

## Firefighter

Firefighters deal with a wide range of emergency situations, from fires, floods and oil spills to terrorist attacks and road traffic accidents. They also give advice to people and organisations on how to prevent fires and accidents.

### The Work

As a wholetime (full time), on call retained, on call volunteer or community response firefighter, you could be:

- fighting and putting out fires and making sure buildings are safe
- rescuing people from burning buildings and other situations, and maybe giving first aid
- attending road traffic accidents and, if necessary, cutting people free from damaged cars
- cleaning up chemical spillages
- rescuing people who are trapped in lifts, buildings or floods
- maintaining, cleaning and checking equipment and vehicles
- writing reports and keeping logs.

In addition, and as a firefighter with the Community Response Unit, you could also be:

- dealing with heath and forest fires
- visiting schools, and other centres in the area
- giving individuals, groups and organisations advice on how to prevent fires
- checking that homes, places of work and public events meet fire safety law and regulations
- visiting homes, carrying out home safety checks and installing smoke alarms.

### Pay

As of July 2025, the salary for a wholetime firefighter starts at £29,169 a year, rising to £30,384 a year after training. This increases to £38,881 a year with experience.

On call retained firefighters receive an annual retaining fee of around £2,917 rising to £5,832 with experience, which is paid quarterly. You would also get paid an hourly rate for attending training nights and call outs.

An airport firefighter can earn between £27,000 and £30,000 a year.

### Conditions

- As a wholetime firefighter in a large town or city, you will be based in a fire station.
- You will work indoors and outdoors, often under difficult conditions and in dangerous situations.
- You would normally work an average of 42 hours a week. You will work shifts including evenings, nights, weekends and public holidays.
- You can be working under a lot of stress, dealing with upsetting situations where people have lost their life or been seriously injured.
- You will sometimes have to work at heights or in confined spaces filled with smoke.
- You will sometimes have to carry equipment weighing at least 25kg.

- You will wear a uniform, protective clothing and in some situations breathing equipment.
- As a retained or volunteer firefighter you will work part time and be on call to attend fires and other emergencies. You will probably live in a rural area or remote village and may be called in from home or your other place of work. You have to be able to get to your local fire station within five to eight minutes.

## Getting In

- There are no formal qualifications required, but you must be able to show competence in maths calculations.
- You must be at least 18 years of age, and legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.
- Recruitment is through the [myjobscotland](https://myjobscotland.gov.uk/) website. You can also check the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service website for information on upcoming recruitment campaigns.
- Entry for wholetime vacancies is very competitive.
- There are five stages in the recruitment process: online application form; first a calculation and fitness test; second practical selection tests; third an interview; and fourth a medical.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](https://www.disclosure-scotland.gov.uk/) for details on the type you would need.
- A driving licence is useful.

Firefighters usually work for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), but some are employed at airports and some by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). However, the recruitment process for jobs outwith the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is different. You would need to check the MoD or airport websites for job vacancies and requirements.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- courage and determination
- good problem solving skills
- good communication skills
- physical strength and stamina.

You need to be able to:

- think quickly and use your initiative in emergency situations
- work as part of a team and keep calm under pressure
- take and carry out orders quickly and precisely
- cope with distressing situations
- reassure casualties in a compassionate way
- deal with onlookers, or even troublemakers, who may be in the way, in an assertive manner
- handle tools and equipment
- work at heights and in dark, confined spaces.

## Training

- All new recruits now complete a three year Modern Apprenticeship in Firefighting.
- You would attend an initial 3-month foundation training course at either the SFRS National Training Centre.
- You learn basic core competence skills including the operation of fire service ladders, fire appliances, pumps and other pieces of fire and rescue service equipment. You are trained in how to deal with road traffic collisions and learn basic first aid skills.
- Successful completion of the three year Firefighter Training and Development Programme will lead to a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Emergency Fire Services: Operations in the Community at SCQF Level 7.
- You do further training at your fire station over a 2-year probation period.
- Training is ongoing, including specialist training throughout your employment.
- If you are a retained firefighter you attend a two-week residential training course in either Gullane or Cambuslang, followed by a further week in the first few months of employment.

## Getting On

- With experience and after passing in-service training courses, you may be promoted through a series of set grades to senior positions, perhaps rising eventually to Chief Officer (for wholetime firefighters) or Watch Manager (for retained firefighters).
- You can take specialist in-service qualifications, such as the LGV licence for driving the fire service vehicle.
- It is helpful if you are willing to move.
- If you complete certain professional exams you can become a member of the Institution of Fire Engineers.

## More Information

It is recommended that you do a lot of preparation before you apply. Many applicants do not get past the initial application stage because they have not prepared properly for the selection process. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have practice tests on their website. You can also visit the [UK Fire Service website](#) for detailed information on the Services application and selection process.

## Contacts

### Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Tel: 0141 646 4500

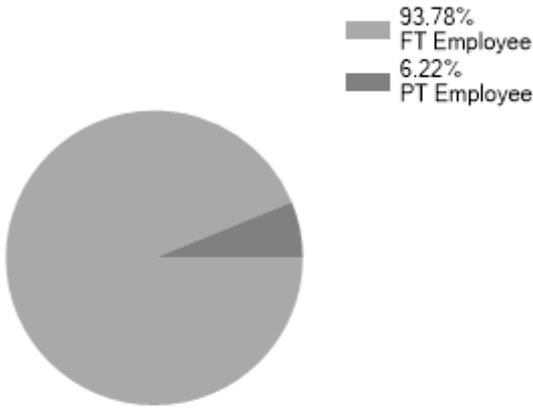
Website: [www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)

X: @fire\_scot

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

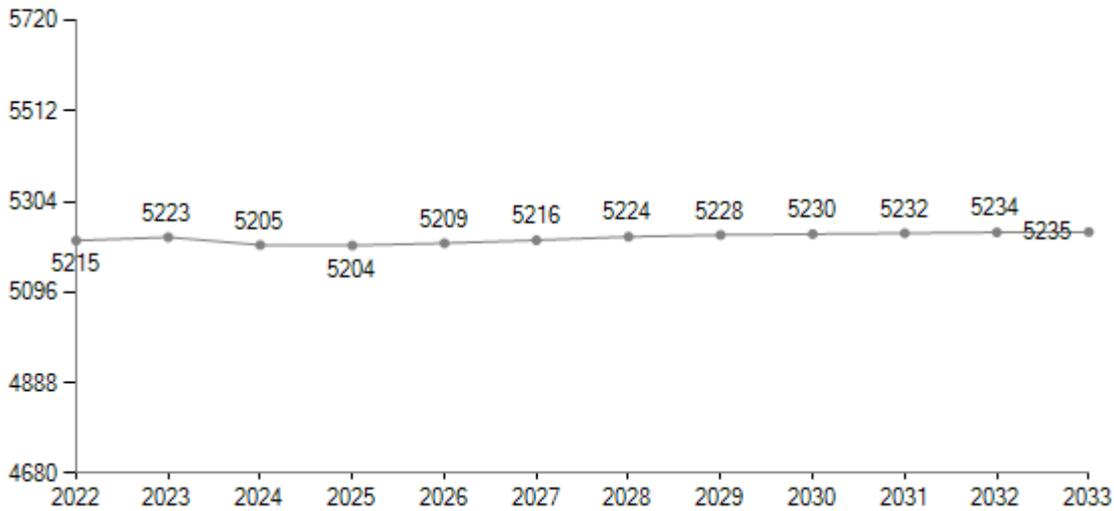


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)