

## EMPLOYEES

### What is a retained firefighter?

A retained firefighter is a uniformed member of staff who works for Grampian Fire & Rescue Service on a part-time basis. They provide a vital service to the communities in which they live or work providing fire cover to smaller or rural towns within Grampian. They are not based in a fire station but may be at home or out working. When the call comes to their pager they must respond to the station quickly and safely.

### 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, you might see some distressing things and be involved in dangerous situations. You must consider your ability to cope with this aspect of the job.

### What kind of incidents would I deal with?

The services that Grampian Fire & Rescue provide to the public are varied and may include attending road traffic collisions, fighting fires, rescuing persons and animals from emergency situations or using specialist equipment to make safe hazardous materials.

It also has to be acknowledged that you could from time to time, have to deal with situations which could be regarded as traumatic. An example of such situations could be:

- Cutting free badly injured persons from vehicles involved in accidents
- Picking up badly burned bodies
- Being in a burning building and fearing that the floor will give way or ceilings will crash on top of you

In other words, firefighters may see some gruesome things, get caught up in dangerous situations, and have to deal with adults and children who are in a stressful state. Firefighters may at times fear for their own safety and in extreme cases their lives.

The Fire Service of today has an equally important role within the area of community safety. We recognise that the best way to fight fires is to prevent them ever starting. You could find yourself supporting initiatives in youth and community groups or providing home safety checks in the community.

## What support would I get if I am successful and encounter traumatic situations?

Confidential counselling and support is offered and available to all staff that experience stress symptoms after an incident.

## What criteria is required to join?

You need to be aged 18 years or over and either live or work within 7 minutes of the fire station. If you are already in employment (primary employer) then you will need their agreement to release you to attend training and incidents when required.

You will need to successfully complete some basic tests on working with numbers and understanding information, a practical test and interview. You will also have to be Disclosure Checked and have a medical. These tests allow us to ensure we employ the most appropriate person for the role.



## How many hours do I need to work each week?

This varies, but on average you could be called out several times a week. You will have to commit to provide at least 120 hours availability (of being 'on call'). During this time if an incident occurs you are expected to respond to the fire station when the pager activates. In addition you must attend the fire station one evening a week for 2 ½ hours training and development session.

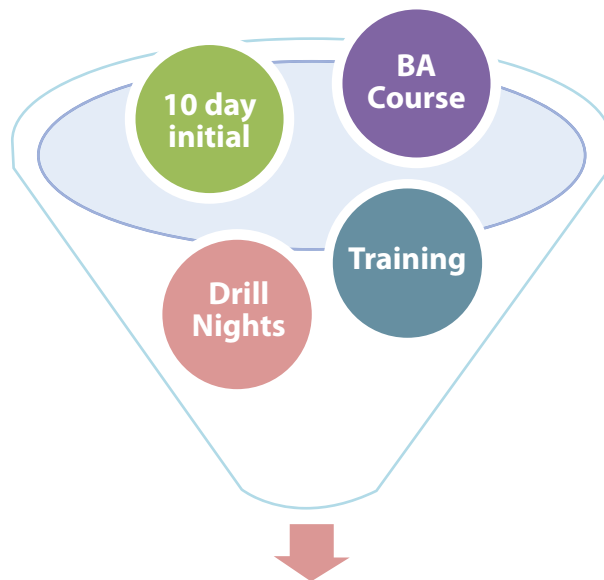
If you cannot be available all of the time due to work or personal commitments we may agree to employ those who offer less than 120 hours availability per week (restricted availability). This may be where there is a particular shortage at the station or that the hours you can provide have been identified as being required for the station to respond to incidents.

## Do I need to be physically fit?

The good news is you don't have to be an athlete to become a fire-fighter but there is a requirement for all uniformed personnel to have a certain standard of fitness. Dependent on the role you carry out you may have to use ladders, hoses and other equipment, however it's not all about sheer strength; by employing the right techniques you can achieve things you never thought possible!

To qualify for one of our positions we will need to test your physical fitness and you can see what this entails by watching the enclosed Point of Entry DVD or entering the following URL address in to your Internet [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEmd9O187QU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEmd9O187QU)

If you are considering applying for a post you may want to start a fitness programme but remember to consult your doctor first. Some of the best ways to improve your fitness include swimming, running and circuit training. You may also need to build your upper body strength for tasks such as lifting and climbing. But, before you dive in to your new fitness regime remember to stretch and warm up – and allow yourself time to rest between sessions.



## Competent Retained Firefighter

### What do I earn and is there a pension scheme?

Retained firefighters are paid an annual retaining fee for being on 'on call' and available to attend incidents. In addition to the retaining fee you are also paid hourly for your attendance at the weekly training night and any incidents that occur. Other payments include disturbance allowances and attendance fees. The national salary pay scales are available inside this pack. There is also a national firefighter's pension scheme. If you want more details about the pension programme please contact our personnel department.

