



On-Call Firefighter



SCAN ME

Employer Guide



Welcome

Without the support of employers like you across Norfolk, we would not be able to offer an on-call service that is so effective at protecting the communities of Norfolk. Members of our on-call teams provide an immediate response to emergencies, saving lives and protecting property every day. By supporting staff to help us, you are helping your local community to stay safe and enriching your staff with new skills, many of which are beneficial to your own workplace.

For example leadership, crisis management and first aid. This booklet aims to offer detail of how the on-call system works and what the level of commitment involved is for both firefighters and their primary employers. If you would like to discuss any details, please get in touch with our team.

Thank you for your support.

Stuart Ruff
Chief Fire Officer
Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service.

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A vital part of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

There are 42 fire stations across Norfolk made up of 39 on-call locations, with further on-call teams based at our day crew stations (Thetford & Dereham) and whole time stations at North Earlham, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston & King's Lynn North.

Our stations at King's Lynn South, Carrow and Sprowston (both Norwich) are purely whole-time.

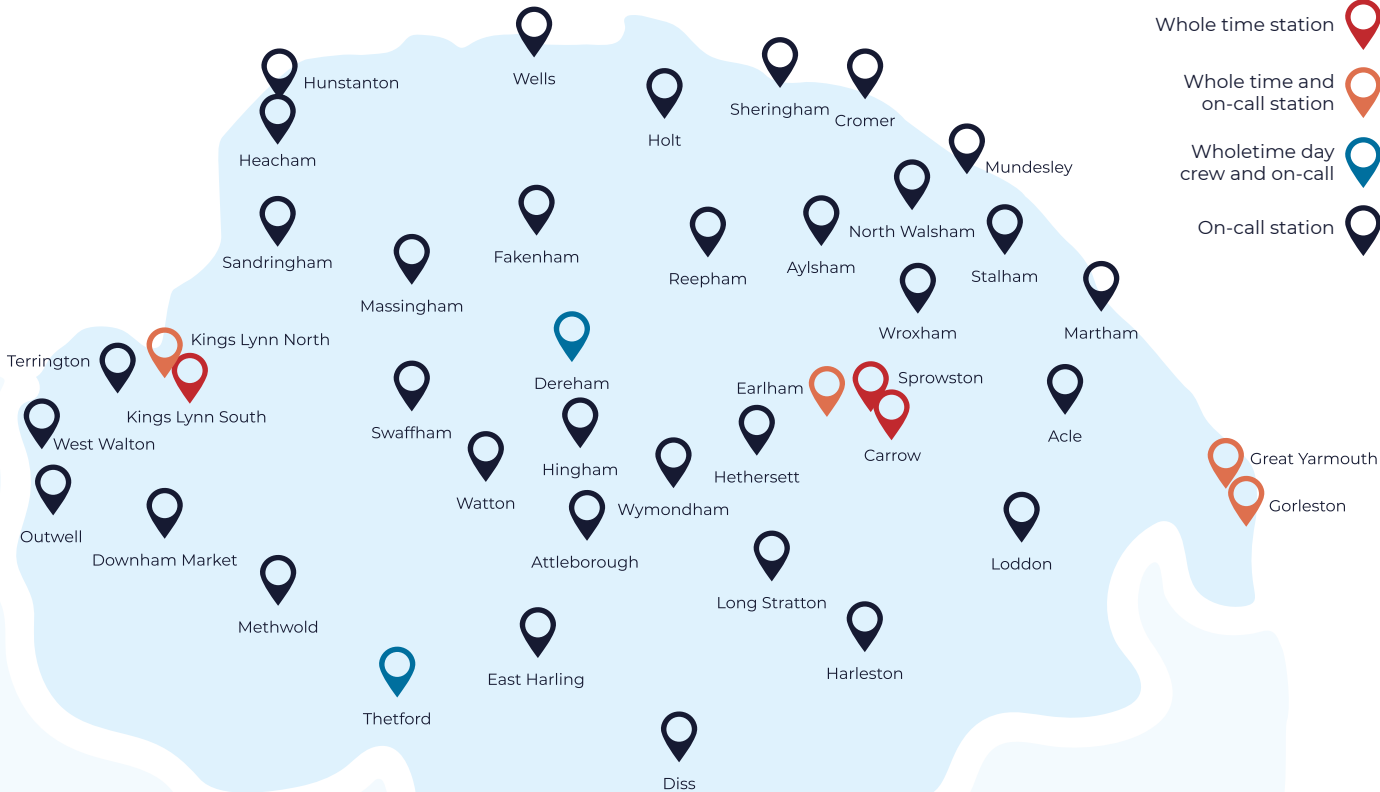
Many of our on-call firefighters are in full time employment with local employers who are keen to support their community. They are just like any other employee, except that they may be on standby for some of their working hours.

