

Leave and attendance times for Fire and Rescue staff policy

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Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements for the booking and taking of leave and the terms, and conditions of attendance times that apply to fire and rescue staff. The granting of leave is subject to the exigencies of the Brigade's service and providing adequate notice for leave requests is required.
- 1.2 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
- Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

2 Leave

- 2.1 The leave year is from 1 April each year to 31 March in the following year.
- 2.2 **Joining and leaving;** leave entitlement will be pro-rata on the basis of each complete month of service up to the end of the current leave year or from the beginning of the leave year as appropriate. All entitlements listed below are for full time staff. Part time and flexi-working staff entitlements will be pro-rata as appropriate.

Annual leave entitlement

- 2.3 You are entitled to 26 days plus public holidays or days in lieu.

Long service leave entitlement

- After 5 years' service – 1 day
- After 10 years' service – 2 days
- After 15 years' service – 3½ days
- After 20 years' service – 5 days
- After 25 years' service – 7 days

New technology leave

- ½ day – You must be in post as of 31 March to accrue for the next leave year.
Applicable to FRS B - FRS E posts only¹.

Carry over

- 2.4 You may carry over leave into the new leave year on the following basis:
- (i) You should ensure that you take your leave allocation by the end of the leave year subject to organisational needs. 5 days leave (annual and/or long service) may be carried over into the next leave taking year and leave not taken by the end of June will be forfeited.

¹ Staff who occupied MG7 posts at the time and are still in an FRS F position retain NTL as part of the agreement

- (ii) In exceptional circumstances, where management accept that leave cannot be taken during the leave year on account of service needs, up to a maximum of an additional 5 days may be carried over into the next leave year subject to the agreement of the head of service, to be used by the end of July, leave not taken by then will be forfeited. This may be granted in addition to 2.4 (i) above.

Leave not taken

- 2.5 The Brigade shall not make payment in lieu of leave not taken beyond the statutory leave entitlement. The Assistant Director People Services may, however, authorise such payments to employees unable to use all their leave by their last day of service because of the pressure of their work or other extenuating circumstances.

Anticipation

- 2.6 Six days annual leave only may be anticipated subject to the approval of the Head of Service in consultation with the Assistant Director, People Services.

3 Sickness and leave entitlement

- 3.1 Extended periods of sickness absence covering more than one leave year may affect your contractual leave entitlement. Following periods of extended absence, leave entitlement will be adjusted on an individual case by case basis as appropriate.
- 3.2 If you become unfit to work at the beginning of, or during a period of leave then you may be entitled to claim this back provided that you:
 - Inform your line manager of your illness or injury promptly in line with normal sickness reporting procedures.
 - Provide a fit note, or other formal medical certification, covering the full period of your illness or incapacity.
- 3.3 Following a period of long-term sickness absence, you may request to take any outstanding annual leave and should take this in the same year in which it was accrued. If the outstanding leave cannot be taken, then you can carry forward the statutory amount of leave into the next leave year, minus that year's leave you've already taken. Legally, statutory leave is 28 days or the equivalent pro-rata figure, but includes Bank Holidays, meaning the total amounts to 4 weeks or its equivalent, (if you work a 4-day week pattern, then it would be sixteen days maximum). This **must** be taken within eighteen months of the end of the leave year in which it is accrued.

4 Option absence scheme

- 4.1 This scheme allows for FRS staff to earn one day off each calendar month by working an additional 22 minutes each day for staff with a working day of 7 hours and working 5 days a week. For staff on flexible working arrangements the additional time to be worked each day will vary in relation to the length of their normal working day and working pattern.
- 4.2 The period during which an option absence may be taken shall be the calendar month in which it is earned and the two successive calendar months following.
- 4.3 Option absence does not accrue in respect of days on long term absence, e.g. sickness and maternity absence, that is more than one complete calendar month.
- 4.4 On returning from such absence, if you want to earn an option day for that calendar month you will need to work sufficient additional time per day for the remaining days of the month so as to

amount to the duration of a normal working day. If you do not want to earn an option day for that month, you will work the normal hours for your work pattern for the rest of that calendar month.

- 4.5 Option absence not taken in line with 4.2 above shall be forfeited unless there are extenuating circumstances acceptable to the Head of Service.
- 4.6 The right is reserved to transfer employees without regard to their option arrangement or to vary an employee's option arrangement.

5 Booking of annual and option leave

- 5.1 Applications for leave will be granted subject to the exigencies of the service and the needs of the section/department.
- 5.2 You are advised not to commit yourself to any holiday arrangements until the period of leave has been authorised by your head of section/department. You should ensure that leave applications are submitted in good time before the proposed commencement of leave, so that your intended arrangements can be considered having due regard to departmental/section needs.
- 5.3 You need to submit your leave application to your manager at least two days before the proposed leave is due to start. Applications for leave of more than one week will normally require longer notice. It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, such as unforeseen emergencies, you may need to take leave at short notice.
- 5.4 Line managers should normally review and respond to leave applications within 3 working days. If you believe that the line manager will be unavailable for these 3 days, then the leave application should be made to another manager in that area who is available.
- 5.5 The procedure for the requesting of leave is via an electronic application. The electronic leave form can be accessed on hotwire via **HR, pay and employment > Leave > Book leave – FRS staff**.

6 Christmas holiday period

- 6.1 Additional leave and excused attendance is allowed during the Christmas holiday period on the following basis:

When Christmas Day falls on:	Period during which attendance may be excused	
	From	To
Monday	Christmas Day	New Year's Day
Tuesday	Monday before Christmas Day	New Year's Day
Wednesday	Christmas Day	New Year's Day
Thursday	Christmas Day	Friday following New Year's Day
Friday	Christmas Day	New Year's Day
Saturday	Christmas Day	Monday after New Year's Day
Sunday	Christmas Day	Monday after New Year's Day

- 6.2 Establishments will remain open and staffed on the days mentioned in the second column where necessary to provide a service to the public. Where you are required to work at such establishments on the days concerned you shall be allowed one days' paid leave in lieu to be taken at a time to be mutually agreed, subject to the exigencies of the service.

Excused attendance

- 6.3 At the discretion of the Brigade and subject to the exigencies of the service, the provision in 6.1 above may be varied so as to allow for excused attendance from duty over the Christmas holiday period; the particular arrangements in each year shall be determined annually.
- 6.4 The arrangements for excused attendance over the Christmas to New Year holiday period shall be on the following conditions:
- (a) You must use a days leave or option absence from your current entitlement, to cover absence on one of the days, as specified in the published "Christmas Leave Arrangements" on Hotwire.
 - (b) Part-time and flexi-working staff must use leave or option absence from their current entitlement, to cover absence on one of the days pro-rated in respect of their individual arrangements.
 - (c) Fixed term staff who are contracted to work beyond 1 January will receive the Christmas and New Year leave entitlement as detailed above.
 - (d) The remaining days of excused attendance for the year in question as shown in 6.3 above which would otherwise normally be worked shall be additional Christmas leave with pay.
 - (e) Except as already provided in connection with rostered shift work, or work on public holidays weekends or on other days not forming part of the normal working week, attendance for duty on any day over the Christmas and New Year holiday period as shown in 6.3 above shall be compensated for by the grant of equivalent time off in lieu to be taken at a time to be mutually agreed, subject to the exigencies of the service, and shall not attract overtime rates of pay.
 - (f) Where you are not rostered, sick or otherwise absent on days on which attendance is excused you shall not be allowed equivalent time off, nor additional payment in lieu.
- 6.5 The provisions above for excused attendance over the Christmas/New Year holiday period may be subject to review by the appropriate Joint Committee on receipt of three months notice from either side of the Committee.

7 Hours of attendance

- 7.1 Fire and rescue staff are contracted to work a 35-hour week based on a Monday to Friday working pattern. The core starting times are between 0800 hours and 1000 hours with corresponding finishing times between 1607 hours and 1807 hours for employees participating in the option absence (OA) scheme. Employees not participating in the option absence scheme, while still adhering to the starting times as detailed, will not be required to work the extra 22 minutes at the end of each day and will as such, finish work between 1545 hours and 1745 hours. A sample of starting and finishing times for both schemes is given below, these timings are based on a 45-minute lunch period, which is not included in the half day timings:

Participants of the OA scheme			
Start time	Afternoon leave finish time	Morning leave start time	Finish time
08:00	11:41	12:26	16:07
08:15	11:56	12:41	16:22
08:30	12:11	12:56	16:37
08:45	12:26	13:11	16:52
09:00	12:41	13:26	17:07
10:00	13:41	14:26	18:07
Non-participants of the OA scheme			
Start time	Afternoon leave finish time	Morning leave start time	Finish time
08:00	11:30	12:15	15:45
08:15	11:45	12:30	16:00
08:30	12:00	12:45	16:15
08:45	12:15	13:00	16:30
09:00	12:30	13:15	16:45
10:00	13:30	14:15	17:45

- 7.2 The lunch break for fire and rescue staff is 45 minutes. Only in exceptional circumstances and with prior approval from line management, will it be acceptable to vary this time. In agreeing any 'one off' variations, managers and employees need to bear in mind the minimum rest periods required under the Working Time Regulations, which stipulates a minimum 20-minute rest period following 6 hours worked.
- 7.3 The basis of the option absence scheme is that you work an extra 22 minutes per day in a given month in order to earn a day's leave in respect of that month and this is referred to as option absence leave.
- 7.4 The period during which an option absence may be taken will be the calendar month in which it is earned. There is provision to carry forward the earned option day up to the third month from when it is earned. The option absence day not taken by this time will be forfeited unless there are extenuating circumstances acceptable to the Head of Service/Section. It is important that starting and finishing times are agreed between you and your manager in order to ensure that office cover is maintained at all times, in particular, during core business hours. Managers will define the core hours which are appropriate to their business needs. Any variations must be by mutual consent and with due regard to both employee and organisational needs. You must keep to your agreed starting and finishing times except in circumstances as that detailed at 2.7 and 2.8 below.
- 7.5 You are required to work your full contractual hours in accordance with that detailed in your contract of employment. The exception is the working of reduced hours following a recommendation by the Brigade's Occupational Health Service. In this instance, the provisions of Policy number 1005 -Supporting health and wellbeing–policy, Part 18, which details the Reduced hours policy for FRS and control staff, will apply. This can be recorded in your Workplace Adjustment passport. Please visit the Workplace Adjustment passport details on Hotwire here to record this.
- 7.6 If temporary difficulties are encountered with regard to you attending work at your agreed starting and finishing times, alternative temporary measures, can be considered in helping you to address these difficulties. A temporary change in the starting and finishing times within the prescribed core hours as detailed at 2.1 above can be considered by managers in helping to

facilitate necessary solutions on the understanding that a return to the original arrangements will apply once the temporary hardship has been resolved. This can be recorded in your Workplace Adjustment passport. Please visit the Workplace Adjustment passport details on Hotwire [here](#) to record this.

- 7.7 If however a permanent change is requested outside of the core hours as detailed at 2.1 above, the required changes, subject to satisfying eligibility criteria, should be pursued via the Brigade's policy in Policy number 448 – Flexible working/work-life balance, including home working as detailed in 2.9 below. Requests will be considered, subject to the business needs of the department/section.
- 7.8 Any changes made to working patterns may be subject to trial period and/or periodic review agreements but will be otherwise deemed permanent.

8 Lateness

- 8.1 All lateness must be recorded on StARS and the PARC annotated with the reasons/circumstances (taking into account confidentiality).
- 8.2 Lateness is a breach of conduct and is dealt with under Policy number 392 - Discipline conduct procedure. Please refer to the Lateness guidance, which applies to operational staff up to station officer.

9 Records

- 9.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF). Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

10 Help and support

- 10.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 option 3 and by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 10.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.
- 10.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in [Policy number 887](#) – Staff suggestion scheme. Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

Document history

Assessments

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

EIA	23/04/24	SDIA	L - 08/01/24	HSWIA	09/01/24	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
Page 7, para 8.1 Page 7, para 9.3	Records Services details added. Staff suggestion scheme access details added.	16/05/2024
Page 3, para 3.3	Due to a legislative change the wording 'fifteen months' has now been updated to 'eighteen months'.	13/01/2024
Throughout Page 7, para 8	Minor changes made. Lateness added from policy number 888 - Partial Attendance.	08/07/2025
Throughout Page 3, para 3.3	Removal of 'statutory leave entitlement' references for clarity. Paragraph extended to clarify position on leave carry over entitlement.	17/11/2025

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Leave	Attendance
Attendance times	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

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