



Control Staff Recruitment Information Pack

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Thank you for your interest in joining Essex County Fire and Rescue Service as a Fire Control Operator.

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A CAREER WITH ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Our mission is to save and protect lives, property and the environment.

With an area covering 367,000 hectares and a population of more than 1.74 million, Essex is one of the largest County Fire Services in the UK.

The County contains every conceivable risk - oil and gas terminals, a power station, two airports, docks, and arguably the country's busiest motorway, the M25 which runs through the heart of our ground.

That's why we continue to strive for operational excellence, doing more than we have ever done to keep Essex safe. With a modernisation agenda and a focus on providing an efficient, effective, value-for-money service, our efforts are firmly fixed on directing our resources in the areas where they can be best utilised.

As well as fighting fires, attending road accidents and dealing with major emergencies, we are being given new responsibilities for preventative community safety work. We take this responsibility seriously and have embarked on a number of innovative schemes to educate and protect those most vulnerable in our communities.

We have 51 Fire Stations which offer fire and rescue cover to every community within the county. There are 12 Wholetime Stations, 34 Retained Stations, 4 Day Crewed Stations, plus one Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Station.

As a Fire Control Operator you act as a link between the public and operational Firefighters on the 51 Fire Stations throughout the County, together with the various Senior Officers and Sections within the Service.

This type of work requires Fire Control Operators to have a variety of personal skills such as understanding, reliability, flexibility, determination, self-motivation and the ability to work within a team.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLE OF FIRE CONTROL OPERATOR

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is a highly disciplined and busy Emergency Service that adapts and changes to reflect the needs of the diverse communities that it serves. Our Fire Control Operators are positive and highly trained individuals who are flexible and able to incorporate these changes into their working lives to provide assistance to all members of the community, giving support in a wide range of situations.

To be a Fire Control Operator you must be capable of working in a busy and highly pressured environment, be able to multi-task, be an excellent communicator and be resilient due to the demands that shift work and such a dynamic job can bring. Reliability is vital to ensure that the Control Room can function with enough personnel to deal with emergency calls at all times.

As a Fire Control Operator you are the link between the public and operational Firefighters. This involves answering 999 calls, direct contact with other emergency services, the use of the Airwave Radio System and the use of a dynamic mobilisation system to deploy resources across the County. You will develop substantial knowledge and expertise, so considerable commitment is required in order to learn over 300 special procedures, work routines and fire ground working practices.

As a member of Control, you will deal with a large range of emergency call types, some of which will be a life and death situation. This means that those making the emergency call are often in a distressed state so you must remain calm and show sympathy, tact and understanding to obtain the essential information that the Service needs to attend the incident.

The role of Fire Control Operator is central to our ability to respond efficiently and effectively to incidents across the County. We are committed to employing the best people to ensure the best service to our communities.

This is not like any other job. It can be unpredictable, exciting and rewarding. There is also the satisfaction and respect that comes from providing a crucial service to the communities of Essex.

THE SELECTION PROCESS AND HOW TO APPLY

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The recruitment and selection process is as follows:

- **Application Form:**

You will be asked to complete the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Control Application Form which will be accessed via the Service website. You should complete the full application form, which includes a selection of checklists, personal details and examples to demonstrate the qualifications, knowledge and experience, skills and abilities and positive behaviours of a Fire Control Operator against the Role Profile and Person Specification. Application forms will be submitted directly to the HR Department.

- **Shortlisting:**

The information provided in the application form will determine who proceeds to the next stage. Shortlisting will be against the 'information in support of this application' section of the application form and everyone will be assessed against the criteria within the Person Specification. A standard scoring process against essential and then desirable criteria will be used. Only successfully shortlisted candidates will be invited to the next stage of the selection process which consists of a competency based interview and role related assessments (selection tests).

- **Role Related Assessments (Selection Tests):**

Role related assessments will be used as an additional selection method before the competency based interview. Role related assessments are often called 'simulation exercises'. These are exercises intended to simulate the role of a Fire Control Operator as closely as possible. Examples of exercises that may be used include a written assessment, a telephone test and a role specific radio and call handling exercise. This is not an exhaustive list.

- **Competency Based Interview:**

Interviews will be carried out using a panel of three trained interviewers which will usually include the Group Fire Control Officer, a Fire Control Officer and a member of the HR Department. You will be asked questions to help us assess you against the behaviours required for the role as detailed in the Role Profile and Person Specification.

This means we will be looking for examples of when you have displayed particular behaviours such as Effective Communication, Teamworking, Adaptability and Change, Commitment to Diversity and Professional Integrity.

Examples may be from your previous employment but in the case of young people, it could include school and other activities and in the case of those returning to work after a gap in employment, it could include taking part in community or voluntary activities.

