



# On-call Firefighter

Information pack



**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 county. 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, the types of activities you could expect to be involved in, as well as details about the recruitment process.

We look forward to welcoming you as a new recruit soon!

**Dan Fearn**  
**Temporary Chief Fire Officer**





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# What are on-call firefighters?

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

Most on-call firefighters have other employment and take on the role as a second job; however you do not need to be in work to become an on-call firefighter. In Suffolk we employ a range of people as on-call firefighters, from consultants, stay at home parents, engineers to shop workers.

We are committed to achieving fairness and equality in employment and service and welcome suitably skilled applicants from all, ages, races, genders and backgrounds. However we do have minimum requirements to be able to become an on-call firefighter.

## **You need to:**

- Be 18 years old or over
- Have a reasonable level of personal fitness
- Live or work within five to eight minutes of the fire station you provide cover to
- Be able to provide over 50 hours of weekly cover
- Have permission to be released from your main employment to attend emergency incidents
- Have the ability to operate at heights and confined spaces
- Keep calm under pressure
- Work well in a team
- Have the ability to develop your skills and work independently

As an on-call firefighter you would also need to have good communication skills and courage, together with qualities such as understanding, reliability, flexibility, determination, self-motivation, common sense, commitment and enthusiasm. You would need to be able to reflect the service's values at all times and above all, the role requires a real desire to serve the local community.

While on duty the use of make-up or hair preparations, such as gel or hair spray, is not allowed. Also hair (including facial hair) must not impair the seal of the breathing apparatus face mask and your vision or hearing.

There are some myths about being an on-call firefighter that we also want to expel:

- There is no maximum or minimum height
- There is no upper age limit
- No previous experience and/or formal qualifications are required due to the comprehensive training programme on-call firefighters receive

Please also be aware;

- Fire and Rescue Services are required to assess applicants on an individual basis with regard to their suitability to perform the role of a Firefighter, in accordance with the Equality Act (2010). This means that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service will consider what reasonable adjustments could be made to enable you to proceed with your application provided any such adjustments do not contravene Health and Safety legislation.
- You are obliged to declare details of any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings that are not protected as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013).



## How often would you be needed?

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Once you have completed the two week induction training and become an on-call firefighter, you would be required to attend an evening session for two hours each week (known as drill night). In addition, part of your role would be to encourage safer communities, therefore you may be asked to attend community events to discuss fire prevention and emergency situations.

You would be contracted to work certain hours based on your availability, during which, you would need to keep a pager with you. As we can't predict when you will be called out, you would need to be flexible in your work or home based activities. You would arrange which hours you cover; it could be days, nights, weekends or a combination of these. How often you are called out depends on which station you are based at. Sometimes we have more on-call firefighters available than needed for each incident, so you would not necessarily be required to attend every call out.

As an on-call firefighter you would be entitled to 28 days annual leave and after you have completed five years continuous service you would also receive an extra seven days leave.



Suffolk on-call firefighter

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





## What would you get out of being an on-call firefighter?

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Firefighting is not like any other job. It can be unpredictable, exciting and rewarding, coupled with the satisfaction and respect that comes with providing a crucial service to the local community.

As well as learning firefighting techniques, you would learn other skills such as, how to wear breathing apparatus, road traffic collision procedures, fire prevention and protection, first aid, team management skills and there is the opportunity to learn how to drive a fire engine.

You would receive an annual salary, plus an hourly rate, for the hours when you attend an incident or a drill night. There is also a disturbance fee which is paid out when you are called out to an incident.

From the start of employment, you would be able to contribute to the new firefighter's pension scheme and you would be entitled to sick pay that is subject to national terms and conditions. You would be issued with a uniform and personal protective equipment which would be kept at the station.

We also offer a range of additional benefits including; shopping vouchers and discounts, public transport discounts, tax free bike schemes, childcare vouchers and a health, wellbeing and lifestyle support scheme.

The annual salary reflects the amount of hours that you are able to provide and falls into two bands:

**100% salary – 120 hours or more per week**

**75% salary – less than 120 hours per week**

For the most up to date rates of pay visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall)

## What training would you receive?

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Full training is provided and you would be trained to deal with the same situations and incidents as your full time colleagues. This includes how to use the latest equipment and techniques to undertake a wide range of duties from firefighting to animal rescues and from floods to road traffic collisions.

To become fully trained you will need to go through a development training package, some of which will take place during drill nights and some will need to be undertaken at our training centre in Wattisham. This takes three years to complete.

After successfully completing your development you will have the opportunity to undertake courses, both internally and externally, to broaden your existing knowledge of firefighting and rescue. You will also receive training throughout your career to ensure that you are competent and kept up to date with the latest technology and equipment.



## What would your career prospects be?

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Within the service there is a clear career progression route, as follows:

- Trainee Firefighter  
(after nine weeks of service)
- Development Firefighter
- Competent Firefighter  
(after three years of service)
- Crew Manager
- Watch Manager

In Suffolk we support the progression of on-call firefighters into full time roles, therefore career progression into many other roles is possible.

