



# Career of the week

## Firefighter

Firefighters help to protect people from fire and other dangers, and give on fire prevention

**Average salary (a year):** £24,191 (starter) to £32,244 (experienced)

**Typical hours (a week):** 41 to 43 a week

You could work evenings/weekends/bank holidays (on shifts)

You can get into this job through:

### College

You could take a Level 2 or 3 Diploma in Public Services before applying to the fire service, although this is not essential.

### Entry requirements

You may need:

2 or more GCSEs at grades 9 to 3 (A\* to D), or equivalent, for a level 2 course

4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C), or equivalent, including English and maths for a T Level

### Apprenticeship

You may be able to start training on an operational firefighter advanced apprenticeship.

You'll need to be employed by a fire service to do this.

You could train to be a firefighter in the Royal Air Force (RAF). You can find more information at:

[Royal Air Force | Home \(mod.uk\)](https://www.royalairforce.mod.uk/)

### Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C), or equivalent, including English and maths, for an advanced apprenticeship
- **Volunteering**
- Volunteering or working in a support role, for example emergency call handling or fire safety, will give you an idea of what the job is like, as well as access to internal vacancies.
- **Direct Application**
- You can apply directly to join the fire service. Each one sets its own entry requirements.
- Many ask for GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C) in English and maths, or equivalent qualifications.

You'll need to pass:

- an online test to assess your judgement ability in a realistic work setting
- number and reading tests

If you're successful, you'll:

- do practical selection tests to find out whether you can do the physical tasks needed for the job
- be interviewed

**Career tips**

Most fire services take on new recruits once every 12 months, so you'll need to find out when they are recruiting next.

**Further information**

You can ask your local fire and rescue service for a firefighter careers and recruitment pack.

**Skills and knowledge**

You'll need:

- knowledge of public safety and security
- customer service skills
- the ability to accept criticism and work well under pressure
- patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- to be thorough and pay attention to detail
- sensitivity and understanding
- knowledge of training and how to present information
- the ability to work well with others
- to be able to carry out basic tasks on a computer or hand-held device

**Restrictions and Requirements**

You'll need to:

- pass a fitness test
- pass a medical check
- pass enhanced background checks
- have a full driving licence
- be over 18 years of age

Some fire services may only accept applications from people living in the local and surrounding areas.

**Day-to-day tasks**

Every day will be different, but you could:

- inspect and maintain equipment
- carry out practice drills and take part in training
- respond to emergency call-outs
- rescue people and animals from burning buildings and accident sites
- control and put out fires
- deal with bomb alerts and floods
- manage chemical or hazardous substance spills
- give presentations to schools and community groups
- inspect buildings to make sure they meet fire safety regulations

**Working environment**

You could work at a fire station, at a client's home or at a client's business.

Your working environment may be at height, physically and emotionally demanding and cramped.

You may need to wear safety clothing and use safety equipment and a uniform.

**Career progression**

All fire services have a programme that lets you plan and track your career development.

You could work your way up to crew manager, watch manager or station manager. If you're prepared to move between services, you could become an area manager, a brigade manager or a chief fire officer.

You could also get a Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) licence for driving fire engines.