

Standby policy

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Owner: **Assistant Commissioner, Fire Stations**
Responsible work team: **Central Operations Team**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In order to maintain operational emergency cover, it will be necessary to move staff across the Brigade to ride appliances by standby moves. The standby moves will be either:
 - direct standby (where staff report to the standby station for the start of shift); or
 - on shift standby (where staff travel to the standby station following the start of shift).
- 1.2 To improve the efficiency of the Brigade and reduce appliance unavailability, as many standbys as possible will be direct standbys. Due consideration shall be given to travel distances between base and standby station when considering appropriate standbys.
- 1.3 The responsibility for managing standbys is undertaken by the Control Operational Resourcing and Events (CORE) team, who will maintain a strategic overview of personnel ridership levels across the Brigade.
- 1.4 Where staff undertake standby duties as set out in this policy, they will be paid standby allowances. Standby allowances are paid subject to tax and national insurance deductions but are not pensionable.
- 1.5 It will be the responsibility of the staff member undertaking a standby or topping up duty to ensure they attend for duty at the appropriate station with their complete set of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including their second pair of firefighting gloves and second fire hood. If these are with Bristol Uniforms for service, they should proceed without them. There is no need for individuals to take a second coat or trousers with them, these can be obtained as necessary from the standby station reserve stock (SRS), as shown in Policy number 693 – Structural firefighting personal protective equipment (ppe), section 5.4. If during the standby, a clean pair of gloves or fire hood is required or the standby station SRS does not have adequate PPE in the size required, Bristol Uniforms should be contacted on #6400. Staff undertaking direct or on shift standbys are responsible for the safe transportation of their PPE. It is the responsibility of the officer-in-charge to ensure all kit bags are in good working order and available for use.
- 1.6 When sending a firefighter on development out on standby to another station, the officer in charge is to call that station to check that they will not be riding with another firefighter on development as part of a breathing apparatus team. If it is found that this is the case, another competent firefighter should be nominated instead on all the occasions that it is possible to do so.
- 1.7 Separate conditions will apply to the two types of standby duties as detailed below.

2 Standby tiers and allowances

- 2.1 There are three tiers of standby:
 - Tier 1 - within 7.5 miles.
 - Tier 2 - 7.5 miles up to 12 miles.
 - Tier 3 - Over 12 miles.
- 2.2 A matrix which sets out the tier of every station-to-station journey has been determined by the Brigade.
- 2.3 On shift standby allowances are as follows (as at 01/07/2026):
 - Tier 1: £35.51 (£10.15 – travel element; £25.36 – non-travel element).
 - Tier 2: £42.35 (£12.09 – travel element; £30.26 – non-travel element).
 - Tier 3: £47.85 (£13.69 – travel element; £34.16 – non-travel element).

- 2.4 Direct standby allowances are as follows (as at 01/07/2026):
- Tier 1: £52.77 (£15.05 – travel element; £37.22 – non-travel element).
 - Tier 2: £68.31 (£19.55 – travel element; £48.76 – non-travel element).
 - Tier 3: £81.94 (£23.40 – travel element; £58.54 – non-travel element).
- 2.5 These allowances are all-inclusive, and no further payment will be made for return kit allowance, travel expenses and/or standby overtime, other than reimbursement of the congestion charge where it is payable.
- 2.6 Standby allowances are uprated by two triggers: the travel element is increased by the published average TfL fare increase for that year from March; the non-travel element is increased in line with the NJC pay settlement from 1 July.
- 2.7 Standby allowances cannot be converted to casual overtime or leave in lieu of overtime (LILO).
- 2.8 The allowance for partial standbys, on shift or direct, will be paid at 75% of the rates set out above. A partial standby is where both of the following two criteria are met. If either of the criteria is not met, then a full shift standby as per the tier will be agreed.
- The standby is 6 hrs or less in duration;
 - The standby does not finish after the times below:
 - Tier 1, 1 hr 15 mins from end of shift;
 - Tier 2, 1 hr 30 mins from end of shift;
 - Tier 3, 2 hrs from end of shift.

3 On shift standbys

- 3.1 Station-based staff are contractually required to undertake on shift standbys across all three tiers as necessary.

