



Retained Firefighter Information Pack



Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

Introduction

This information booklet has been compiled to give you the information you need to make a decision on whether the job of a Retained Firefighter is right for you. If you are satisfied that you have the necessary skills and qualities, you should complete the enclosed application form.

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service covers an area of 2,500 square miles of the south-east of Scotland. The Service currently employs approximately 1300 people in various functions of which approximately 300 are employed as Retained Firefighters. The Service has 26 retained stations located in the following five areas:

City of Edinburgh	South Queensferry
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East Lothian	Haddington, Tranent, East Linton, North Berwick, Dunbar
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Midlothian	Penicuik
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West Lothian	Bathgate, Whitburn, Linlithgow, Broxburn, West Calder, Livingston
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Scottish Borders	Galashiels, Selkirk, Lauder, Hawick, Newcastleton, Jedburgh, Peebles, Innerleithen, West Linton, Duns, Coldstream, Eyemouth, Kelso
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Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

We endeavour to ensure that the Fire and Rescue Service is as diverse as, and reflective of the communities we serve.

Subject to our legal obligations, we will promote equality of opportunity throughout our recruitment practices and will oppose discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, disability, ethnic background, faith, gender, language, marital status, nationality, political belief, race, religion, responsibility for dependants, sexual orientation and social background.

We will undertake positive action activities to promote fairness and diversity throughout all our recruitment practices.

We will strive to continually improve our processes in order to work positively with the communities we serve and engage their skills and abilities to create and improve our effectiveness.

We will continue our commitment to fairness and diversity within all our practices and ensure respect and dignity for all employees within each of our Services.

Being A Retained Firefighter

Our retained firefighters provide a vital service to the communities in which they live, providing fire cover to smaller or rural towns within Lothian and Borders. Retained firefighters are not based in a fire station but may be at home, or out working. But when the call comes to their pager, a retained firefighter must drop what they are doing and respond to the station quickly and safely.

They then become part of a team ready to face any emergency; fighting fires or other incidents including road traffic accidents, helping people who are trapped, or using specialist equipment to make safe hazardous materials. A retained crew will be called upon to attend the same range of incidents as their wholetime colleagues at any time of the day or night.

Dealing with emergency incidents is vital, but the Fire Service of today has an equally important role within the area of community safety, in which retained firefighters are extensively involved. We recognise that the best way to fight fires is to prevent them ever starting. This aim is achieved in a variety of ways, but is primarily focused on educating and informing. As a firefighter, you would find yourself supporting initiatives in youth and community groups. Another element of this community safety work is the provision of Home Safety Checks to the community in which you work, advising people on potential hazards within the home, how to minimise risks and fitting smoke alarms when necessary.

Could I be a Retained Firefighter?

First of all, you need to work or live near a fire station, because you have to be able to get there within a few minutes of a call. Secondly, because you can't predict when you'll be called out, you'll have to be flexible. You may be working for yourself, or have an employer who will let you have time off to attend calls. You'll have to consider what impact being 'on call' for 80-120+ hours per week will have on your life. Finally, firefighters may see some distressing things and be involved in dangerous situations. You must consider your ability to cope with this aspect of the job too.

How often will I be needed?

This varies, but on average, you will be called out several times a week. You will have to commit 80-120+ hours of your time to being 'on call'. If you cannot be available all the time, that may not be a problem. You can be paid for being 'on call' for only part of the day or week if your available hours meet the needs of the station. There is a particular shortage of people who are available midweek during the day. You may also be required to work some weekends for community safety initiatives.

What are the rewards of being a Retained Firefighter?

You get paid a basic retainer, a fee for call outs and another for the hours spent in action. You get paid for your weekly drill nights and duties like equipment maintenance.

Apart from the challenges and satisfaction of a job well done, this work gives you the chance to work as part of a friendly team. You'll learn new skills, whether its rescue work or preventative fire safety work, helping you become more self-reliant and confident.

What does a Firefighter do?

The role of a Firefighter is varied. The main responsibilities are described below:

Promoting Community Safety

- Be proactive in the community to identify risk, to reduce fire deaths and injuries and to protect the environment.
- Deliver appropriate fire safety messages to those groups most at risk.
- Educate and inform the community in fire safety.

