

# On-call firefighters

A guide for employers



Lancashire Fire  
and Rescue Service

making Lancashire **safer**





## Foreword



Almost half of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's firefighters are on-call, meaning they respond to emergency calls within their community from home or work.

The contribution of on-call firefighters and the support of employers, particularly in Lancashire's rural areas and small towns, enable the Service to respond quickly to fires and other emergencies and keep people safe.


There is great value in the skills and attributes our on-call firefighters bring to the Service and equal benefits to be gained outside the Service from the training and experiences they undergo.

This guide will tell you what is involved for both employer and employee, and how this could benefit your organisation and your community.

**Dave Russel**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer





## Who are on-call firefighters?

On-call firefighters are men and women living and working in Lancashire who often have another job but also provide cover to the fire service when needed.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service employs people from all walks of life, ranging from self-employed tradespeople and stay-at-home parents to employees of small businesses and large, well known organisations.

They are professionally trained firefighters who work alongside full-time colleagues to respond to a wide range of incidents from road, rail or air crashes, to floods, fires, chemical spills or rescuing people trapped in confined spaces.

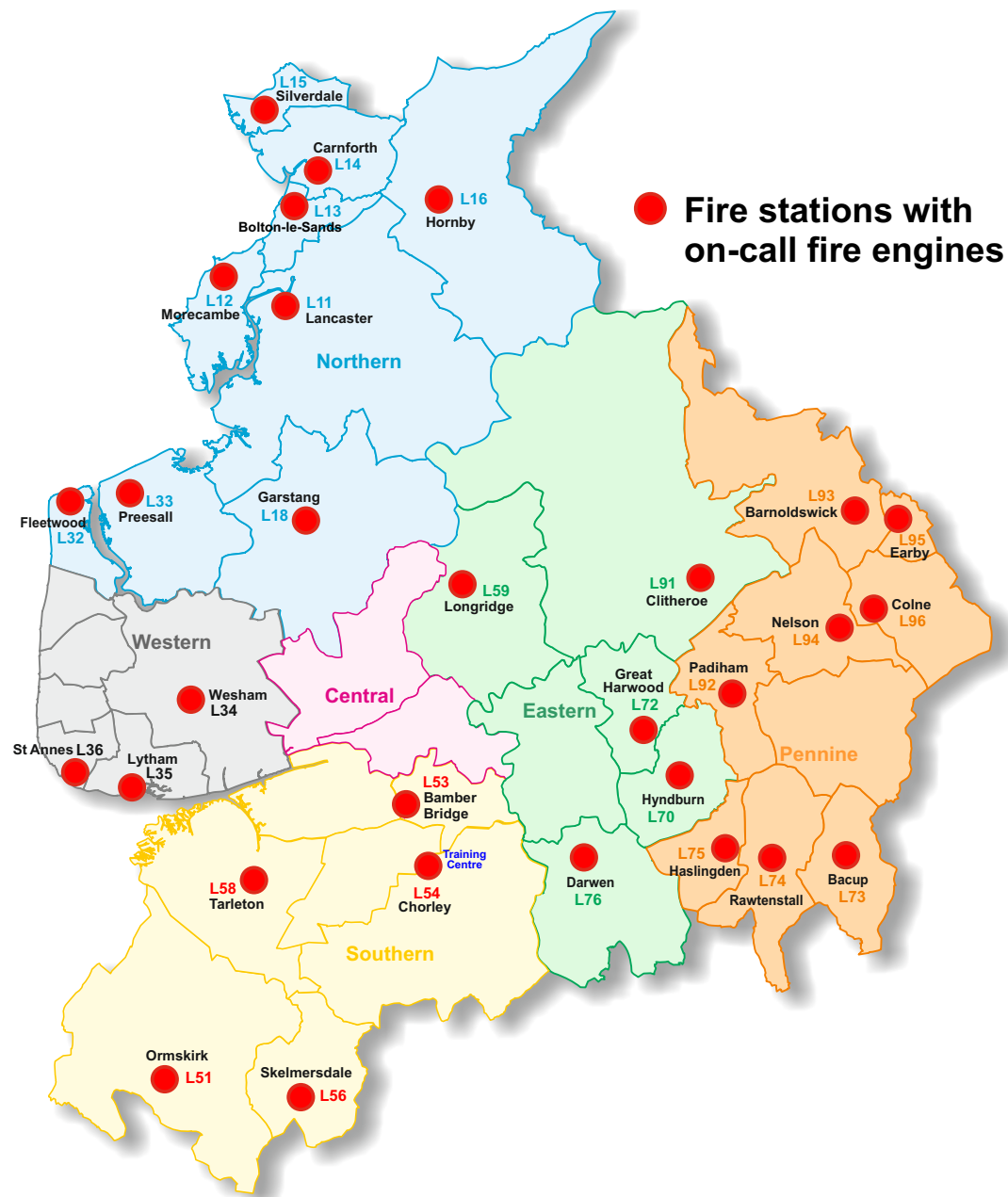
On-call firefighters must live or work within 5-7 minutes of the fire station in order to respond to emergencies when alerted by pager. They are contracted to be available for a set number of hours per week, during which they keep their pager with them, and must attend their local station when alerted.