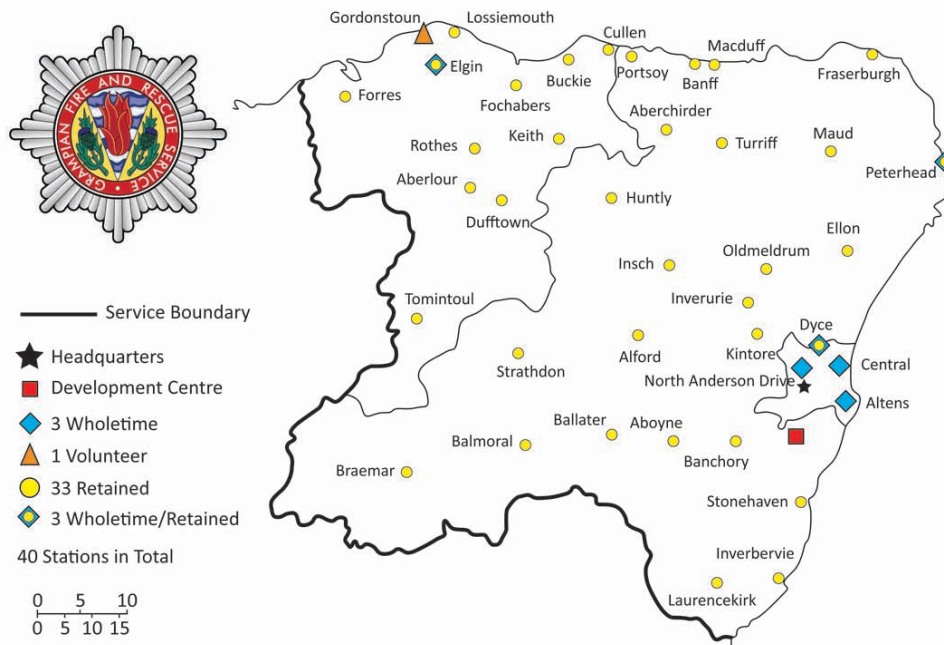
## OUR AREA

Grampian Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS) serves the local authority areas and communities of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, covering an area of approximately 8,700 km<sup>2</sup> (3,360 square miles) with a population of approximately 520,000.

With Aberdeen being the 'Energy Capital of Europe', the Service protects a number of significant risks including a busy industrial harbour, major oil and gas terminals and the most frequently used heliport in the country. In addition there is the biggest single site hospital in Europe, two operational RAF bases, two prisons and the Royal Residence at Balmoral Castle. The Service has six full-time fire stations which are based in Aberdeen (4), Peterhead (1) and Elgin (1) and retained fire stations in a further thirty-five towns in the area. We also have one volunteer unit at Gordonstoun School.

The Service employs more than nine hundred people in emergency operations, community safety and business support roles.

Please see below a map of our operational full-time and retained fire stations.



## OUR ORGANISATION

GFRS is organised into 3 Command areas which are aligned with unitary authority boundaries. The Commands are responsible for day to day operations, preventing emergency incidents, protecting our communities and responding to calls for assistance. To support this, the Service has a number of support functions, primarily based at Service Headquarters, including Finance, Personnel, Transport and ICT departments. Staff levels (as at December 2009) number over 900, made up of approximately 800 operational fire-fighters and managers operating from some of the 40 operational stations and sites throughout the area. About 90 staff are employed in support departments performing a vital role in assisting service delivery.

## EMPLOYERS

### What is a retained Firefighter?

A retained firefighter is someone who lives or works in a rural community and attend emergency situations within minutes, at any time of the day or night, by responding to pager calls. Included in this pack is a map showing all operational full-time and retained stations.

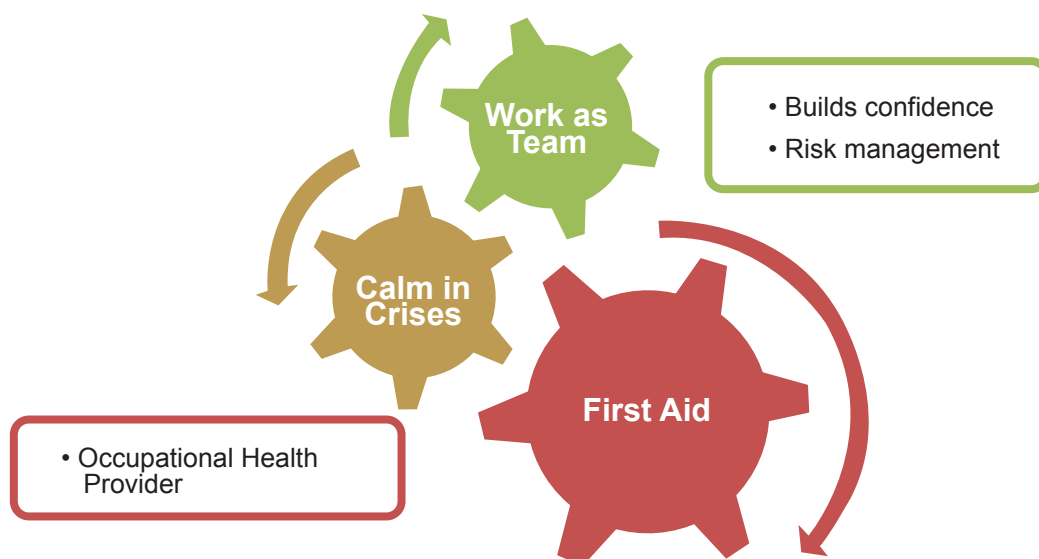
### What benefits can a Retained Firefighter offer your business?