Resolving emergencies

- Respond to requests for assistance.
- Deal with emergencies as directed.
- Minimise distress and suffering, including giving First Aid.

Engaging with people/ community

- Establish and maintain the confidence of members of the public.
- Maintain links with the community.
- Actively seek to understand and to value diverse individuals and groups.
- Operate as an effective team member.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others, treating them with respect and consideration.

Developing local awareness

- Get to know the local community area, including streets, roads and buildings.
- Be aware of the risks and possible hazards to be found within your fire station area.
- Identify fire risks during visits to local premises and be able to offer relevant advice and guidance.

Promoting Health and Safety

- Recognise health and safety risks at work and deal with them appropriately.
- Ensure your own and others' personal safety at work at all times.

Personal Development

- Take responsibility for developing your own skills.
- Taking part in a training and development programme.
- Keep a level of physical fitness necessary to carry out your duties.

What skills do you need to be a Firefighter?

In order to carry out the Firefighter role you will need a number of skills – as listed below:

Solving Problems

Be able to solve problems using relevant information.

Flexibility

Be flexible to new situations and open to change in the role.

Integrity and commitment

Be able to demonstrate ethical standards and commitment to the Firefighter role.

Motivation

Be motivated to achieve high standards.

Coping with Pressure

Be able to cope with pressure and demands.

Physical Ability

Have the physical ability to carry out the Firefighter role including adequate stamina and strength.

Communication

Be able to communicate effectively to varied individuals and groups.

Co-operative Working

Be able to work in a co-operative way to support others.

Conditions of Service

Detailed in this section are some of the main terms and conditions of service which apply to the job of Firefighter.

Hours of Duty

Retained Firefighters are on stand-by, responding to pager, to attend incidents during their period of availability. In addition they must report to the station to which he/she is attached for training, development and maintenance duties for an average of two hours each week (or three hours at the discretion of the Chief Fire Officer).

Prior to appointment you will be asked to complete a Retained Cover Assessment form, detailing the hours you are able to work. This will form part of your contract.

Retained Firefighters are required to submit a detailed forecast of actual availability on a weekly basis and co-operate with the local arrangements for crew management.

Any material change such as hours of availability, home address or place of work, etc, where this affects your availability, may result in termination of your employment.

Leave

Retained Firefighters are entitled to 4 weeks paid annual leave each year. This will increase to 5 weeks upon completion of 5 years continuous service.

Competence and Pay

Pay entitlements of individual employees are determined by the employees' role and whether the employee is in the training, development or competent stage of that role.

The current Pay Rates for the Retained Duty System are also contained within your application pack.

These pay rates are applicable to employees working on a 100% retained contract (i.e. at least 120 hours per week) and pay is adjusted dependant on the availability of the employee as detailed below:

- 24/7 No Restrictions Cover attracting 125% Retaining Fee
- At least 120 hours per week (which is defined as Full Cover) attracting a 100% Retaining Fee
- From 80 to 119 hours per week (defined as Reduced Cover) attracting 75% Retaining Fee

Below 80 hours per week would only be considered on an individual basis under the flexible working arrangements contained in the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service such as Job Share or Part Time e.g. Day Cover only attracting a Retaining Fee pro rata the level of cover provided.

Retained Firefighters will also receive payment for attendance at drill nights and turn-out for and attendance at fire calls.

Rates of pay shall be based on progression through the roles in line with the requirements of the Integrated Personal Development System, in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

Pension

Firefighters will automatically be entered into the New Firefighter's Pension Scheme, however individuals may elect to opt-out of this. Contributions are currently set at 8.5% of salary. Further detailed information on the pension scheme will be made available if you are successfully appointed to the post.

Promotion

Vacancies as they arise are advertised at the relevant Station and on the Service intranet and all interested parties are invited to apply.

Fairness and Dignity at Work

The Fire Service is committed to achieving equality and to ensuring that every individual is treated with respect and fairness. Achieving equality means breaking down existing prejudices and stereotypes. The Service will therefore challenge bad practice and find constructive ways to change attitudes and practices.

