

We appreciate the disruption this could cause and so we aim to ensure everyone is fully aware of the commitment prior to agreeing for any staff to be released.

You will always be the primary employer and as such, have priority over the working time of your staff. We endeavour to explain to all potential and current on-call firefighters the impact being on call can have on their primary employment, and that this should be taken into consideration when making themselves available for duties.

Initial Training

Firefighters must be well trained, skilled, and knowledgeable if they're to work safely and effectively in the wide range of operational instance they are called upon to attend.

Each on-call firefighter attends 45 days of basic training in their first 6-8 months. This is a mixture of days, weekends, and evenings. Approximately 20 days are during the week (Mon-Fri). After this training, they become fully professional, operational firefighters.

You will be involved at every stage, ensuring that you have the dates for their training well in advance. We encourage our on-call recruits to take this training from their holiday entitlement, or as unpaid leave from their primary employer, to impact your business as little as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if an employee is out all night at an incident and is unfit for work the next day?

Firefighters no longer remain at incidents for long periods. It is recognised that extended periods of exertion can lead to accidents through tiredness and lack of concentration. At prolonged incidents, staff are relieved of their duties every four hours.

If my employee gets called out, will I know how long they will be gone for?

Unfortunately, it's not possible to predict how long each incident will last until a crew is there to assess the situation. However, an incident will see an on-call firefighter away for an average of 1 hour. When time allows, on-call firefighters can contact you to estimate a return time.

What if my employee gets injured at an incident?

Thankfully, this is a very rare occurrence. However, if this does happen, the service has policies in place for compensating on-call firefighters for any loss of earnings after Statutory Sick Pay.

Our employees are on-call already for my business. How would this work?

If you need your employee to be on-call for business reasons, then they would not be able to give us any hours while they are on-call for you. You will always be considered their primary employer.

What will it cost the business?

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. We hope the benefits will outweigh the inconvenience.

Find Out More

Becoming an employer of an on-call firefighter is a big step for any organisation, large or small. For this reason, we want to make sure that you have a realistic understanding of the commitments and benefits that this may pose for your business.

If you would like to find out more about becoming an employer of an on-call firefighter, contact the recruitment team on 01604 797000.

Our recruitment team will be able to discuss this further with you. We can potentially also put you in contact with existing employers of on-call firefighters so that you can be sure that this is the right step for your business.