4 Direct standbys

- 4.1 Direct standbys ensure that the Brigade has sufficient appropriately skilled staff in the right place for each shift. They may be used to overcome a skill or manage a shortage which will have been identified by the CORE team when producing the standby plan.
- 4.2 Station-based staff are contractually required to undertake tier 1 direct standbys as necessary.
- 4.3 Tier 2 and 3 direct standbys are voluntary. Staff are able to opt in and opt out of any station within Tiers 2 and 3 at any time; this is done by the individual staff member on StARS ('Direct Standby Registration' screen). Where staff have opted into a Tier 2 or Tier 3 station, they are contractually required to undertake the relevant direct standby.
- 4.4 The cut off times for changing a choice of station for direct standbys is 12:30 hrs (days) and 21:30 hrs (nights) on the previous shift. If a station is deselected after the cut off time, the staff member will still be contractually required to undertake that standby on the following shift.
- 4.5 It is the responsibility of the officer-in-charge to notify new firefighters on development of the existence of the StARS 'Direct Standby Registration' screen and the facility to opt in and out of Tier 2 and Tier 3 stations for direct standbys.
- 4.6 Staff will not be required to undertake back to back direct standbys or do more than 12 standby duties in any 24 working day period. The Brigade will however seek volunteers to:
- undertake back-to-back direct standbys; and/or
 - undertake more than 12 standby duties in any 24 working day period.

- 4.7 Staff that volunteer to undertake more than 12 standby duties in any 24 working day period are to first seek the agreement of their sub officer/station officer, to ensure that any additional standby has no detrimental impact on their training requirement (DAMOP) and their ability to maintain their operational competency.
- 4.8 In order for the CORE team to forward plan direct standbys, there will be a cut off period after which no further leave can be entered for the next duty shift. This will be 12.30 hours for the day shift and 21.30 hours for the night shift. Any additional leave requests, after the cut off period, will need to be authorised directly with the CORE team, as any leave granted may affect the standby plan. Once all leave has been approved and entered staff will not be permitted to cancel leave for the forthcoming shift without the approval of the CORE team.
- 4.9 The CORE team will communicate the direct standby requirements to the supplying station through StARS.
- 4.10 Staff nominated to undertake a direct standby will be informed no later than the preceding duty shift of this requirement. It will be the responsibility of the employee to ensure that they attend for duty at the appropriate standby station for the start of the standby shift with PPE, as shown in section 1.5 above. If there are any issues, these should be reported to the CORE team as soon as practically possible for due consideration.
- 4.11 Upon receipt of a direct standby ordering from the CORE team by telephone, pager or station printer, station officers, sub officers or leading firefighters must allocate an appropriately skilled member of staff and confirm receipt of the ordering on the roll call board as soon as practically possible.
- 4.12 Where a shortfall of personnel has been identified and addressed by a direct standby which is subsequently not required, the staff member performing the direct standby will not be required to undertake a further standby duty, whether they remain at the standby station or return to their base station, unless they volunteer to do so. Surplus staff members at the receiving station may be assigned an on shift standby, although only when required to do so by the CORE team subject to the exigencies of the service. Where a sub officer/station officer reports for duty when a direct standby has been assigned to cover their absence, the staff member performing the direct standby may remain at the receiving station or be returned to their base station, following consultation with the CORE team. Where the CORE team require the covering officer to return to their base station, they will receive the appropriate on shift standby payment.

5 Topping up

- 5.1 Topping up occurs where surplus station-based staff are moved in order to fill a vacant riding position. Staff who are topping up should leave their topping up station in order to arrive back at their base station before the end of shift.
- 5.2 When an employee is required to top up, a payment of £20.50 (£5.85 – travel element; £14.65 – non-travel element) per shift will be paid inclusive of any travel expenses. No other payment will be made. The topping up allowance will be uprated using the same formula as for standby allowances (see paragraph 2.6).
- 5.3 Topping up will only be allocated within 7.5 miles of the employee's base station.

6 Standbys where stations are co-located

- 6.1 Where two stations are co-located for a time, staff from either station who are ordered by the CORE team to a standby at the other, are to action the ordering immediately. An allowance of £13.63 will be paid to the employee who stands by. No other payment will be made.

7 Operational overtime whilst on a standby

- 7.1 Where a member who is performing a standby, whether on shift or direct, is delayed beyond the end of a shift as a result of attending an operational incident, the total time until the member books off duty at the standby station will be regarded as overtime and recorded and claimed in accordance with the Policy number 430 - Casual overtime duty, leave and allowance.

8 Release of members on standby duty and return to station

- 8.1 Officers are to make sure that, whenever possible, standby personnel are the first to be released by mutual exchange with oncoming personnel.

9 Recording and authorisation of standby and topping up duties

- 9.1 Standbys and topping up will be entered on StARS by the CORE team.
- 9.2 Authorisation of allowances will be undertaken by the station commander at the base station of the qualifying staff. StARS>tools>authorise payments>standbys or topping up.