- **Outcome of the Selection Process:**

If you successfully complete the competency based interview and role related assessments you will receive a Conditional Offer of Employment which is subject to the outcome of the Occupational Health Screening Assessment and Reference Checking.

- **Occupational Health Screening Assessment:**

You will be asked to complete a confidential pre-placement health questionnaire and attend a health assessment with our Occupational Health Department. The assessment will include an eyesight test and a hearing test. Occasionally candidates may not satisfy all of the requirements of the Occupational Health Screening Assessment, and in these circumstances the Service may offer a functional test to assess whether the candidate may fulfil the requirements of a Fire Control Operators role. Where appropriate, the Service will offer reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support candidates in being able to successfully fulfil the requirements of the role.

- **Reference Checks:**

References checks will be completed by the HR Department. Two references will be required from a current and previous employer. References will always be sought directly from the referee. The service will not rely on references or testimonials provided by the candidate themselves, or on 'open' references or testimonials, e.g. addressed 'To whom it may concern'.

- **Offer of Employment:**

Once all aspects have been successfully completed to our standards and satisfaction a Formal Offer Letter and Contract of Employment will be issued to you and arrangements made for the provision of uniform and initial training.

TRAINING

INITIAL TRAINING

If you are selected to join Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, whatever your educational achievements, you and other new Fire Control Operators will receive the same basic training, consisting of theoretical and practical work.

There is a lot to learn but you will be supported by the Control Trainers and Watch Managers who will monitor your progress. During your initial training there will be written, oral and practical assessments. The course is demanding but rewarding, and you will develop lots of new skills, including high level listening and communication skills, that once achieved will be maintained throughout your Service career.

Initial training consists of 2 phases:-

- Phase One – this is a classroom based course during which office hours are worked
- Phase Two – this phase takes place within the working environment. You will follow a shift pattern and work alongside your allocated Watch

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SKILLS

As a Fire Control Operator you will move through three phases of development, these are acquisition, development and maintenance.

When you have successfully completed your phase one initial training you will continue to work with your Watch colleagues to develop the skills and knowledge you have gained through an eighteen month phase two development programme. Once you have completed this and move to the third phase, maintenance, you are considered to be a competent Fire Control Operator.

Throughout your time as a Fire Control Operator you will be required to continue to maintain and develop the skills and knowledge for your role to ensure that you remain operationally competent. The phase three maintenance programme is a yearly rolling programme, which you will complete on an ongoing basis using an electronic system called TASK, which stands for Technical Activities Skills and Knowledge.

PROMOTION AND LONGER TERM CAREER PROSPECTS

There is a management structure within the Control Room and after completing your Fire Control Operator development you may wish to further your career by promotion. There will be opportunities, subject to vacancies, to undertake training in Leadership and Management to gain the skills required of a Leading Fire Control Operator and then Senior Fire Control Operator.

GENERAL INFORMATION

SHIFT WORKING

The control Room is covered 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year; this means you will be required to work on weekends and bank holidays. You will undertake an average 42 hour week working 12 hour shifts on a rota basis in accordance with the Control Duty System; a day shift starts at 07:00 and a night shift starts at 19:00. We currently have two standard shift patterns:

1. Two Days, Two Nights and Four Days Off; and
2. Four Days Working and Four Days Off.

SALARY

The Table below shows the current pay information. Pay scales are set nationally by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

Fire Control Operator	Annual
Trainee (Phase One)	£20,709
Development (Phase Two)	£21,571
Competent(Phase Three)	£27,601

PENSION

From the start of your employment you will be able to contribute to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), which the Service will also contribute to.

HOLIDAY

In a full leave year, you will be entitled to 25 days 'Scale A' leave which is booked in blocks of seven days (off-duty days that fall within a period of annual leave count as Scale A leave) plus 5 days 'Scale B' leave (which can be taken on any duty day) and leave for each public holiday. After five years continuous service, you will receive an additional 3 days 'Long Service Leave' (which can be taken on any duty day). You will also be entitled to

The leave year runs from the 1st January to 31st December and the timing of all leave is subject to the exigencies of the Service.

SICKNESS

You are entitled to full pay for up to six-months in any twelve-month period when on authorised sick leave. Thereafter pay will be reduced to half for six-months.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

All Fire Control Operators receive comprehensive and ongoing training and development in order to ensure that they operate effectively in every aspect of their work.

UNIFORM

The Service expects its employees to present themselves and dress in a professional manner whilst at work. A uniform that reflects the professional image of the Service is provided and must be worn while you are on duty. When wearing uniform, you should ensure that your conduct is professional at all times and uniform should not be worn when you are not on duty.