



# On-call Firefighter

Employer Guide



**Suffolk**  
County Council



# Welcome

On-call firefighters are a vital part of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. They provide an efficient, effective service that gives emergency cover across the country.

In Suffolk, on-call firefighters make up 66% of the workforce and are generally located in rural communities, small towns and villages. This booklet will give you an insight into the role of an on-call firefighter, what is involved in employing an on-call firefighter and the benefits this could bring to your organisation.

I hope this encourages you to support some of your staff to join your local fire station.

Dan Fearn  
Temporary Chief Fire Officer





# Contents

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- 4 A vital part of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
- 5 Who are on-call firefighters?
- 6 Benefits to your organisation
- 7 How does employing an on-call firefighter work?
- 8 Case studies
  - 8 Karen Clark - Waitrose
  - 8 Darren Howard - Maple Group
  - 9 Mags Humphery - Hatcher Components
  - 9 Darren Rogers - SCS Technaseal
- 10 Frequently asked questions
- 11 Further information

# A vital part of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

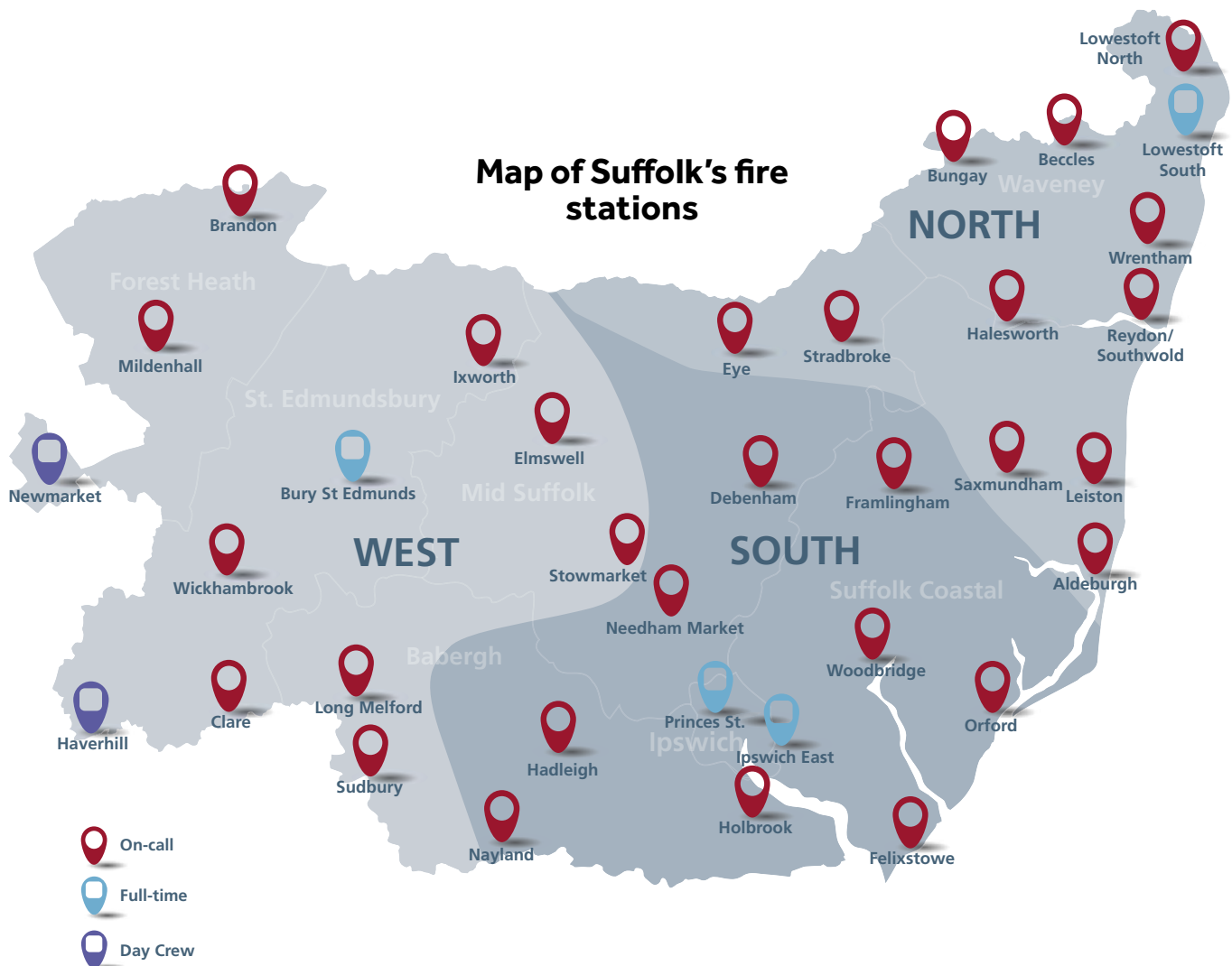
There are 35 fire stations across Suffolk made up of four whole-time stations, 29 on-call stations and two, day crewed stations.