Suffolk on-call firefighter

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

# Meet our on-call firefighters

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*Daniel*



*Abi*



*Michael*





# Daniel

## Factory Fitter & On-call Firefighter

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Daniel is a Factory Fitter and has been an on-call firefighter for Saxmundham, since November 2011.

"In 2000 I applied to become a full time firefighter, but unfortunately I wasn't successful. 11 years later, I heard Saxmundham Fire Station were recruiting on-call firefighters, so I went along to an open day. That's where my firefighter journey began. After an interview, medical, aptitude test and a great two weeks training at the Wattisham training centre, I became a fully-fledged firefighter!

"I live and work within 5 minutes of the fire station so I can respond at any time and every Monday night the crew get together for drill night. We do weekly checks on the equipment and training drills.

"For a long time I wanted to be a firefighter; I love that I get to help people in a physical emergency services role."

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Being part Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is like having a second family.

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# Abi



## Shop Assistant & On-call Firefighter

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Abi is a Shop Assistant and has been an on-call firefighter for Bury St Edmunds, since June 2015.

"I always wanted to be a firefighter; I was inspired by my Dad who was an on-call firefighter for Suffolk and is now a Watch Commander for the Ministry of Defence Fire and Rescue Service.

"Being an on-call firefighter is completely different to my other role; I really like the challenge of them being polar opposites. When you're on-call you never know what your day might be like.

"It's a role that means the more work I do, the more things I get out of it, particularly with the extra training and firefighter progression."

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It's the best job in the world; you get paid to do things that few people would experience. //

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# Michael

## Mechanic & On-call Firefighter

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Michael is a Mechanic and has been an on-call firefighter in Debenham since June 1988. He is now the Watch Manager in charge at the station.

"A retired on-call firefighter, who was also headmaster at my school, thought I would make a good firefighter.

"Wearing a pager becomes routine and you get used to just stopping what you are doing and changing your mindset. You don't know what the incident is until you read the instructions from fire control – it's the unknown that keeps me interested.

"When my pager goes off, it means someone is in trouble, therefore I could say the best part of the job is being at home as this means that people in the community of Debenham are safe."

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It's a spirit of comradeship, everyone in the crew is looking out for each other and the community. //

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## Information for employers

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If responding to incidents while at work you must have the permission of your main employer. It is important that employers understand what this involves so please ensure that they receive the employer information booklet, available on our website [www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall).

Employers will also need to sign a form confirming that you can be released from work. This can be found as part of the application.

If you are not available to be released from your main employment to attend incidents this will not prevent you from still applying.

Unfortunately we are unable to accept applications from people who have a contract of employment with an employer that requires them to be moved from their normal place of work for periods of more than two weeks or periods of more than four weeks in a calendar year; with less than one month's notice being given.

## Information for families

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It is important that as an on-call firefighter you have the support and encouragement of your family. Occasionally the lives of families can be affected and it is important to explain to them the requirements of the role.

When considering becoming an on-call firefighter bear in mind:

- Difficulty in planning spur of the moment activities
- Unsociable call outs
- Not being able to be relied upon to be the sole-carer when on call. Alternative child or dependant care arrangements need to be made in case of the need to respond to an emergency quickly

However, we believe there are many advantages of becoming an on-call firefighter.

On-call firefighters benefit from:

- Being able to protect their local community
- Financial reward
- Being able to carry out fire risk assessments of the home and other buildings
- Driving large goods vehicles and receiving leadership and other training such as first aid
- Being a positive role model

# What is the selection process?

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The recruitment and selection of on-call firefighters is dependent upon you living or working within five to eight minutes of one of the service's fire stations.

We have a five stage process - the length of time it takes to complete the process varies, but it may take up to seven months from the initial application.

The successful completion of any stage of the recruitment process does not guarantee a role with us. In addition, all roles are determined by the availability you are able to offer your station and what availability they need at that time.



Suffolk on-call firefighter

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

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# 01 Stage one: **apply**

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An online application, employer's consent form, availability form and equality and inclusion monitoring form need to be submitted.

These are available on the recruitment pages of our website: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall)

## Application form

This contains your personal details and will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## Employer's consent form

If you are employed and you have permission to be released by your employer, they must give written consent, via the employer form.

## Availability form

You tell us what hours you will be available to be on-call. You will be expected to maintain this availability if you are successful in being offered a post as an on-call firefighter. Your availability will be assessed to ensure there are vacancies at your local fire station during the hours you have indicated. If your availability does not match the station's requirements at the time of applying, your details will be added to a recruitment pool for your chosen station.

## Equality and inclusion monitoring form

This helps us ensure we are as accessible as possible to all groups in the community. The data is held in accordance with the GDPR and is not used to assist or make selection decisions.

## Open evening

Once you have submitted your application you will be contacted and be invited to attend an open evening to discuss the job and your availability in more detail.





## 02 Stage two: **interview**

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The interview will assess your general aptitude for the role of an on-call Firefighter and we will discuss your availability and your understanding of the commitment and the fitness levels required to undertake the role of an on-call firefighter.

You will be required to give examples about experiences you have had that relate to the qualities and behaviours we expect of an on-call firefighter.

## 03 Stage three: **written and practical tests**

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If successful at stage one you will be invited to attend an assessment day at Wattisham Training Centre which will include physical tests, written tests and personal protective equipment fitting. These tests normally take a day to complete.

### Written tests

If you have GCSE in English and Maths of Grade C or have a level 2 and can provide evidence you will be exempt from the written aptitude tests. These tests consist of a series of multiple choice questions designed to assess your abilities and aptitude for becoming an on-call firefighter.

The tests are conducted in a classroom style environment and take approximately 90 minutes to complete (including breaks). They consist of two tests which need to be completed in a set time and include:

- Working with numbers
- Understanding information

For further information on written tests, visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall)

### Physical tests

These tests aim to assess your level of fitness, strength and manual dexterity as well as your level of confidence in simulated exercises. There are eight tests designed to reflect operational practice and include:

1. Beep Test to a level of 8.8
2. Ladder climb
3. Enclosed space
4. Equipment carry
5. Equipment assembly
6. 23 reps pull down of 28kg
7. 60 kg lat pull down
8. 35 kg overhead free weight

For further information about the levels of fitness required, visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall)



## 04 Stage four: **medical**

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You will be invited to attend a medical appointment with our Occupational Health Unit. They normally take approximately two hours to complete. The purpose of the medical is to assess your general level of health to decide whether you are fit to undertake firefighting duties (allowing for any reasonable adjustments that may be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010).

### Fitness test

During your medical assessment with Occupational Health you will be required to undertake 'The Chester Step Test' that has been designed specifically for Fire and Rescue Services. The object of the test is to measure the aerobic fitness, which is the ability to carry out activities in all aspects of your social and occupational life without causing undue fatigue.

### Uniform fitting

On the day of your medical you will be asked to attend our supplies department where you will have a uniform fitting. This is necessary to ensure that you receive your full firefighting uniform before starting on station and attending the new recruits course.

You will also have a photograph taken for your ID badge so male applicants must be clean shaven..



Suffolk on-call firefighter

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

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## 05 Stage five: **offer of employment**

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Once you have successfully completed the recruitment and selection process and subject to your availability meeting the current requirements of your local station, you will be sent an offer of employment letter together with your contract.

All offers made are subject to confirmation of your legal right to work in the UK, receipt of references satisfactory to the service and medical fitness (including an eye sight examination) appropriate to the job and consistent with our equality policy.

Subject to us receiving the above, you will receive your uniform and be required to attend an induction evening and receive your development folder and then you will start on station and complete six drill nights for initial training prior to attending your 2 week Approved to Ride' recruits course at our training centre at RAF Wattisham.





# Further information

If you would like to apply to become an on-call firefighter, we would encourage you to visit your local station on a drill night.

At a drill night you will be able to talk to on-call firefighters about what the role is really like. They will also be able to talk through the current needs of the station and assist with the completion of any forms.

For further information and details about drill nights, visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/firestations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/firestations) or 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

Suffolk on-call firefighter



I am very proud to be a firefighter. I love the fact that I can help people in my community //



# Suffolk County Council - values and behaviours

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Suffolk County Council has a set of values and behaviours which set the expectation of how people will do their job in addition to the specific activities/accountabilities listed in the Job Person Profile. Evidence of these values and behaviours are an integral part of the service's performance management framework.

## **Achieve** – we are the best we can be

- I know what is expected of myself and other people
- I continually strive to improve by reflecting, learning and developing
- I give and accept constructive advice and feedback

## **Support** – we work as one team

- I offer, give and accept help
- I listen to and learn from other people
- I share my learning, information, knowledge and resources

## **Pride** – we take pride in and are proud of what we do

- I look for opportunities to enhance the reputation of the council and its partners
- I celebrate success and take pride in my achievements and those of other people
- I look for opportunities to promote council services and those of its partners

## **Inspire** – we model the ASPIRE values

- I bring passion, energy and drive to my work
- I create solutions and encourage innovation
- I keep promises

## **Respect** – we give and earn respect

- I am open and honest
- I see things from the perspective of other people and value their opinion
- I treat people as equals and promote equality and value diversity

## **Empower** – we empower, encourage and motivate people

- I am accountable, make decisions and take responsible risks
- I have the freedom to act and challenge
- I embrace and adapt to change



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

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo. 03456 066 067

Portuguese

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer. 03456 066 067

Polish

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন 03456 066 067

Bengali

Jeigu jums reikia šios informacijos kita kalba, paskambinkite 03456 066 067

Lithuanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru a înțelege această informație într-o altă limbă, vă rugăm să telefonați la numărul 03456 066 067

Romanian

Если для того чтобы понять эту информацию Вам нужна помощь на другом языке, позвоните, пожалуйста, по телефону 03456 066 067

Russian

If you would like this information in another format, including audio or large print, please call **03456 066 067**



[www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/oncall)

#OnCallFire #SwiftToServe