This booklet will give you an insight into the role of an on-call firefighter and the benefits and impact of employing an on-call firefighter in your business.

We know that releasing an employee to become an on-call firefighter is a big decision and it could not happen without your agreement. We rely on the partnerships we build with local employers and aim to ensure everyone is fully aware of the commitment prior to you agreeing to release the member of staff.

Take a look at the map, is your business close to any of the on-call stations? The chances are you rely on on-call firefighters more than you might think.

Map of Norfolk's Fire stations



Who are on-call firefighters?

On-call firefighters are ordinary men and women from all walks of life, but they do an extraordinary job for the Fire & Rescue Service and are integral to protecting the local community.

On-call firefighters live or work within five minutes of their allocated fire station and are fully trained firefighters who are called into service when they are needed rather than staffing the fire stations on a full time basis.

They are contracted to work certain hours based on their availability, during which, they keep a pager with them. It is up to the on-call firefighter to agree the hours they are available with their primary employer.



“ I am proud to be part of a highly regarded service.”

Norfolk on-call firefighter

Benefits to your organisation

On-call firefighters are highly trained professionals who can bring added value to your business. They gain many transferable skills with the Fire and Rescue Service which can be used in any workplace.

Emergency skills

Firefighters are qualified in advanced first aid and Immediate Emergency Care, clinically governed and accredited. This will help to keep other employees safe but also contribute to 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; this is similar to an advanced driving test in that it raises their awareness of road conditions.

Health and Safety training

Risk assessments and hazards are all part of the training for firefighters so they can support Health and Safety Officers in meeting their obligations and improve the safety of staff.

Manual handling training

Firefighters are trained by a recognised instructor in the correct procedures to be adopted when lifting or moving items. The training involves learning simple techniques that could prevent injuries occurring, reducing the risk of time lost at work through injury.

Personal skills

On-call firefighters are highly motivated people who are committed to the community they serve. This means they are more likely to be dedicated and long serving members of staff. They learn to work well in a team, to think quickly, take responsibility and use their initiative. They are also able to communicate quickly and keep calm in a crisis.

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



How does employing an on-call firefighter work?

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

Therefore, each on-call firefighter will need to attend an initial two-week training course, twelve months later they will be required to attend another two week course. We encourage firefighters to take this time as annual leave or unpaid leave from their primary employer to lessen the impact on your business.

We will ensure that you are involved at every stage and ensure that you have the dates for their training well in advance.



“It means I can feel proud and safe that I am doing an integral part of protecting the local community.”

Norfolk on-call firefighter



Case Studies

Dave Cleland Hunstanton Fire Station



Community spirited would be a great way to describe Dave, an on-call firefighter for Hunstanton for the last nine years.

He has spent his entire working career of 28 years in the local community. Dave started his career as a lifeguard and has had various roles since, now working as a leisure centre manager. Dave has also been a volunteer for the RNLI for

24 years and clearly enjoys giving something back and helping people.

“Years ago I was a fire cadet so there was always an interest there, but there weren’t any vacancies at our local station. When that changed, I applied and got into the service.” Dave is now a crew manager, and able to respond to calls from his workplace thanks to an understanding employer, Alive Oasis.

“There is something special and very rewarding about working for the fire service, people in the community really respect what we do and the teamwork is great on station. We’re all there for one purpose, to help people when they need us.

“If you are community minded and want to help the area where you live, then I’d say find out more about a career as an on-call firefighter.”



“Here at Alive West Norfolk we are happy to support the local community by allowing Dave to be on duty as an on-call firefighter when it is appropriate depending on his duties. What this means for us as an employer is being flexible and allowing Dave to carry out his duties at slightly different times, to enable him to assist with fire and rescue callouts. As a rural town, if we want to maintain the availability of our local fire station to emergencies in the area, many employers can do their bit to support their staff in this secondary employment, which benefits us all. If ever we need the fire and rescue service, we know that we’ve done our bit to make sure they are available in the local area to help.”



Managing director Neil Gromett, Alive West Norfolk

Michelle Lowe: Stalham Fire Station



For Michelle, a career in the fire service was always on the cards. Her grandfather was a watch manager at Stalham and her dad is still a serving crew manager, so she grew up with a curiosity and interest that was only ever going to be satisfied by being a part of it. Michelle's other love is horses and she successfully runs her own yard, teaching riding, offering equestrian rehabilitation services and competing in events.

Getting into the fire service took a little longer than Michelle had hoped, as at the time she

became old enough to sign up, there were no vacancies at Stalham Fire Station. She was determined, joined in 2007 and has enjoyed being able to run her two dream jobs alongside each other.

"To me, it was always about joining Stalham, being part of the team and helping the community. I hadn't joined with a view to ever becoming wholetime as Stalham was where I wanted to be. But there are lots of opportunities to progress within the service once you are a competent firefighter, if you want them."

Michelle is now Watch Manager at Stalham and also recently took on the role as an instructor at the fire service's Bowthorpe training school, this includes teaching the newest on-call recruits as part of their initial training, as well as carrying out the animal rescue training to staff.

"If you're thinking of joining the service then I'd say go for it. Give it a go, what have you got to lose?"

Support for business:

Michelle feels that working self-employed and on-call work really well with each other because as her own boss she has flexibility with both jobs. She is able to provide the time to being on-call when the station needs it most. Being on-call also helps Michelle's business. Being able to carry out first aid training, DBS Checks and further training courses as part of her fire service work means that she has transferable skills without cost to her own business.

Tom Gilham: Massingham Fire Station



When Tom left school, he wanted to see the world and ended up working as a chef in the French Alps, where he met his fiancée. On returning to England a few years later, they settled in Norfolk and he began working as a chef at his local pub in Great Massingham. It was there that a chance conversation with a local, an on-call Norfolk firefighter, got him thinking about a secondary career.

“I never thought I would be able to do it as I didn’t find tests and exams easy at school. I had a look at some of the sample tests on the NFRS website and realised it might be possible, so I applied.”

Tom started working for the service in Spring 2019, and offers cover even when he is working, thanks to his generous employers at The Dabbling Duck, who have employed and supported three members of our on-call staff since 2008.

“We work the rotas between the chefs, but yes there have been times where I have been cooking meals and have had to hand over and dash off to a call. Massingham is a great community, and the pub and the fire station are both at the heart of it so it’s great to be part of both.

“I would say to anyone thinking of a career in the fire service, just go for it. The camaraderie and teamwork is incredible and it is so rewarding.”

“I would say to anyone thinking of a career in the fire service, just go for it.”

Tom Gilham, Norfolk on-call firefighter

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 as available. If they say they are available, they will be expected to respond to the call. This is why 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 the priority.

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

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

How often are on-call firefighters called out?

We are unable to predict exactly how often an individual firefighter might get called out, but on average it is usually only about 2 to 3 times a week depending on the firefighter's hours of availability -and these calls are often when the firefighter is not at work anyway.

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

Each of the appliances has a mobile phone and your employee will be encouraged to use this facility to estimate a return time as soon as they can. In some cases, such as a false alarm, they will return within 20 minutes.

What if my employee gets injured while on an incident?

This is a very rare occurrence as firefighters are trained to a high standard before they are fully operational. However, if this does happen, the Fire Service has policies in place for compensating the employee for any loss of earnings after statutory sick pay.

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

There are no direct costs for supporting an employee to be an on-call firefighter. However, there may be some indirect costs to your business. For example, if you have to fill in while your employee responds to an emergency call out or attends training, but we hope the benefits outweigh the inconvenience.

What support is available should I have any questions?

Each on-call station has a watch manager and a station manager. These managers will be your point of contact and help support you through the early days of appointing your employee, as well as providing on-going support and assistance as required.



Further information

If you would like to find out more about becoming an employer of an on-call firefighter, you can request a call back to discuss this via www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/norfolk-fire-and-rescue-service/recruitment/becoming-an-on-call-firefighter

During the call, our staff can discuss with you in further depth, and will be able to advise you on the members of staff in your organisation that would be most suitable for the role.



“It means I can protect and help people where I live when they need it the most”

Norfolk on-call firefighter



Norfolk County Council



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www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire



If you would like this information in large print or in an alternative version, please contact us on 0344 800 8020 and we will do our best to provide it.