A retained firefighter learns a variety of skills, many of which can be useful in any workplace. They learn to work well in a team, to think and act quickly and accurately and to keep calm in a crisis. They will also learn to deal with all sorts of people in a wide range of circumstances. Their confidence and team working skills will be enhanced along with their risk management skills.

Retained firefighters need to be fit which has many health benefits. The Service does all it can to ensure that its personnel keep fit and well through our local Occupational Health provider.

They also learn first aid to a high standard, which helps to keep other employees safe.

Risk assessments and dealing with fire hazards are all part of the training for our Retained Firefighters, so they can support health and safety officers in meeting their obligations and help to improve the safety of all staff in your workplace



Although an employee may have to rush off to respond to an incident at any moment and could be away for some time, the above benefits could make this worthwhile. As an employer you will have the satisfaction of knowing your support for your employee will also benefit your local community in something that could really make a difference.

## **How often and for how long will my employee be called out for?**

It is difficult to give a definitive answer as this will depend on the number of calls that a specific station receives. The average number of call-outs per month varies throughout the Grampian area, and include incidents occurring outwith the normal working day. The average duration of each call will also vary depending on the nature of the incident. However most incidents last, on average, one hour and 15 minutes. At prolonged incidents personnel are relieved of their duties every 4 hours.

If you would like specific information relating to the station that your employee has applied to join, please contact your local Fire Station.

## **How will my employee be alerted and how will I know?**

Your employee will carry a radio pager and will be alerted to attend the station when an emergency call is received. If your employee is likely to be working alone, you may want to agree with him/her a means of notifying you when alerted.

## **Apart from attending emergency incidents, will there be any other times that my employee is likely to be carrying out Fire Service duties?**

In addition, you will need to be willing to release your employee for the following:

- To attend the local fire station for training – one evening per week between 1830 hour – 2130 hours
- To attend a one-off 10 day initial Training course – this is usually run from Wednesday to Sunday for 2 consecutive weeks to minimise disruption to employers.
- To attend a one-off 8 day Breathing Apparatus course – this is scheduled approximately 6 months after completion of the Initial Training.
- Releasing your employee to perform Fire Service duties at other times will be by mutual agreement between the employer and employee.

## **Will the fact that my employee is a Retained Firefighter restrict me in relation to where I can send him/her to work?**

No, each fire station has an establishment level that allows for Retained firefighters being unavailable by reason of being on leave, off sick, working away from the town/village, etc.

## Retained Fire-fighters come from a wide range of backgrounds.

This variety brings rich and valuable experience and enables Grampian Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS) to provide the highest level of service delivery to the communities we serve.



### **Graeme Smith (Plumber) and Iain Anderson (Joiner) both have 8 months service as Firefighters at Cullen Fire Station:**

We both joined at the same time – February 2010 as we had always wanted to become firefighters and to give something back to the community that we live in. As a retained firefighter we respond to emergency incidents and provide fire safety advice and in doing so have learned lots of new skills like teamwork, practical skills and first aid along with gaining a growing confidence in dealing with emergency situations. One of the greatest things is the pride you feel at being part of an Emergency Service.

### **Lilian Main (Nursery Owner), has 9 years service at Inch Fire Station and is a Crew Manager:**

I joined Inch fire station as a retained firefighter in July 2001 aged 21. My reason for joining was that I wanted to make a difference and a contribution to the local community as well as something rewarding for myself. Our station covers a wide area so I feel we make a substantial difference to community fire safety working alongside local schools and groups and providing that much needed service to people who are in need of our assistance. In my current role I've developed my leadership skills and confidence by having the responsibility and accountability for my Watch at Inch. I thoroughly enjoy my job and get a lot of job satisfaction from my role as well as a sense of achievement in helping others and contributing to a safer community.



## Retained Fire-fighting roles - pay rates from 1st July 2009

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	<b>*(1) £ per annum</b>	<b>*(2) £ per annum</b>	<b>*(3) £ per annum</b>
<b>Firefighter</b>			
Trainee	2,116	9.66	3.70
Development	2,204	10.06	3.70
Competent	2,821	12.88	3.70
<b>Crew Manager</b>			
Development	2,998	13.69	3.70
Competent	3,127	14.28	3.70
<b>Watch Manager</b>			
Development	3,193	14.58	3.70
Competent A	3,284	14.99	3.70
Competent B	3,496	15.96	3.70

\* (1) Full annual retainer

\* (2) Hourly rate for work undertaken

\* (3) Disturbance payment per call-out