

**Working together  
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

# **RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM EMPLOYERS INFORMATION PACK**

**Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.**

# SFRS Retained Duty System

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Retained Duty System employees are part-time firefighters who provide a vital service to our remote or more rural communities and deliver the same range of emergency service as their wholetime colleagues, including attending fires, floods, road traffic accidents, chemical spills and more.

## FIRE SAFETY

RDS Crews spread fire safety messages to local communities, working alongside Wholetime firefighters to carry out home fire safety visits as part of their standard duties. During these visits they offer free advice to occupiers on how to eliminate, or where this is not possible, reduce the risk of fire. Individuals commit a great deal of their time and efforts to ensure that their communities are safe. Despite frequently having other full time jobs or commitments, they make themselves available for emergency calls via a pager system.

## PRIMARY EMPLOYER

This huge commitment could not be honoured without a great deal of assistance, support and understanding from employers who have RDS crew members on their staff. Many employers have pledged to allow their employees to leave their normal place of work when required to respond to an emergency, and have approved holidays periods for their employees to take part in essential training, and SFRS fully acknowledges this is a significant undertaking.

## OUR VISION

Doing the right thing by transforming how we deliver our Services. Doing more for Scotland by investing in safe and planned transformation to address current, new and emerging risks. The overall vision is to deliver a modern, flexible and efficient fire and rescue service to meet the changing needs in our diverse communities

## CHANGE AHEAD

As part of transformation, we will be looking at the role of an RDS firefighter and how we can make this role more accessible to members of the community

This information pack aims to provide employers with an understanding of the role of an RDS firefighter and how supporting your employee in joining their local RDS crew could impact your organisation/business.

# RDS FIRE CREWS

## WHAT IS A RETAINED FIREFIGHTER?

An RDS Firefighter, is a professional Firefighter who responds to emergency calls within their local area, as and when required.

They will provide an emergency response service from home or place of work (subject to employer agreement) at any time of the day or night - normally within 5 – 8 minutes of emergency call outs although this may vary.

## RDS AVAILABILITY

Our RDS firefighters agree to be available for a certain number of hours per week (60\*/90/120 hours) and are mobilised using pagers, with employer approval or they may provide cover during mutually agreed times that does not affect their working hours. Once their pager goes off, they are required to respond to the station to deal with the incident.

The availability they have declared is detailed within their employment contract with SFRS. We will not expect crew members to attend an incident out with their agreed availability.

*\*60 hour contract only available in certain areas.*

## MOTIVATIONS

The main reason people choose to become an RDS firefighter is to serve and contribute to the communities in which they live. By doing so they will gain a variety of skills, training and experiences which will provide a range of skills that can be used in their primary employment.

## PRIMARY EMPLOYER RELEASE

Primary employer approval is required by every RDS Candidate, even where their stated availability is out with their standard working hours. Employees must declare Secondary employment with their employer to ensure that each party is adhering to the Working Time Regulations.

# EMPLOYER & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

## BENEFITS TO YOU THE EMPLOYER

With the changing nature of society, one of the main problems we encounter is that many people live and work a significant distance apart. As a result, many Retained Fire Stations are well crewed during the weekends and evenings, but not during the day. This can lead to the appliance being unavailable to attend an incident in its own area, and whilst an appliance (from another area) will always respond, any delay may allow an incident to escalate and may possibly mean the difference between life and death.

### Allowing one of your employees to respond during the day could make the difference.

We reached out to a local business owner William Smith of Kerr and Smith (Cumnock) Ltd (Vauxhall Car Garage) to gain an understanding, from his perspective, on how employing RDS crew members benefit their business, he identified the following:

- A higher and more constant level of motivation, maturity and commitment within staff, there is an awareness of the value and importance of the work that they do serving the communities. This motivation equates to a more productive employee/workforce.
- Employees understand the importance of clear instruction, particularly around Health and Safety and agreed procedures/ protocols.
- Staff are trained to deal with any situation.
- The training they receive from SFRS is continuous and provides staff with skills which can be transferred to their everyday work e.g. HGV driving, first aid, fire safety & manual handling. This can, in certain circumstances, save the organisation a significant amount of money in training.
- Good publicity and good reputation is generated as the company has the opportunity to get more involved with the community, the RDS connection helps the company contribute to community spirit.

Mr Smith has a number of RDS firefighters employed in his garage, both in front facing customer service roles as well as in the garage. He is aware of the impact that an employee responding to an emergency call-out could have on service delivery and he is satisfied of knowing he is supporting something which is making a significant difference in his local community.

## BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYEE

RDS FF Greg Allan is employed by Kerr and Smith as a Sales Consultant and has a dual contract role at Cumnock and Mauchline. Greg thoroughly enjoys his work and highlighted the following benefits from his time in the Retained Service:

- Personal social interactions with the community increase which can result in individuals being seen as a role model for younger audiences.

- Training and continuous professional development including first aid, fire safety and HGV driving contributes to the ability to perform everyday work to a high standard which raises personal confidence.
- Heightened sense of self-respect and respect for employer because of the support provided and respect for the public.
- It will always be a talking point which opens up conversations with customers etc.
- Satisfaction of contributing towards the safety of your community

## **EMPLOYER SUPPORT:**

SFRS recognises that on occasion employers may wish to contact us for information, support or reassurance. We will endeavour to assist in any way we can.

