



Fire Control

Firefighters (Control) perform a vital role at the hub of the Fire & Rescue Service. The role is not just about taking 999 calls but involves the ability to think clearly and calmly in extreme circumstances, to identify what a situation requires and work as part of a team to help save lives.

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Frequently asked questions

Some answers to the most frequently asked questions about joining Fire Control

Case studies

A typical day and a profile of a Watch Manager (Control) and Watch Training Manager.

Related sites: www.communities.gov.uk/fire/resilienceresponse/firecontrol/

The government's FiReControl project will provide an integrated and modern network of nine Regional Control Centres (RCCs). They will be able to receive calls and mobilise resources across the country.

Becoming a Firefighter (Control)



Joining a Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) control centre is a demanding but rewarding opportunity. The eligibility criteria to become a Firefighter (Control) will be slightly between FRSs so you should check with your local Fire & Rescue Service for their exact requirements.

General eligibility requirements

- Basic levels of literacy and numeracy (spell accurately, calculate numbers).
- Ability to receive and record information and act accordingly on this information.
- Keyboard skills - ability to enter accurately into a computer system at a moderate speed (30 words per minute).
- Communication skills - ability to listen attentively and speak clearly so callers or other team members can understand what you are saying.
- Ability to follow instructions to find out necessary information from callers and deal appropriately with the information provided.
- Ability to keep calm and provide guidance and advice over a prolonged period to callers in a stressful situation.
- Ability to work as part of a team, confined to one room for prolonged periods of time with a small group of colleagues.
- Able to co-ordinate receiving information through a headset, entering data on a keyboard and operating foot pedals to use radio equipment - almost simultaneously.
- Ability to multi-task.

Selection process

The actual selection process will vary between Fire & Rescue Services but is likely to include the following:

- Completion of an application form, including named references.
- A basic literacy and numeracy test. This may include listening to information and recording it, either by hand or on a keyboard.
- A keyboard test to check you can enter information accurately and at a reasonable speed - e.g. 30 words per minute.
- Realistic scenario tests - e.g. take a mock fire call, obtain address and incident details and record these accurately.
- Interview
- Medical.

For further information, please contact your local Fire and Rescue Service.

The role of Fire Control rooms



A Fire & Rescue Service control room provides the essential link between handling emergency calls and deploying the appropriate resources to deal with the situation. Fire Control also monitors emergency situations and responds to requests for additional help or services as required.

Being at the hub of an emergency service

As emergencies can occur at any time of the day or night, control staff provide cover 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via a locally agreed shift pattern. Most staff work a system of providing both day time and night time cover, although the hours of work vary between Fire & Rescue Services, in some there are opportunities for part-time working and/or job share. A Firefighter (Control) role includes:

- Effectively and efficiently handling emergency and administrative calls
- Obtaining clear and accurate incident details to enable mobilisation of appropriate resources in accordance with Fire & Rescue Service policy
- Providing appropriate advice to callers
- Maintaining contact with resources providing information to the incident as required e.g. information regarding hazardous substances
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to maintain fire and emergency cover
- Liaising with other fire authorities, services and organisations regarding incidents and their involvement and inform the incident accordingly
- Obtaining and updating details of resource, appliance and equipment disposition and staffing, ensuring any equipment defects, accidents to vehicles or personnel are reported
- Testing and maintaining communication and mobilising equipment to ensure operational readiness
- Tracing calls through operator call handling centres and managing mobile phone and other call reduction strategies
- Supporting national and local initiatives and activities
- Gathering of statistics and general administrative duties.

Fire & Rescue Service Control Room staff receive and record emergency calls from members of the public and other sources. They determine the nearest and most appropriate resources based upon current policy and geographic considerations and then alert and deploy those resources. Staff are responsible for providing ongoing support in respect of resources and equipment e.g. if additional resources are needed such as specialist equipment, different types of fire tender or key information, the control centre take the requests and provide help as necessary. Staff work to a locally determined policy, but within a framework of nationally determined pay and conditions.

Frequently asked questions



If you have a question that is not answered below, please contact your local Fire and Rescue Service who will be able to help.

Q What is the FiReControl project?

A Currently there are 46 fire control rooms in England, based within local fire and rescue services. The FiReControl project is working to move from the existing system of control rooms into 9 new amalgamated and networked Regional Control Centres.

Link to FiReControl web site:

www.communities.gov.uk/fire/resilienceresponse/firecontrol

Q How old do I have to be before I can apply to join?

A In order to be employed as a Firefighter (Control), you must be at least 18 years old. However some Fire & Rescue Services will accept applications from people approaching their 18th birthday.

Q Do I need any qualifications to become a Firefighter (Control)?

A No. However Firefighter (Control) must possess a range of personal qualities and attributes and be able to meet a range of selection criteria (including basic levels of literacy, numeracy and ability to keep calm under pressure).

Q Will I have to work shifts?

A Yes. You will work a shift system which includes long nights, weekends and public holidays.

Q How much will I get paid?

A Starting pay as a trainee (as of 1st July 2009) is £20,099 per annum.

Q What training will I receive?

A Generally you will receive approximately 6 weeks training on day duties. You would then be assigned to a Watch as a supernumerary member for a further 6 weeks, however, this period may vary between Fire & Rescue Services. After this period, provided that you have reached the required standards, you will become a full Watch member.

Q Will I wear a uniform?

A Yes. A uniform is provided and must be worn while you are on duty.

Case studies



A typical day in the Fire Control room could see you dealing with a range of incidents; from house fires to road traffic collisions, from chemical incidents to industrial emergencies, from giving advice to members of the public trapped in a fire situation and supporting fire fighters at an incident.

Profile: **Stephen Bone**, Senior Fire Control Officer and Watch Training Officer.

Stephen Bone is a Senior Fire Control Officer and Watch Training Officer who has been with Humberside Fire & Rescue Service for 23 years and serves in Fire Control at the Service's Hull headquarters.

"At Control, we're the public's first contact in an emergency, from traffic accidents and chimney fires to major incidents. We'll take a couple of hundred calls a day, rising to 600 or more at extreme times like when there's a storm or flooding. Calls are logged and timed by computer and we mobilise the necessary resources, manpower and equipment to the correct location as quickly as possible and manage the incident through to its conclusion, mobilising any additional equipment or welfare needs as requested."

"I won't deny it's challenging work. You've got to think fast and make decisions on the logistics of getting firefighters and equipment to an incident. You've got to have lifesaving skills and be able to use them on the phone, getting someone to do the right thing until the engine arrives - your advice can make all the difference."