Employees have clear responsibilities to actively support the Service's policies and procedures in providing a working environment that is free from bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Health, Safety and Welfare

The Fire Service recognises the importance of health, safety and welfare in the workplace and is committed to achieving standards of excellence. The wide variety of hazards encountered in the Service will be controlled through appropriate training and the systematic application of preventative and protective measures in a risk assessment framework.

Whilst the Fire Service has a duty to comply with legislation governing the health, safety and welfare of employees there is a duty on employees to take care of themselves and others affected by their actions at work and to comply with the Services actions policies and guidance on health, safety and welfare.

Retained Cover by Wholetime Personnel

Wholetime Personnel interested in applying to become Retained firefighters in addition to their Wholetime duties should refer to the following documents for additional information:

- 'Provision of Retained Cover by Wholetime Personnel' - Practice Statement
- 'Provision of Retained Cover by Wholetime Personnel' - FAQ's

Both of these documents are available by contacting the Personnel Department.

Recruitment and Selection Stages

Stage 1: Application

You are required to complete and return the Application Form and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form as part of this stage of the process.

Application Form

Personal Details

It is important that you complete this section accurately as the information requested is required in order to communicate with you and process your application. Failure to complete this section properly will mean we may not be able to consider your application further.

Residency Status - Please see the general information section.

Employment Details

Please give full details of any current and previous employment.

Education and Training

Please enter any qualifications, skills or training you have that may be relevant to your application for the role of Firefighter.

References

You are required to provide full details of two individuals who could provide a written reference on your behalf. One of these should be your current or most recent employer.

Declaration of Offences

If you have any criminal convictions, this may not necessarily disqualify you from employment. All applications are considered strictly on their merit, and in particular whether or not the offence has a bearing on your suitability for employment having regard to the duties of a Firefighter.

You are however, required to declare any offence for which the conviction is not yet spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. You must also declare any charges and driving offences that are pending; a subsequent conviction could lead to you being discharged from the Fire Service if appointed.

Please note that a **Standard Disclosure** will be required prior to any offer of employment.

Canvassing

Canvassing either directly or indirectly will automatically disqualify any applicants.

Please return your completed application to:

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service
Personnel Department
Lauriston Place
Edinburgh, EH3 9DE

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

The purpose of completing this form is to enable us to monitor our recruitment process in relation to our equal opportunities policy and to ensure equality and fairness exists throughout our recruitment process.

This information will not be seen by any selection panel and will remain strictly confidential – used only for monitoring purposes.

Applicants who have a disability should provide details in order that reasonable adjustments may be considered.

Stage 2: Interview and Tests

If applicants satisfy the criteria of a Retained Firefighter they will be invited to attend for Interview. This will normally take place at the Station for which you are applying.

This stage consists of an informal, structured interview with the Station Commander and Personnel Officer. The interview is designed to provide you with an opportunity to describe the knowledge and skills you can offer, and also to provide you with information that may be helpful to you.

We will also discuss the availability which you are able to commit to and how this matches with station requirements.

This stage also involves:

- A written test
- Two practical ability tests

Stage 3: Fitness Test

This will normally take place at the same time as the Interview and written test.

The preliminary fitness assessment, stage three, and the practical assessments, stage four, are designed to demonstrate the levels of aerobic fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and agility required to carry out the role of a Firefighter. Anyone who is physically active in work or who regularly participates in sport or exercise is likely to have an adequate level of physical fitness.

If you are not involved in any form of physical activity at the moment, you would be advised to start preparing now. This will give you the best possible chance to demonstrate your potential, not only at this stage but also later in the Practical Assessments.

Before proceeding to the actual fitness assessment you will be asked to complete a basic Health Questionnaire and have your Blood Pressure measured. Any concerns which may arise will be dealt with appropriately by a member of our Team before you are allowed to proceed.