Please ensure that you are contacted annually to focus on our partnership with you and discuss any issues that may arise throughout the year. We are always available during office hours to discuss any priorities that may arise out with these annual visits to ensure a smooth working relationship.

## **FAQS**

We have worked with some Primary employers and reviewed candidate's queries to create a "Frequently asked Questions" section for our candidates Primary employers. We welcome feedback at every opportunity, and if you feel that there is detail missing, please feel free to contact your local station with a suggestion.

### ***"In practical terms how much time will my employee have to commit to being an RDS Firefighter?"***

- ⇒ The SFRS is committed to offering RDS Firefighters flexible contracts and working hours to ensure a healthy work/life balance.
- ⇒ RDS Firefighters choose the cover they agree to provide i.e. evening, daytime or weekend with full-time cover being 120 hours per week. They may not choose to carry their pager through working hours, however they must declare secondary employment to their primary employer under the Working Time Regulations, to ensure there are periods of rest between periods of work. Guidance on the working time regulations can be [found here](#).
- ⇒ In most instances your employee should be able to provide you with their rota on a weekly basis and rest assured the needs and requirements of the primary employer will have priority.
- ⇒ If your employee is called out for emergency response during working hours, we cannot confirm how long they will be away for, this is all dependent on the scale of the emergency.

***“What if my employee is out all night at an incident and is unfit for work the next day”***

- ⇒ Nowadays it is less likely for firefighters to remain at incidents for a long period of time. However the Service recognises that extended periods of exertion can lead to accidents through tiredness and lack of concentration.
- ⇒ At prolonged incidents, personnel would normally be relieved after 4 hours – this can vary depending on the nature of the incident.
- ⇒ In the event of a false alarm call, they may be back within 20 minutes. Most incidents are resolved in approximately one hour.

***“If my employee is called out to attend an emergency am I obliged to let them go regardless of my organisation’s needs?”***

- ⇒ No. RDS Firefighters will indicate their availability in advance to SFRS so when an incident arises, all those who have indicated their availability will be paged but only those that are available are expected to respond and attend.

***“What sort of training and development will my staff undergo, as an important part of SFRS?”***

- ⇒ All Firefighters go through rigorous training and development programme which is provided by SFRS.
- ⇒ They will develop skills in;
  - risk management
  - communication
  - team working
  - leadership
  - self-discipline
  - first aid
  - trauma care
  - health and safety; and,
  - large good vehicles training.

All of which they can bring back to the workplace.

***“How long will my employee be required to take time away from work for training?”***

- ⇒ Firefighters must be highly skilled if they are to work safely and effectively in the wide range of operational incidents they are called upon to attend.

- ⇒ The initial comprehensive training course, “Task and Task Management” is **two weeks** long, and this can be spread Mon-Fri, or in some instances Tues-Sat.
- ⇒ This course is followed by a requirement to attend breathing apparatus training, which is a further **two week** course, and again can be spread across Mon-Fri, Tues-Sat, and sometimes weekends.
- ⇒ Thereafter, throughout their employment weekly training is required to maintain competence in various skill sets. SFRS will aim to reduce the impact on the primary employer by providing this training on station at nights and during weekends thereby reducing the time required for training during weekdays.
- ⇒ ***In total, within the first year it is likely that your employee may need 4 weeks off from work in total.***

### ***“What if my employee gets injured while at an incident?”***

- ⇒ RDS Firefighters are trained to a high standard before they are fully operational therefore this is a very rare occurrence.
- ⇒ In the event this does happen, SFRS has a policy in place for compensating the employee for any loss of earnings after Statutory Sick Pay. Details can be obtained from SFRS.

### ***“Are there any restrictions/implications to me or my business whilst employing a RDS Firefighter?”***

- ⇒ Fire and Rescue Services like all employers have to abide by legislation i.e. Health and Safety, Working Time Directive, Road Transport Directive etc. If you are a haulage company or your employee drives a truck for work, both you and your employee should be aware of the implications of the EC Drivers’ Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006). Details of any legislation and its impact can be obtained from SFRS.

### ***“My employees are often on call for business. How would this work?”***

- ⇒ They would not be on call with SFRS if they were on call with you. As the primary employer, you will always have priority.

### ***“My employees are often on call for business. How would these patterns of work run alongside each other?”***

- ⇒ They would not be on call with SFRS if they were on call with you. As the primary employer, you will always have priority.

### ***“If my employee is called out, I won’t know how long they will be gone for.”***

⇒ In the event of a false alarm call, they may be back within 20 minutes. Most incidents last, on average, one hour and 15 minutes.

### ***“Call out Frequencies/ Patterns”***

⇒ We can provide you with a copy of the annual report of the incidents which we attend in your area. Whilst we are unable to break this down into person specific information it will allow you to see the positive commitment you are making within your community and the likely implications for your employee and yourself, in terms of incident activity. Please request this through your local station.