10 Loan facility for travel expenses whilst undertaking standby duties

- 10.1 Staff who are required to perform standbys as part of their role are eligible to apply for a one off advance loan payment of £50 for travel expenses incurred whilst undertaking standbys, plus an additional loan of £50 (this additional loan is £60 for staff who undertake an above-average number of standbys (staff with skills that are only required at a small number of stations, meaning longer travel distances, i.e. HVP, FRU, CU).
- 10.2 The advance loan payments are increased in line with the published average TfL fare increase for that year from March.
- 10.3 The advance loan facility is to ensure that all staff are able to proceed on a standby duty without requiring advance payment of fares for travelling expenses. There is no other facility to provide advance payment of fares for standby duties.
- 10.4 Eligible staff will still be required to undertake standbys regardless of whether or not they choose to apply for the advance loan payment.
- 10.5 Loans will be repayable on leaving the service and deducted from final salary.
- 10.6 Staff can apply for the standby loans by following the relevant links on Hotwire (working here/ pay, pension, expenses and loans/expenses and loans/standby and training allowance).

11 Station mess and standby food-related allowances; subsistence entitlements for standbys

- 11.1 Station mess and standby food-related allowances, subsistence entitlements for standbys, and the procedure for claiming these, are contained in Policy number 354 - Station mess and standby food related allowances.

12 Related policies

- 12.1 To be read in conjunction with Policy number 430 - Casual overtime duty, leave and allowance.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	05/03/19	SDIA	L - 15/05/23	HSWIA	16/03/23	RA	N/A
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
	This policy replaces policy number 299 - standby policy and policy number 751 - direct standby policy following the collective agreement reached with the FBU on standbys in January 2017, implemented in March 2017.	30/10/2017
Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4 Page 4, para 5.2 and 6.1	Changes made to standby allowances. Changes made to top up and standby allowances.	14/02/2018
Throughout Page 3, paras. 4.3-4.5	This policy has been reviewed as current with changes made to department and team name to reflect the abolition of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, now replaced with London Fire Commissioner. Please re-read and familiarise yourself with the content. Changes to Tiers 2 & 3 direct standby opting-in arrangements (from tier-wide to individual station basis).	26/09/2018
Throughout Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4 Page 4, para 5.2 and 6.1	This policy has been reviewed as current with minor changes made. Please re-read to familiarise yourself with the content. Following 2% NJC pay increase wef. 01/07/2018, changes made to standby allowances. Changes also made to top up and colocation allowances.	10/10/2018
Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4 Page 4, para 5.2	Changes made to standby and top up allowances following increase in travel element as at 02/01/2019.	05/02/2019
Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4	Following 2% NJC pay increase wef. 01/07/2019, changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances.	03/10/2019
Throughout	Changes made on account of Role to Rank implementation on 15/10/2019.	15/10/2019

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4 Page 4, para 5.2	Changes made to standby and top up allowances following increase in travel element as at 02/01/2020.	23/01/2020
Page 2, para 1.5 Page 2, para 1.6 Page 4, para 4.10	Additions to clarify PPE to be taken on standbys. New para 1.6 regarding FF(D) standbys; the previous para 1.6 becomes 1.7. Small amendment referring back to 1.5.	04/05/2020
Page 3, para. 2.8	Additions after first sentence to define 'partial standby'.	16/07/2020
Page 2, para 2.3 and 2.4 Page 4, para 5.2 and 6.1	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following 2% NJC pay increase wef. 01/07/2020.	13/10/2020
Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2.4 Page 4, paras. 5.2 and 6.1	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following, (a) increase in travel element as at 01/03/2021 (average 2.6% TfL fares increase); and (b) 1.5% NJC pay increase wef. 01/07/2021.	13/09/2021
Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2.4 and 2.6 Page 4, para 5.2 Page 5, para 10.5	Changes made to standby and top up allowances following increase in travel element as at 01/03/22 (average 4.8% TfL fares increase). Link to the standby loans application page on Hotwire updated.	26/08/2022
Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2-4, 5.2. and 6.1	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following, (a) increase in travel element as at 01/03/23 (average 5.9% TfL fares increase); and (b) 7% NJC pay increase wef.01/07/2022.	14/03/2023
Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2-4, 5.2. and 6.1	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following 5% NJC pay increase wef.01/07/2023.	03/07/2023
Page 1	Ownership of policy transferred from People Services to Fire Stations.	09/10/2023
Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2-4, 5.2. and 6.1	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following, (a) increase in travel element as at 01/03/24 (average 4.9% TfL fares increase); and (b) 4% NJC pay increase wef.01/07/2024.	01/07/2024
Page 5, para 10.1 and 10.2	Increase made to the advance loan payment and change made to include the average TfL fares increase for future increases.	30/08/2024

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout Pages 2-3, paras. 2.3-2-4, 5.2. and 6.1	Control Operational Resourcing and Events (CORE) team replaces RMC. Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following, (a) increase in travel element as at 01/03/25 (average 4.6% TfL fares increase); and (b) 3.2% NJC pay increase wef.01/07/2025.	21/07/2025
Throughout	Changes made to standby, top up and colocation allowances following, (a) increase in travel element as at 01/03/26 (average .26% TfL fares increase); and (b) 3.8% NJC pay increase wef.01/07/2026.	24/07/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Allowances	Pay
Standby	Callout

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification