



# On-Call Firefighter

## Application Guidance and Information

Thank you for expressing an interest in applying to join Avon Fire & Rescue Service as an On-Call firefighter. Please read the following guidance before you apply to ensure your application is completed correctly and accepted, and that you are aware of the selection process.

### Being an 'On-Call' Firefighter

Whilst the majority of our firefighters are full-time employees, around 30% of our fire crews have jobs elsewhere and are 'on-call' with their local On-Call fire station.

On-Call firefighters carry an alerter and let the fire station know when they're available so they can respond immediately to emergency calls at any time. They make up an invaluable part of the team, heading to their fire station only when needed.

Just like full-time firefighters they are trained to deal with everything from extinguishing burning buildings to providing first aid. The only difference is that they aren't based at a fire station. They come from all walks of life and could be full-time parents, office staff, manual workers or any other profession you can think of.

Whilst On-Call firefighters are ordinary men and women, they do an extraordinary job for the fire and rescue service and are integral to keeping their local fire station crewed and local communities protected.

Many On-Call firefighters have an arrangement with their other employer so they can be on-call whilst at work. Some of the training, skills and experiences they acquire will be of benefit to that employer.

In return for their commitment On-Call firefighters:-

- Are paid an annual retainer and call-out fees;
- Receive first aid and trauma care training;
- Get risk assessment and health and safety training;
- Forge important links with their community; and
- Have opportunities for educational and vocational qualifications.

## Eligibility

Becoming an On-Call firefighter with Avon Fire & Rescue Service is extremely rewarding both to you and your community; however there are some criteria which we ask for:

- You must live and/or work within five minutes of your local On-Call Fire Station (see 'distance' below).
- You must be offering the level of cover your local On-Call fire station requires (see 'cover' below).
- You must be aged 18 or over when firefighter training starts.
- You must be physically fit, and have good upper body strength, hearing and eyesight (see 'fitness and strength' below).

### Distance

You are required to work and/or live within five minutes of your local On-call fire station to allow you to respond in time to meet the agreed attendance levels. Any response to the station is constrained by current driving legislation and adherence to speed limits, traffic signals and so on.

### Cover

Your commitment to the role is the 'cover' you can provide, that is, the agreed period of time you are available to respond to your station. You can commit to full or part cover, the choice is yours.

The decision to bring you forward for assessment will be based on (amongst other criteria) the cover you are offering; it is therefore important you are clear about the cover you are able to give. Your cover will be agreed before any offer of employment is made and will form part of your employment contract.

- **Part cover** On-Call firefighters must be available for an average of 84 hours out of an available 168 hours within any seven day period. This average is calculated over a 12 week period.
- **Full cover** On-Call firefighters must be available for an average of 120 hours out of the available 168 hours within any seven day period. This average is calculated over a 12 week period.

Our On-Call fire stations are situated in Bath, Blagdon, Chew Magna, Clevedon, Nailsea, Paulton, Pill, Portishead, Radstock, Thornbury, Weston-super-Mare, Winscombe, Yate and Yatton.

### Fitness and strength

The role of On-Call firefighter can be physically demanding, and your fitness will be determined during the selection process. Details of the standards you are required to achieve can be found on our website along with general exercise guidance. Applicants should ensure they can meet the minimum standards of cardiovascular fitness and strength. Any offer of employment will be subject to the successful completion of a medical assessment.

## Important: Drivers' hours and tachograph rules

The following information about the EU Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006) might affect your application for the role of On-Call firefighter.

The EU Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles came into effect in April 2007 and exist to ensure the health and safety of mobile workers and drivers of in scope vehicles. The purpose of the rules is to limit driving time and ensure proper break and rest periods are taken so that road traffic collisions are prevented.

The rules apply to certain categories of 'mobile workers', the most common being drivers of Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) and Passenger Service Vehicles (PSV) - 'in-scope vehicles'.

- **Mobile workers** include any driver or member of vehicle crew, including trainees or apprentices, who operate transport services for passengers or goods by road, for hire or reward or on its own account. For the purposes of this legislation, vehicle crew could include porters involved in household removals, draymen in brewery delivery movements, conductors, loaders, navigators or security.
- The most common types of mobile workers will be drivers of Large Goods Vehicles (LGVs) with an overall weight over 3.5 tonnes and Passenger Service Vehicles (PSVs) with more than nine seats or travelling more than 50 kilometres. These are called **in-scope vehicles**. Vehicles used by the fire and rescue service are automatically exempt from the rules but applicants who drive in-scope vehicles for their primary or secondary employment will still be covered by these regulations.

Although fire and rescue service vehicles are exempt the rules do apply where a firefighter holds a second job which involves driving. In this case all the strict breaks and rest periods must be adhered to, even if that firefighter only drives in scope vehicles for a short period of time.

The rules particularly apply to On-Call firefighters and will impact on the ability of an On-Call firefighter who drives an in-scope vehicle during their primary employment to get appropriate rest periods. This will also affect their availability to provide firefighter cover. It has therefore been deemed unlawful for us to employ an individual whose primary or other employment conflicts with the rules and we will be unable to accept an application from you if you are a mobile worker driving an in-scope vehicle.

If you are unsure as to whether you drive an in-scope vehicle you should seek advice from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). For all other questions regarding an application for On-Call firefighter please contact the Recruitment Team.

If you think a career as an On-Call firefighter is for you, this guide goes on to outline the selection process and the tests you will need to take which will require some commitment from you. It also briefly outlines the training you will complete if your application is successful.

## How to apply

You can apply at any time by downloading our application form and submitting it to the address below. Your application will be acknowledged in writing and you will be contacted again once we have news about its progress.

Send to: Human Resources  
Avon Fire & Rescue Service  
Police & Fire Headquarters  
PO Box 37  
Valley Road  
Portishead  
Bristol BS20 8JJ

## The selection process

To make sure we find the best people for the job there are a number of stages to the selection process. You will be required to commit some time to attend each stage. We appreciate this may involve booking time off work and re-arranging family commitments.

### Stage 1: application form

Completing your application form will take some time so to help you decide if it is the right job is for you, we ask that you complete two pre-application checklists - **checklist one** will help you decide whether you are likely to enjoy working as a firefighter, and **checklist two** will help you determine if you are eligible to apply. You should read the notes at the bottom of the page to help you in responding to the questions.

**Personal details** - This section asks for your name, address, contact details and National Insurance Number. It is important that this information is accurate and that you inform us of any changes to your contact details so that we may keep in touch with you. Contact with you will primarily be via email therefore please write your email address as clearly as possible and regularly check your inbox for messages and important information. If you do not have access to email please let us know.

**Qualifications** - Please provide details of your qualifications in this section. If you can provide evidence that you possess GCSEs grade A-C (or equivalent) in English and Maths you will not be required to take the full suite of written tests and will only be required to take the 'Situational awareness and problem solving test'. If this is the case, a photocopy of your GCSEs in English and Maths must be provided along with your application form, and the original documents produced at your written test session.

**Employment details** - Tell us how you are currently employed and provide details of your current employer. This is particularly important if your employer has agreed to release you from work to attend emergency calls as they will be required to complete the 'Statement of employer' section if this is the case. Please also tell us about your previous employment and if you have worked for the fire and rescue service in the past.

**Station, distance and cover** - Tell us which On-Call fire station you are applying for, remember you must live and/or work within five minutes of that station. Also tell us how long it takes you to get to the fire station from home and/or work (using an online route planner). You will also need to tell us the level of cover you can offer at your local station by providing the hours you will be available each day to respond to your station in an emergency. Remember, a full cover On-Call firefighter is available for an average of 120 hours per week; and part cover for an average of 84 hours per week.

**Driving** – Taking into account the information provided on Page 3 of this Guide, complete this section to confirm you are not a mobile worker and do not drive an in-scope vehicle.

**Reference** - This section requires you to provide the name and contact details of a person we can contact for a reference. For example, this person could be a teacher, community worker or employer, but if you have been in work or are currently employed your referee must be your current or most recent employer. Your referee will only be contacted if you are provisionally offered employment with Avon Fire & Rescue Service. It is important to note we **will not** accept friends or relatives as a referee.