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.





## Who are on-call firefighters?

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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 to ten 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.



Suffolk on-call firefighter

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



# Benefits to your organisation

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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 trauma 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?

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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, six to eight 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 so 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.



Suffolk on-call firefighter

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



# Case studies

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There are a range of business both small and large across Suffolk who currently release employees to be on-call firefighters. These include, Tesco, Waitrose, Royal Mail, factories, farms and retail outlets. Here, some of our employers talk about their experiences employing on-call firefighters.



**Abi**  
**Employer: Karen Clarke, Waitrose**

Abi joined Waitrose in February 2016 as a Supermarket Assistant with the Operations team.

During her time with us Abi has shown great flexibility in her approach to her job, not only has she become trained within the Operations team but she has also got herself trained on the majority of other sections within the branch.

This has allowed Abi, after she returns from having attended a fire or other emergency, to then slot into the section in the store that needs the most support.



**Becky**  
**Employer: Darren Howard, Maple Group**

I speak as an employer and a very proud father to have Becky as a daughter and an employee. When she approached me about joining the fire service and the commitment she would need to give, it was no issue to me that she could be called out at any time whilst working at my main office.

As a builder who has restored fire damaged buildings previously, I understand the importance of getting to an incident quickly, as possible. We could all need these services at some point in our lives so I was more than happy to allow a member of staff to leave the office to fulfil this role.

I would say to any potential new employer of an on-call firefighter, it really is no burden. To think that in some way you help someone's life is very satisfying to me. In addition, as a fully trained firefighter, Becky's input to my office and sites in relation to safeguarding against fire and first aid is invaluable.

It is of great importance for employers to continue to support and encourage individuals who choose to become an on call firefighter. Regardless of Becky being my daughter, I would have supported the role and I would certainly do it again.



Daniel  
**Employer: Mags Humphery,  
 Hatcher Components**

Hatcher Components manufactures composite moulded aerodynamic kits and cab extensions for commercial vehicles. We have close links with the local community in and around Framlingham, and are proud to employ people with drive, commitment and altruism. There are obvious benefits for the business in employing an on-call firefighter and Daniel is an important member of the Hatcher team. As Departmental Assistant Factory Manager, the business relies on his leadership qualities to inspire and motivate the workforce while optimising production and providing efficient and effective management.

Daniel uses his knowledge of fire safety to provide valued assistance with Health and Safety matters. He maintains Risk Assessments, manages Fire Escape plans and oversees the maintenance and issuing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). As First Aid Officer, Daniel may be on the front line in accident or emergency situations. As well as the more obvious benefits to employing people with heightened skills in fire safety and first aid, there are other advantages. The focus and discipline needed to thrive in challenging situations; the conviction and tenacity required to make decisions; and the diligence and accuracy useful in minimising mistakes mean that individuals become valuable employees.



Michael  
**Employer: Darren Rogers,  
 SCS Technaseal**

Michael was first employed by SCS Technaseal some 11 years ago when he was already Watch Manager at Debenham fire station. I had known Michael for many years and had seen him progress through the ranks of the Fire Service, so I knew that he would be an asset to our business.

The training given to him by the Fire Service helps the way he conducts himself at work and as a business we are very proud to help support our local community and potentially save people's lives.

Furthermore, we allow local crews to carry out various training exercises at our premises, which gives us great peace of mind, that if ever we had an emergency ourselves, all local crews know our premises and practices.

# Frequently asked questions

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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, contact Martyn Hazelwood, the service's On Call Liaison & Recruitment Officer: [martyn.hazelwood@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:martyn.hazelwood@suffolk.gov.uk) or 07935 009985

He will be able to discuss this 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.

Suffolk on-call firefighter

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

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If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **03456 066 067**

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