# How can you help?

There are 39 fire stations across Lancashire; 30 have fire engines crewed by on-call firefighters. They are often the first to attend emergencies in their towns and villages and provide a vital resource within Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

If you or your employees had a fire at home or were injured in a road traffic collision, on-call firefighters from your local station could be first on the scene to help. If there weren't enough to crew the fire engine, the next available crew would take longer to arrive. The Service needs more on-call firefighters; without them some of our fire engines would not be able to respond to emergency calls.

If you are a local employer close to one of our stations, could you support any of your employees to fulfil this integral role in the community?





## What local employers and on-call firefighters say



“SWS UK Ltd supports employees who are on-call firefighters and I am proud to be able to contribute to the community. The work of on-call firefighters is invaluable and benefits the area in which we live. As a business, we are also benefitting from employees who have had additional training which enables them to demonstrate exceptional teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills, all of which can be used in their day-to-day roles.



“Our on-call firefighters assisted in completing the company's fire risk assessment, and in addition to providing refresher first aid training to other employees, they are also trained to trauma level first aid should such treatment ever be required.”

**Ben Laycock**

Product Designer, SWS UK Ltd  
and On-call Firefighter





"As a timber merchant who owns a warehouse full of combustible materials, I understand the importance of getting to an incident as quickly as possible. We could all need this vital service at some point in our lives so I am happy to give my time and leave my primary job to fulfil this role."

"The impact on my business is minimal, as I only have to leave occasionally during working hours. My family understand my role as an on-call firefighter and support my requirement to be on-call when I am at home. My on-call cover and weekly training is managed to have minimal impact on my family life."



"I would say to any potential new employer of an on-call firefighter, to think that in some way you could help save someone's life is very satisfying."

"It is of great importance for local employers to continue to support and encourage individuals who choose to become an on-call firefighter."

**Stewart Healy**

Owner of Lytham Timber  
and On-call Firefighter



Sarah Bray combines home responsibilities for her three children with 60 hours on-call cover per week as a firefighter in Barnoldswick.

“Monday to Friday I'll take the children to school then I'm on-call from 9.15am to 3pm, so I'm free to pick them up. I'm also on-call alternate weekends.

“They think it's really cool that their mum's a firefighter and I get the third degree from them when it's their home time as to what incidents I've attended while they've been at school. Two of them want to be firefighters when they grow up, so they're definitely taking notes!

“Their obvious pride in me as their mum and as a firefighter as well is lovely. Although your professionalism kicks



in when you're at an incident and your thoughts have to be in the here and now, when I later reflect on what I've achieved as part of the team response, I'm proud of myself and my role as an on-call firefighter. It's a great feeling.

“Deciding to apply to become a firefighter was quite a spontaneous thing. I knew I wanted something to present new challenges and something clicked. I thought, why not?

“It's about challenges certainly, but within an organisation with a support network and ways of working that make outcomes achievable. Right now I'm undergoing LGV driver training, so that's a new skill I could never have expected to gain without Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.”

**Sarah Bray**

Full-time Mum and On-call Firefighter



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"I would encourage businesses to support their local fire stations. Not only is this of great benefit to the local community but there are also many benefits for the employer themselves, including the positive public perception and enhanced staff retention.

"The impact is not as great as you may first assume. Our local fire station receives on average three emergency calls per week.



"Of course there are occasions, once or twice a year, when a whole working day may be lost, but we can work around these instances thanks in no small part to the support of our non-firefighting staff members."

**Paul Farman**

Sales Negotiator, John Arden  
and On-call Firefighter

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Watch Manager Junior Bell, the senior officer responsible for Earby Fire Station and its team of firefighters, has completed thirty years as an on-call firefighter and he enjoys his firefighting role due to its variety and challenges.

Adrian Howarth is the Operations Manager at Uniroyal Global, manufacturers of polymer sheet and coated fabrics with an international market for their products in automotive, mass transportation, agricultural machines, contract upholstery and industrial applications.

Adrian says,

“Employing someone who is also an on-call firefighter fulfils our commitment to their personal



development and growth certainly, but confers enormous benefit on the business too in terms of the reassurance of having a colleague with intimate knowledge of the layout and processes of the workplace who is also an expert in fire prevention, accident prevention and first aid.

“Also of great value and importance to us is the contribution Watch Manager Bell makes to our local community as the officer-in-charge at Earby Fire Station. We don't run our business in isolation and recognise our role as a major employer with a commitment to the welfare of the locality.”

**Watch Manager Junior Bell  
and Adrian Howarth**

Uniroyal Global





Some on-call firefighters also have primary employment with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and are in a position to work on-call from home, when not on duty at their wholetime station.

Steph Holden and Abby Pullen are two such firefighters.

Steph's primary employment is as a firefighter at South Shore and when at home in Lytham she provides on-call cover there.

A homeowner with two dogs, there has been an occasion when her pager has activated when out walking the dogs, cutting short their exercise as she headed off to the station to ride the fire engine to the incident.

An experienced on-call firefighter at Lytham for a number of years, she became a wholetime firefighter having previously worked in the railway industry.

Steph cites the variety of the role as an important aspect; "No two days are ever the same. It's a job that I love.







“There's always something new to learn but the core skills become second nature, such as first aid, which is a real asset for anyone to have, with the potential for saving a life wherever you are and whoever needs your help.”

Abby is one of Lancashire's most recent recruits to the wholtime service, having taken up a post at Blackpool. Before that she was a specialist aviation firefighter at Blackpool Airport. She has been an on-call firefighter for many years, at Morecambe and later at Lytham.

Again, it's the variety of the work that's a key attraction for Abby,

“It's a hands-on role with different challenges all the time. Never a dull moment you could say!”

**Steph Holden and Abby Pullen**







## Benefits to you the employer

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is a strongly performing, forward-thinking Service. This is a reflection of our employees, who demonstrate strong core values and are among the best trained and most professional in the country.

Employing an on-call firefighter brings many positive attributes to the workplace; they are used to working as part of a team to achieve an objective, have the ability to think fast while remaining calm in stressful situations and are self-disciplined.

Your employee will receive a variety of professional training and development in transferable skills that could benefit your business. These include certified training in first aid and trauma, LGV driving and basic health and safety including manual handling and risk assessments.

Supporting on-call firefighters also aligns with the social responsibility aims that many businesses aspire to and can enhance your reputation. It demonstrates engagement with your community and sets you apart from your competitors.





# Commitment from the employer

## **What will be the impact on my business?**

We encourage on-call firefighters to ensure that their primary employment remains a priority and that they maintain their availability to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service in agreement with their managers.

We recognise the impact releasing employees may have and offer flexibility in terms of contracted hours to cause minimal disruption to the business.

## **How many times per week will my employee leave work to attend incidents?**

Please see the information relating to your local station in this pack.

## **How long will they be away from work to attend an incident?**

We encourage on-call firefighters to return to their primary employment at the earliest opportunity following an incident. In the event of a false alarm, for example, the fire engines can be back at the station within 20 minutes.

## **What if my employee is out all night at an incident?**

Firefighters do not tend to remain at incidents for long periods of time due to safety and welfare. It is recognised that extended working hours can lead to accidents due to tiredness and lapses in concentration. The Service sends additional crews to relieve those working at incidents for protracted periods.

## **Will I be reimbursed when my employee leaves work?**

Employers do not receive any monetary remuneration. We encourage on-call firefighters to agree arrangements with their employers to leave work to attend incidents.



# Training and development

On-call firefighters attending mandatory training courses will receive payment from Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. Your employee should discuss with you their options regarding time away from primary employment.

## Initial training

On-call firefighters must attend a two-week initial training course at our training centre in Chorley. The course takes place Monday to Friday and will require additional study.

## Breathing apparatus training

This is a two-week course carried out approximately six months after the initial training. It covers the skills needed to wear breathing apparatus in hot and humid conditions and can be demanding on the firefighter.

## Drill nights

New recruits must complete a development handbook over a maximum of four years. This involves attending drill nights at the fire station every week, additional training in the evenings or at weekend and some study in their own time.

## Continuous professional development

Throughout an on-call firefighter's career, there will be opportunities for further development, such as LGV driver training and refresher training for critical skills.







## Employer recognition

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service commends the commitment of employers with an annual recognition award and through its communication channels.





## How to find out more

If you would like to find out more about supporting an on-call firefighter, contact your local retained support officer using the details on the business card supplied with this pack.



[www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk](http://www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk)



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