The test used to assess your fitness at this preliminary stage is the Sports Coach UK (National Coaching Foundation) Multistage Shuttle Run Test. The test is designed to measure the efficiency of your heart and lungs during activity, often referred to as cardiovascular (CV) fitness or stamina. It not only provides a good indication of CV fitness, but also agility and mental determination to succeed, both of which are equally important requirements.

The Multistage Shuttle Run Test is a progressive test run over a 20m distance. The time allowed to cover the 20m shuttle is indicated by a 'bleep' sound. There is an average of 8-10 shuttles within each level. As the test progresses the time between shuttles is reduced (at the beginning of each level), therefore you have to run quicker. The total time you will be running is 9-10 minutes. Simply, this means that you will be running 20m back and forth and after approximately each minute of running your pace will have to increase until you reach Level 8.6.

You are required to achieve Level 8.6 which equates to a VO₂ max score of 42(ml/kg/min) to be able to progress to the next stage. If you have prepared and have a reasonably good level of fitness you should not find this too difficult.

The test is not a race and therefore you will not be in competition with the others in your group.

As with any physical fitness test, you should avoid vigorous physical activity in the 24 hours prior to your test. In the hours immediately prior to your test, you should avoid drinking tea or coffee, or smoking.

Important: The national standard recommended by the Home Office for recruitment is a VO₂ max score of 45 (ml/kg/min). National guidelines also state that at some stage in the recruitment process candidates should undergo a Step Test. Therefore, if you are successful you will have your aerobic fitness re-tested, using a Chester Step Test, at the final physical and medical examination. At this stage you will be required to attain a VO₂ max score of 45 (ml/kg/min). It is therefore essential that your fitness is sufficient to reach this level.

How can you prepare for this test?

Training for the test should be specific therefore in this instance running should make up the bulk of your training, although other forms of CV training will be beneficial. For information on how you can prepare your fitness please visit the following web page www.lbfire.org.uk/work/Fitness&Recruitment_GuidancePack.pdf.

This provides suggestions on training methods and gives an example of a 12 week training programme you may find useful. If you do not have access to the internet a copy can be requested from the recruitment administrator.

Stage 4: Practical Assessments

If successful at the Interview stage of the process, candidates will be invited to attend a Practical Assessment session.

The Practical Assessment involves three activities, firstly, wearing breathing apparatus and moving through a confined space, and, secondly, a ladder climb and finally a strength test.

ACTIVITY 1: Breathing Apparatus & Confined Spaces

You will make your way through a crawling gallery as part of a team. You will be working in a confined environment whilst wearing fire kit and breathing apparatus. You will be given information to remember which you will then be required to relay to the assessors.

You will be guided through this exercise by experienced instructors who will assess your ability to cope with this environment, to work as an effective team member and to be able to communicate with others.

How can you prepare for this test?

In terms of working in confined spaces there is little you can do to prepare for this. If you suspect that you may have difficulty working in confined spaces, in darkness, please tell us and we will try to support you in this environment. You may well not be aware of this until you actually experience this test.

N.B. We regret that the wearing of facial hair is not compatible with the safe wearing of Breathing Apparatus which is an integral part of a Firefighters Personal Protective Equipment. If you wear a beard for religious reasons, please contact the Service Equality Officer to discuss this issue.

ACTIVITY 2: Ladder Climb

You will be required to climb a ladder pitched against a building to a height of approximately 15 metres. This is assessed by our instructors who will assess your ability to undertake this task without suffering from obvious fear of heights and to cope with the demands of the task. He/she will explain and demonstrate the Fire Service technique for ladder climbing.

How can you prepare for the Ladder Climbing Test?

You can practice if you have access to a ladder. However, don't take risks. The assessor will be assessing ability to carry out this task safely in a co-ordinated manner without displaying undue stress or discomfort. Listen carefully to the instructor when he/she is giving instructions.

If you suspect that you may suffer from a fear of heights, you should think very carefully before applying to join the Fire Service. The ability to work safely at heights is fundamental to the work of a firefighter.

ACTIVITY 3: Dead Lift Test

The dead lift test is a simulation test, designed to assess your ability to lift and carry a piece of Fire Service Equipment over a distance of 20 metres. You will have to carry the simulation Equipment along the 20 metre distance without dropping it, in a safe and controlled manner. Only one attempt is permitted.

