

UK Fire Service Ranks, Insignia & Pay

Printable chart · National NJC pay from 1 July 2026 · firefighterpay.co.uk

Role	Look	Helmet markings	Epaulettes	Basic pay (NJC, per year)
Firefighter		Yellow, plain	Plain	£31,539 – £40,358
Crew Manager		Yellow, two 12.5mm black bands	Two bars	£42,892 – £44,742
Watch Manager		White, black comb, one 12.5mm band	Two impellers	£45,711 – £50,034
Station Manager		White, black comb, one 19mm band	Three impellers	£52,040 – £57,402
Group Manager		White, one 19mm + one 12.5mm band	One impeller and wreath	£59,937 – £66,445
Area Manager		White, two 19mm bands	One impeller, wreath and bar	£70,368 – £77,186
Assistant Chief Fire Officer		White, very broad (38mm) band	One large + one small impeller, wreath	Set locally
Deputy Chief Fire Officer		White, broad band	Large + small impeller, wreath and bar	Set locally
Chief Fire Officer		White, broad band	One large + two small impellers, wreath	Set locally

Pay shows the lowest to highest NJC point for each role (development to competent / competent B). Brigade manager pay is set by each service. London Fire Brigade uses its own pay scale and rank titles.

Older rank titles and their modern equivalents

Leading Firefighter	usually compared with: Crew Manager
Sub Officer	usually compared with: Watch Manager
Station Officer	usually compared with: Watch Manager B to Station Manager (varies by service; London converted it to watch manager B level)
Divisional Officer grades	usually compared with: Group Manager and Area Manager (approximate)

How to read the insignia

Rank shows in two places: the helmet (yellow for firefighters and crew managers; white with a black comb from watch manager up, with more or wider black bands as rank rises) and the epaulettes, which use bars, impellers (the rotating part of a pump) and wreaths in a fixed pattern. Services differ in detail and in whether they describe bands in millimetres or as narrow and broad, so check your own service for exact specifications.

Sources: markings compiled from the published rank pages of Devon and Somerset, Essex and South Wales fire and rescue services and the FireSafe role-structure summary; pay from NJC circular NJC/2/26 (3.8% from 1 July 2026). Illustrative reference only, not an official document. Always check your service's own rank and uniform policy. Full explanations, sources and the latest pay: firefighterpay.co.uk/guides/firefighter-ranks-roles/