**Reasonable adjustments** - If you have dyslexia this will not preclude you from applying. Many existing firefighters have dyslexia and we offer support and, where required, provide adjustments to assist within the workplace. We recognise that dyslexia can bring many benefits and different skills. You will need to provide proof of your formal dyslexia assessment (conducted by an appropriate qualified professional) to have any adjustments made within the selection process (for example, during the written tests). You should be aware that the role of firefighter requires you to read and retain a lot of information on policies, standard procedures, safety information and so on. There is also a lot of academic study, both on the training course and during employment.

**Age at time of training** – It is a requirement that you are 18 years of age or above by the beginning of your firefighter training.

**Eligibility to work in the UK** – It is your responsibility to ensure you are eligible to work in the UK at application stage. If you are unsure you should refer to the Home Office UK Visas & Immigration Website. We will check eligibility at job offer stage.

**Declaration of offences** - If you have a previous criminal record this will not necessarily disqualify you from employment with Avon Fire & Rescue Service. If your criminal conviction is spent you do not need to declare this on your application form; you are only required to declare any convictions for offences that are **not** yet spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. This includes offences dealt with by a court of law, HM services disciplinary procedures, and any driving offences. You must also tell us immediately if you are charged with an offence after you submit your application form and before you take up any job offer. We will consider unspent convictions on a case by case basis and will assess your age when the event occurred, the nature of the conviction and whether this is likely to have any impact upon your employment when we reach a decision.

If you do not know if a conviction is spent it is your responsibility to check this with a relevant organisation such as the Probation Service or the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO). Alternatively there are many organisations online which provide advice, for example [www.cleansheet.org.uk](http://www.cleansheet.org.uk). Failure to disclose an unspent conviction will result in your application or employment being terminated if this information comes to light at a later stage.

Your driving licence will be checked, and any unspent convictions or endorsements found on your licence that have not been declared on your application form could result in your application being rejected, depending on the nature of the offence. This refers to all driving offences, including speeding.

**Equal opportunities monitoring information** - The information on this form is for monitoring purposes only and will not be seen by those assessing your application form as it will be separated upon receipt. The information supplied will be treated in strictest confidence and will not affect your application in any way. Completion of this monitoring form is voluntary but the information you provide will help us to ensure equality of opportunity.

### **Points to remember**

- Read through your completed application form carefully to ensure you have not missed anything out and that it is clearly and accurately presented. It may be useful to write your answers out in draft before you complete the form.
- Take a copy of your completed application form.
- Failure to provide accurate and complete information may result in your application being sent back to you.
- Check any offences (including driving offences) carefully and get advice if you are unsure if they are spent.
- If you are posting your application, you must send it to Human Resources, Avon Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6EU. Please mark your envelope 'On-Call Firefighter Application' and remember to use the correct postage.
- Applications delivered in person should be handed to a member of staff in Reception. If delivering outside office hours, please place it in the letter box. Your envelope should be addressed as above to ensure it is forwarded to Human Resources.
- Remember, you can be 17 years of age when you apply but you must be 18 years of age at the start of firefighter training.

On receipt, your application form will be read carefully by the recruitment team who are trained to only use the information from the application form and not make assumptions. Once your application has been assessed and, if you meet the required cover and distance criteria and your station is recruiting, you will be invited to take part in the selection process.

## **Stage 2: interview**

You will be invited to attend your local On-Call fire station for an informal interview with the station management team. This will last approximately one hour. This will be an opportunity for the team to get to know you, and to further explain the role and expectations of an On-Call firefighter. It will also be an opportunity for you to find out more about the life of an On-Call firefighter and if you are likely to enjoy it.

## **Stage 3: fitness test**

You must have a good standard of upper body strength and fitness, and maintain your fitness levels throughout your career as a firefighter. Your fitness will be assessed during the selection process to determine that your aerobic capacity is at least a VO<sub>2</sub> max level of 42; this is the absolute minimum level of fitness we will accept. You are also required to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

You will be invited to take a fitness test (Chester Treadmill Test) to determine if you meet the minimum VO<sub>2</sub> standard; this will take approximately half an hour. If you do not meet the standard at this stage and our Fitness Advisor feels you are able to improve your fitness levels, you will be provided with fitness guidance.

## **Stage 4: written tests**

You will be invited to take the full suite of written tests detailed below. These last approximately three hours. All tests are timed, and you will be provided with a practice booklet before your test date so that you may become familiar with the type of tests you will take.

**Working with numbers test** - In this test you will be presented with a number of scenarios that include numerical information in a variety of formats, from graphs to gauges. For each scenario you will be asked multiple choice questions.

**Understanding information test** - You will be presented with a number of scenarios, each followed by a number of multiple choice questions that you should answer using the information contained in the scenario.

**Situational awareness and problem solving test** - You will be presented with a number of scenarios and asked to select your most likely response from a series of answers.

**Note:** If you can provide original evidence that you possess GCSEs grade A-C (or equivalent) in Maths and English you will only be required to take the 'Situational awareness and problem solving test', which will take approximately one hour. A copy of your evidence must be provided with your application form, and the original evidence produced at the written tests.

## Stage 5: physical and strength tests

You will be invited to attend the physical tests which will be conducted in small group sessions by our training team. The tests replicate the type of tasks you would be expected to undertake on the training course and within the role of On-Call firefighter, and are designed to test your practical ability and ability to follow instructions. The tests take approximately three hours.

**Lateral pulldown test** - upper body strength test.

**Barbell push test** - upper body strength test.

**Casualty evacuation** – this test is designed to assess upper/lower body strength and co-ordination. Within a time limit, you will drag a 55kg dummy backwards round a 30m course at walking pace using a carrying handle fixed to the dummy.

**Ladder climb** – this test is designed to assess confidence and co-ordination at heights. Within a time limit, you will climb a 13.5 metre ladder and carry out a number of tasks. You will be given the opportunity to practice at ground level before ascending two thirds of the way up, carrying out selected tasks as instructed, before descending correctly. You will be wearing a full safety harness.

**Enclosed space** – this test is designed to assess confidence, agility and stamina. Within a time limit, and wearing a breathing apparatus set and face mask, you will make your way halfway through a crawlway with unobscured vision. Once inside, you will have your vision obscured and you will have to return to the start, performing tasks on the way as instructed.

**Equipment assembly** - this test is designed to assess manual dexterity. Within a time limit, you will assemble and disassemble a number of components to make a piece of equipment, following a series of diagrams. You will be given a demonstration of the test beforehand.

**Equipment carry** – this test is designed to assess aerobic fitness, stamina, upper and lower body strength and co-ordination. Within a time limit, you will carry various items of fire service equipment up and down a course between two cones placed 25 metres apart. You will be given demonstrations of correct lifting techniques and the opportunity to practice picking up the items beforehand.

To make the tests more realistic you will wear fire kit, which we will provide. The tests are supervised and you will be given all the information you need along with a demonstration before taking each test.

The physical tests will involve physical effort and in some cases this will be at a high level over a short period of time. You are advised not to eat or drink immediately before them. If you have not done much physical fitness work for some time it is recommended that you seek advice from your doctor before taking part. If you are in any doubt about your health or physical ability to exercise, consult your doctor before you start physical activity, and seek advice from a trained professional. The tests are very physically demanding and you should not attend if you are recovering from a cold, any illness or surgical operation.

Before you take the physical tests you must complete a Fitness Declaration & Consent Form confirming that you understand the nature of the tests and are fit to perform them. You will not be permitted to take the tests if we have not assessed this declaration, therefore you should complete and return it in plenty of time and before your test date.

You will need to bring a pair of training shoes or suitable footwear, a t-shirt and tracksuit bottoms, or similar, to the tests.

## **Stage 6: job offers and medicals**

We receive a number of applications for On-Call firefighter positions and many applicants will go through to the final stages. Offers of employment will depend on the number of vacancies we have, which stations have a vacancy, and the level of cover each candidate is offering. You will be asked to confirm your level of cover again before any offer of employment is made, to ensure our service needs are being met.

If it is the case that you are successful but not offered a place on the first available training course, you may be held in reserve for future courses. We will advise you of your position at all times.

Those chosen for the first available training course will be given a conditional offer of employment subject to a full medical assessment, references and pre-employment checks (including driving licence check).

**Medical assessment** - this will take approximately two hours and you will need to wear suitable clothing and trainers to take the tests. Along with a general examination you will undergo the following:

- Vision test (including colour vision)
- Hearing test
- Lung function test
- Fitness test (VO2 max 42)\*
- Grip strength test
- Back pull strength test
- Urine test

(\* If necessary, depending on the outcome of your initial fitness test and the time that has lapsed since you took your initial fitness test.)

**Eyesight standards** - It will be necessary for you to take an optician's report with you to your medical assessment, and you will be sent an eyesight report form for your optician to complete. The eyesight standards are as follows

- Minimum corrected visual acuity (VA) of 6/9, with a minimum of 6/12 in the worse eye.
- Minimum uncorrected vision of 6/18 in the better eye, and 6/24 in the worse eye.
- Normal binocular field of vision.
- The ability to read N6 at 30cm unaided (under 25 years)
- The ability to read N12 at 30cm unaided (25 years and over).
- Colour vision will be assessed using the Ishihara Test.
- If you have had surgical correction (for example laser surgery) you must be 12 months post-surgery with no evidence of complications that would impair safe or effective working, provided the above criteria are met.
- Conditions likely to preclude you are: protanopia, deuteranopia, monochromatism, tritanopia/tritanomaly, protanomaly, night blindness or any ocular disease.

If you have any concerns about your eyesight or colour vision you should check if you are likely to meet the required standards with your optician.

**Hearing standards** - Your hearing will also be assessed during your medical. The following summative measures are used to assign an overall score for each ear (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5). The worst ear is used for recruitment purposes, with levels H1 and H2 being acceptable. If you have any concerns about your hearing you should check if you are likely to meet the required standards with your GP or arrange a test through a private hearing test provider.

	LF Sum	HF Sum	Speech Sum
<b>H1</b>	<b>≤ 45 dB HL</b>	<b>≤ 45 dB HL</b>	<b>≤ 35 dB HL</b>
<b>H2</b>	<b>≤ 60 dB HL</b>	<b>≤ 80 dB HL</b>	<b>≤ 60 dB HL (no value &gt; 25 dB HL)</b>
H3	≤ 80 dB HL	≤ 120 dB HL	≤ 90 dB HL (no value > 40 dB HL)
H4	< 120 dB HL	≤ 150 dB HL	≤ 120 dB HL
H5	> 120 dB HL	> 150 dB HL	> 120 dB HL

If you are successful and your conditional offer of employment is confirmed you will be issued with your contract of employment with accompanying documents regarding your induction, training, pay and other matters. You should read these carefully and return them as instructed, signed and dated, before you start your employment with us.

In addition to your Avon Fire & Rescue Service contract you will receive joining instructions from the Severn Park Fire & Rescue Training Centre with information about your firefighter training course.

## Uniform fitting

You will be asked to attend a uniform fitting so that arrangements can be made to provide you with uniform and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in time for your training. The fitting should take no longer than 30 minutes and it is important that you attend as PPE takes time to prepare. Your uniform and PPE will be delivered to your station before your training starts.

## Training

### Pre-course training

Before you begin firefighter training you will complete a period of pre-course training at your local On-Call fire station on their designated drill night between 1900hrs and 2100hrs. Station drill nights are detailed in the table below. Throughout your service you will continue to attend your station on their drill night each week to maintain and develop your skills.

Station	Drill night	Station	Drill night	Station	Drill night
Bath	Thursday	Paulton	Thursday	Weston-s-Mare	Monday
Blagdon	Monday	Pill	Wednesday	Winscombe	Monday
Chew Magna	Monday	Portishead	Wednesday	Yate	Monday
Clevedon	Monday	Radstock	Thursday	Yatton	Wednesday
Nailsea	Wednesday	Thornbury	Monday		

## **Firefighter training (phase 1)**

To attain the knowledge and skills required to progress to a competent On-Call firefighter you will embark upon a programme of structured training, development and assessment at the Severn Park Fire & Rescue Training Centre in Avonmouth, Bristol.

You will attend the Severn Park Fire & Rescue Training Centre and complete three modules of firefighter training and, through structured learning sessions, acquire the basic skills required to fulfil your role. You should note that some of the training will fall over the weekend.

- Core skills module (12 days)
- Breathing apparatus training module (week one five days, week two five days)
- Road traffic collision training module (three days)

Payment will be made for your attendance on the training course, and accommodation will be available.

## **Your development (phase 2)**

Following your firefighter training (phase 1) you will complete a 24 month period of development during which you will exercise and apply your new skills, and evidence your learning, experiences and competence in your Development Portfolio.

You will be regularly assessed throughout your development phase to ensure you are applying your skills to a competent standard, and our Development Support Officer will visit you at 3, 6, 12 and 18 month intervals to see how you are progressing and to verify your Portfolio. Further guidance will also be provided by your Crew, Watch and Station Managers.

In addition, you will be required to attend ten Development Assessment Sessions (DAS) to further progress your development, these must be completed within the development phase.

Successful completion of your Portfolio and attendance at DAS sessions is compulsory and will require a considerable amount of personal investment in terms of time and study from you. Failure to successfully complete your Portfolio within the required time may result in disciplinary action. Support and guidance will be provided by your Managers in order to assist you in successful completion, but it is important that you have the self-motivation to achieve competence.

Training will be an ongoing process throughout your career as a firefighter and you will be expected to participate in all relevant training and contribute to your own development.

# General

## Items you will need

Throughout the selection process you will be required to produce a variety of documents which are listed below. They must be original versions and not photocopies. You may want to spend some time gathering these items to avoid any unnecessary delays, however if you think you will be unable to produce a particular item please contact the Recruitment Advisor.

- Driving licence, and Birth Certificate or Passport.
- Original evidence of your National Insurance Number.
- Original evidence of your English and Maths qualifications.
- Any necessary evidence to enable us to make reasonable adjustments to our selection process.
- Original evidence of change of name.
- Original evidence of relevant qualifications.
- A pair of training shoes or suitable footwear, a t-shirt and tracksuit bottoms, or similar for taking part in the physical tests.

## Forms you will complete

You will be asked to complete a number of forms throughout the selection process and it is important that you complete and return them as instructed and on time.

- **Application form** – must be completed and returned to the Recruitment Advisor at the address on the form.
- **Fitness declaration and consent form** – must be completed and returned to the Recruitment Advisor for assessment and any necessary action **before** you take the physical tests.
- **Eyesight report form** – must be completed by your optician and taken with you to your medical assessment. **Please do not return this form to Avon Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters.**
- **Confirmation of cover form** – we may have held your details on file for some time while waiting for your station to recruit, and the cover you can offer may have changed. You will be asked to complete this form again before any offer of employment is made to ensure our station needs are being met.

## Invitations

When being invited to each stage of the selection process you will be provided with relevant guidance and clear instructions on what you need to do to prepare. On each occasion you will be required to confirm your intention to attend and it is important that you do this so that we can make the necessary arrangements for you. If you do not confirm your attendance the assumption will be made that you are not attending and your place may be offered to another applicant.

## Dress code

We want you to feel comfortable during our selection process, and there is no dress code. You will be provided with details of any specific appropriate mode of dress when invited to that stage.

Good luck with your application.

### **General recruitment enquiries:**

Human Resources  
Avon Fire & Rescue Service  
Police & Fire Headquarters  
PO Box 37  
Valley Road  
Portishead  
Bristol BS20 8JJ  
Tel: 0117 9262061 extension 238

### **Recruitment Advisor**

Tel: 0117 9262061 extension 383

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