How can you prepare for this test?

A balanced fitness training programme which encompasses elements of aerobic work together with strength and muscle endurance will help you prepare for these tests. If you feel you lack in any one of these areas then it would be wise to spend extra time focusing specifically on that component.

Stage 5: Confirmation of Availability

If successful, candidates will be required to provide us with a Letter of Release from their employer if applicable to ensure their availability to attend incidents during working hours.

Candidates will also be asked to complete a Retained Cover Assessment form which will detail the hours which you are able to commit to, and this will form part of your Contract of Employment.

It is important to note that you will be required to advise the Service of any material change such as hours of availability, home address or employer, etc, to meet service delivery needs, failure to do so may result in termination of your employment. In addition, where this affects your availability, this may also result in termination of your employment.

Stage 6: Eyesight, Medical Examination and Fitness Assessment

Once availability is confirmed, successful candidates will be required to undergo an eyesight test, medical examination and fitness assessment.

Eyesight

The following have been accepted by the Board as eyesight standards for recruitment and retention of Firefighters:

- The use of aids to vision will be possible at recruitment stage.
- Corrected visual acuity should be 6/9 with both eyes and a minimum of 6/12 in the worse eye.
- The minimum uncorrected vision for recruits will be 6/18, 6/24.
- There will be a minimum requirement to read N12 at 30cm (with correction).
- There is a requirement to be considered colour safe, i.e. certain degrees of colour impairment may be acceptable.

You will be required to provide a full visual assessment by a specialist registered on the Ophthalmic List (Optician, Optometrist, and Ophthalmologist). Final decisions regarding acceptability will remain with management based on advice given by the Fire Service Medical Adviser and health and safety considerations.

Please be advised that if you have any concerns regarding your eyesight you can seek further advice from the Service Occupational Health Department.

Medical Examination

The medical examination will be conducted by the Fire Service Medical Adviser.

You will be required to complete a medical questionnaire and undergo a medical examination. You may be required to give your consent for us to contact your GP as part of the process to obtain further information where necessary.

Please note that there is no absolute bar to employment, however as part of the recruitment process we shall investigate any illness or injury you may have and assess how this may affect your employment as a Firefighter. Failure to declare relevant information at this stage may result in subsequent dismissal from the Service.

If you have any concerns about this you may contact our Occupational Health Unit on 0131 557 8157 at any stage in the process. Calls can be made in confidence.

Final Fitness Assessment

As part of the statutory entrance requirements, you will be required to undertake a Fitness Test - in this case the Chester Step Test.

The test is carried out at this stage to assess your aerobic capacity to ensure you can attain the required level of cardiovascular fitness – VO₂ max of 45 (ml/kg/min). The Chester Step test is a sub-maximal multistage step test and involves stepping on and off a 30 cm high bench in time with a metronome for 6 – 10 minutes.

You should avoid any demanding physical activity in the 24 hours prior to your final medical and fitness test. In the hours prior to your test you should also avoid drinking tea or coffee or smoking. It should be noted that additional testing may be applied at the discretion of the Fire Service Medical Adviser.

Stage 7: Reference Checks

Prior to any offer of employment being made the Service will require:

- Certificate of satisfactory medical and fitness test.
- Satisfactory references from two named referees.
- A satisfactory Standard Disclosure Scotland Certificate.
- Documentary evidence that you have the right to work and live in the UK

General Information

Residency Status

As an employer we are subject to the provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. As we could be found guilty of committing a criminal offence if we employ someone who does not have permission to be in or work in the United Kingdom, we shall request relevant documentation from you prior to confirming an offer of employment. Examples of relevant documentation include a full UK passport, a valid work permit and valid EU passport.

Facial Hair

The breathing apparatus facemask must be able to form a seal with the skin around the perimeter of the face; therefore beards and long sideburns are not permitted as these place the wearer at risk. Individuals who wear beards for religious reasons would have to ensure that they are trimmed to allow for an effective seal.

