



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

Having on-call firefighters work for you

A guide for employers

#BeOneOfUs

PASSIONATE ABOUT
CHANGING & SAVING LIVES

Welcome!



On-call firefighters are a vital part of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Responding to emergency calls from their place of work or home, on-call firefighters make up over two thirds of our operational workforce and, nationally, they provide efficient and effective emergency cover across more than 90% of the UK.

The on-call duty system is reliant on partners like you releasing staff to respond to emergencies when needed. Our on-call firefighters are dedicated to changing and saving lives, with excellent team working and problem-solving skills, and the ability to remain calm under pressure. As a firefighter, they develop many new skills including first aid and leadership - all of which will benefit your organisation as well as the local community.

Supporting a staff member to be an on-call firefighter can also be hugely rewarding. Local businesses have told us that having on-call firefighters on their staff provides reassurance to customers, encourages a sense of belonging, and gives the employer a chance to give back to their communities.

This booklet will give you more information on the role of an on-call firefighter, what is involved in employing an on-call firefighter, and the benefits this would bring to your organisation.

Thank you for considering supporting your staff to join your local fire station. Together we can help make our communities safer.

Chief Fire Officer, **Ben Ansell QFSM**

The Governor and management team at HMP Portland have supported their local fire station for over 20 years, allowing staff from the prison to respond as on-call firefighters. As an employer, we have gained value in many areas of expertise due to the training provided from the fire service.

The added values, skill sets, knowledge and professionalism have been used to help our shared staff train, support and care - and be a great asset to our prison.

We would recommend any business supporting their staff to become an on-call firefighter.

Pete Lewis, Governor, HMP Portland

A vital part of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

On-call firefighters are paid professionals, who do the same work as their full time (wholetime) colleagues. Unlike wholetime firefighters, they are not based at the fire station but have other jobs and commitments, responding to emergencies only when their pager goes off.

On-call firefighters are usually contracted to provide between 40 and 120 hours of cover per week, but this can vary. Between them, each fire station team will provide cover for weekdays, evenings, overnight and weekends.

Around two thirds of the firefighters in Dorset and Wiltshire work on an on-call basis, making them extremely important to both the Service and the communities they serve. This guide will give you an insight into the role of an on-call firefighter and highlight the benefits and impact on your business when employing or releasing a member of staff.

We know that releasing a member of staff to respond to the role of on-call firefighter is a big decision and it cannot happen without your involvement. We rely on the partnerships we build with local employers, and aim to ensure that everyone is fully aware of the commitment involved.



Who are on-call firefighters?

On-call firefighters come from all walks of life. They do an extraordinary job for the fire and rescue service and play a vital role in protecting the local community.

On-call firefighters live or work close to the fire station and respond to a pager when needed, rather than crewing the station on a full-time basis. They are contracted to be available during certain hours, fitting around their home and work commitments.



Like you, we are governed by the Equality Act 2010. As a public authority, we have additional responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful behaviour including discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equal opportunities and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

To assist us with this, equality, diversity and inclusion is made the responsibility of all of our staff as one of our five ethical principles. Our Code of Ethics (www.dwfire.org.uk/values-and-behaviours) set out what is expected of all staff and at all times as ambassadors of our Service.

Code of Ethics



Putting our communities first



Integrity



Equality, diversity and inclusion



Dignity and respect



Leadership

Benefits to you and your business

Our firefighters learn the following:

- **Emergency skills** - firefighters are qualified in advanced first aid and trauma care. These transferable skills will help to keep your other employees safe but also contribute to your legal obligations for first aid cover.
- **Large Goods Vehicle training** - many firefighters are trained to drive fire engines, which includes obtaining a Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) licence. They also receive Emergency Response Driving training, which is similar to an advanced driving test and raises their awareness of road conditions.
- **Health & Safety training** - due to the nature of the role, all on-call firefighters receive health & safety training to help them and others stay safe. These fully transferable skills include creating and reviewing risk assessments, identifying hazards, and knowing how to control hazards in the workplace.
- **Manual handling** – our instructors train and demonstrate the correct procedures and risk assessments required for carrying out manual handling tasks. Through having fully trained staff, you will have fewer lost work days and will see improved health and wellbeing across your business.