Make up / Body Piercing / Jewellery

Operational employees cannot wear make-up or jewellery, including body and/or facial piercings, whilst on duty (this includes training).

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Decisions regarding Recruitment and Selection are based on the assessment of an individual to carry out the role of a Firefighter. Applicants who have a disability should complete the relevant section of the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form in order that any reasonable adjustments which are required may be considered.

Training

Once candidates have met all of the above conditions you will be issued with an Offer of Employment and given a start date with the Service. Training will commence with a two week induction period which involves you attending a one-day induction session and your retained station on its allocated drill nights to receive training on basic Manual Handling, Health and Safety, and Equal Opportunities.

You will then be required to attend the Scottish Fire Service College, Gullane for a two week training course. This course is residential, Monday to Friday, and accommodation will be provided.

Upon completion of this course you will then be able to attend operational incidents in a limited role to obtain experience.

You will be required to attend a Phase I and Phase II Breathing Apparatus Course over 4 consecutive weekends at the Service Fire Training Centre, McDonald Road Fire Station, Edinburgh, and thereafter at yearly intervals.

Further training will take place at your retained station. However, you may be required to attend any course for which you are nominated, pertinent to your post.

Training in the Fire and Rescue Service is ongoing and is safety critical. Attendance at Station Training Nights is therefore mandatory with the exception of periods of annual leave, and is paid separately to the Retaining Fee and does not relate to the level of that fee.

For your information Retained Station Training Nights are as follows:

Group	Station	Day	Time
West Lothian	Bathgate	Monday	1900
	Linlithgow	Thursday	1900
	Whitburn	Thursday	1900
	Broxburn	Tuesday	1900
	West Calder	Monday	1900
	Livingston	Monday/Wednesday	1900
City of Edinburgh	South Queensferry	Wednesday	1900
Midlothian	Penicuik	Wednesday	1830
East Lothian	Dunbar	Thursday	1830
	Haddington	Tuesday	1900
	North Berwick	Thursday	1900
	Tranent	Monday	1900
	East Linton	Wednesday	1900
	Scottish Borders	Innerleithen	Tuesday
Peebles		Tuesday	1900
West Linton		Wednesday	1900
Galashiels		Tuesday	1900
Lauder		Wednesday	1830
Selkirk		Monday	1900
Hawick		Wednesday	1830
Jedburgh		Wednesday	1900
Newcastleton		Thursday	1900
Coldstream		Thursday	1900
Duns		Monday	1900
Eyemouth		Monday	1800
Kelso	Tuesday	1830	

Retained Firefighter Pay Rates

FIREFIGHTING ROLES – PAY RATES FROM 1st JULY 2008 (RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM)

	(1) £ per annum	(2) £ per annum	(3) £ per hour	(4) £ per occasion
Firefighter				
Trainee	2,090	1,045	9.54	3.65
Development	2,177	1,089	9.94	3.65
Competent	2,786	1,393	12.72	3.65
Crew Manager				
Development	2,961	1,480	13.52	3.65
Competent	3,088	1,544	14.10	3.65
Watch Manager				
Development	3,154	1,578	14.40	3.65
Competent A	3,243	1,622	14.80	3.65
Competent B	3,453	1,727	15.77	3.65
Station Manager				
Development	3,592	1,796	16.40	3.65
Competent A	3,699	1,849	16.89	3.65
Competent B	3,962	1,980	18.09	3.65
Group Manager				
Development	4,137	2,068	18.89	3.65
Competent A	4,260	2,131	19.45	3.65
Competent B	4,586	2,293	20.94	3.65
Area Manager				
Development	4,856	2,429	22.17	3.65
Competent A	5,002	2,501	22.84	3.65
Competent B	5,327	2,664	24.32	3.65

Column 1 shows the full annual retainer

Column 2 shows the retainer for employees on the day crewing duty system

Column 3 shows the hourly rate for work undertaken

Column 4 shows the disturbance payment per call-out

Further Information

Further information on the Fire Service can be obtained from the following websites:

www.lbfire.org.uk

www.scottish-fireservicescollege.org

Please note that all information contained in this document is for information purposes only and does not constitute part of a Contract of Employment.