In addition to these practical skills, firefighters also develop the following:

- **Personal skills** – being a firefighter means learning, adapting, and taking responsibility. It's about working as a team, but also having the confidence to work on your own. It's about applying initiative, reasoning and empathy to any problem, situation or crisis.
- **Leadership and management** – on-call firefighters have access to coaching, EDI training, digital learning resources and other online materials to help their personal growth. Developing their skills and building their confidence will have a positive impact on other parts of their lives.
- **Safeguarding** – our firefighters are taught about safeguarding and how to report concerns. This knowledge will benefit your business and the wider community.

Employing an on-call firefighter could improve the reputation of your business, as companies releasing staff gain local recognition and respect within their community.

Becoming an on-call firefighter

As well as holding the right values, we want our recruits to succeed and become competent firefighters.

Our recruitment and selection process is designed to determine how someone adapts to the physical, mental and emotional requirements of being a firefighter. We want to be sure we select those people whose values align to our ethical principles, and who will pass their training to achieve full competence.

Firefighters must be well trained, skilled and knowledgeable if they are to work safely and effectively in a wide range of operational incidents.

Each week, on-call firefighters are required to attend a training (drill) night to learn and maintain skills. In the first 24 months of a firefighter's career, there's a lot to learn, so recruits need to self-study, write assignments, attend extra training sessions, and undergo regular assessments.

The training commitment

There are a number of essential courses that firefighters have to complete to become competent. We don't expect these to be completed consecutively, and plenty of notice is given to candidates.

Each training course is run several times throughout the year, which hopefully provides flexibility for all affected. We encourage our firefighters to take this time as annual or unpaid leave from their primary employment, to lessen the impact on you and your business.



Training will involve:

- **Basic skills acquisition** – ten days over two consecutive weeks. Once this has been passed, recruits can attend emergency incidents.
- **Casualty care** – three days.
- **Road traffic collision skills** – five days.
- **Breathing apparatus** – ten days over two consecutive weeks.
- **Live fire** – this would be a one-day revalidation assessment following the Breathing Apparatus course held once a year.

If you would like to know more about these courses, please take a look at our website www.dwfire.org.uk/firefighter-development.



FAQs

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

This will be an agreement between you and your employee. If they can provide any cover during your business hours, it will be reflected in their contract with us. If agreed, they can book available and are then expected to respond to any callouts that occur. It is important you check your capacity to enable them to do this. Your needs as the primary employer will always be the priority.

What if an employee is out all night at an emergency? Will they still be in work the next day?

Firefighters do not remain at incidents over extended periods of time, as over-exertion can result in accidents through tiredness and lack of concentration. Most incidents are no longer than an hour but, where they are more involved or serious, we look to relieve crews of their duties after four to six hours maximum. The expectation is that firefighters must consider their primary employment as a priority and plan around that.

How often are on-call firefighters called out, and how long are they gone for?

On average, it is usually only two to three times per week, depending on the cover given. Quite often these calls occur when the firefighter isn't at work. We have mobile phones on the appliance and encourage our staff to contact their employers if they anticipate being absent for an extended period.

What happens if my employee gets injured at an incident?

Firefighters receive a high level of training to prevent occurrence of injuries, and are extremely well-versed in health & safety. However, in the rare occurrence that something does happen, we have policies in place for compensating the employee for any loss of earnings after statutory sick pay.



How much will it cost me to employ an on-call firefighter?

There are no direct costs to you other than the time you agree to allow your employee to provide cover, and then it will only be if they are called to an incident. There will also be times that they need to attend training, but there will be notice of these occasions. Your commitment to support the individual in this way is also providing support to the local community. This is your agreement and contribution. We will work with you and your employee to keep any impact to the minimum, achieving the best outcomes for all of us. Hopefully the benefits will outweigh any inconvenience.

What if I have concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff who works for both of us?

Our firefighters are in a privileged position of trust when they serve their community, and they are expected to be ambassadors for our Service. If you have seen behaviours in our shared employee that falls short of our Code of Ethics (www.dwfire.org.uk/values-and-behaviours), please contact us at www.dwfire.org.uk/compliments-and-complaints.

In partnership, we can assure the safety of our staff at all times, and in compliance with the incorporation of the Worker Protection Bill to the Equality Act.

What support is available should I have any more questions?

Points of contact for more information are:

- Your employee.
- The station they are applying to, including the station commander.
- The DWFRS Operational Support and Recruitment teams.

You can call our recruitment hotline on



01722 691444 or email



recruitment@dwfire.org.uk.



www.dwfire.org.uk/on-call-firefighters

