

# Aids to vision (ATV) policy

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 Owner: **Assistant Director, People Services**  
 Responsible work team: **Wellbeing**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements of the visual standards for operational staff used by the Brigade and the use of Aids To Vision (ATV) on the fireground and whilst performing other duties.
- 1.2 In 1996 the Joint Working Party on Medical and Physical standards (JWPMP) recommended revising the eyesight standards for firefighting personnel and allowing the use of ATV on the fireground. These recommendations and subsequent standards have been endorsed by the CFBAC and Ministers.
- 1.3 The current standards are contained in Fire Service Circular 9/1996 (28 October 1996) and replaced Regulation 5(1)(e) of the Fire Services (Appointments and Promotion) Regulations 1978, as amended by the Fire Services (Appointments and Promotion) (Amendment)(No3) Regulations 1988. It also replaced guidance previously issued by the Home Office under Fire Service Circular 8/1987 and DCOL 3/1995 (Item K, paragraphs 1-7).
- 1.4 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 Visual standards for appointment as a wholetime firefighter

- 2.1 Applicants to the wholetime fire service should:
  - Satisfy a duly qualified ophthalmologist, optometrist or ophthalmic medical practitioner selected by the fire authority that they are fit to undertake firefighting duties, and that there is no abnormality or any disease which, in either case, would be likely to affect visual function, temporarily or permanently, so as to prevent the individual from carrying out the range of operational duties.
  - Have uncorrected distance visual acuity of 6/6, 6/6, as measured by an appropriate test, unaided.
  - Have no more than +3.00 dioptres of hypermetropia in each eye.
  - Have no more than -0.25 dioptres of myopia in each eye (applicants under 25 years of age).
  - Have not more than -0.75 dioptres of myopia in each eye (applicants aged 25 and over).
  - Be able to read N12 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open.
  - Have a normal visual field in each eye, as determined by confrontation techniques.  
Have no history of night blindness or any ocular disease that is likely to progress and result in future failure of the visual standards for firefighters.
  - Have an appropriate level of colour perception. Individuals with either normal colour vision or slightly abnormal green colour vision are suitable for appointment to the fire service. The recommended test procedure uses the Ishihara test as the initial screen with an additional test, the Farnsworth D15 to determine both the severity and type of colour vision deficiency. All applicants will be tested using Ishihara plates. Those who pass (having made no more than two errors in plate identification) have normal colour vision. Those who fail should be tested by Farnsworth D15, which will determine the severity of their colour vision defect. Applicants

who fail Farnsworth D15 will be rejected as unsuitable. Those who pass should be offered the opportunity to take a third stage test, the Nagel anomaloscope, to distinguish whether the individual has slight red or slight green colour vision deficiency. The cost of administering the Nagel test will be at the applicant's expense.

### **3 Visual standards for serving wholetime firefighters**

3.1 The standards state that firefighters should:

- See at least 6/9-4 and read N12 at 30cm with both eyes open, using spectacles if necessary.
- Use spectacles of an appropriate specification on the fireground if they are needed to obtain this standard of vision.
- See at least 6/60 and read N48 at 30cm with both eyes open without the use of spectacles.
- Have a normal binocular visual field as determined by confrontation techniques.
- Have an eyesight examination every three years, whether or not they wear spectacles.

### **4 Guidance on ATV for use on the fireground and with BA**

4.1 Guidance for using ATV on the fireground and with BA is outlined below. If you wish to use soft contact lenses as detailed in paragraph 4.4 below there is no obligation to take up and/or make use of the ATV provision made available by the Brigade.

#### **ATV suitable for use with breathing apparatus**

4.2 Firefighters who need to use spectacle inserts should be supplied with two pairs. BA facemasks that incorporate spectacle inserts must pass leakage tests as described in EN136/BS136 and have obtained appropriate certification. Spectacles suitable for use with BA should in addition:

- Incorporate lenses made of abrasion resistant (hard) coated polycarbonate to minimise lens misting.
- Be securely mounted in the mask so that they will not be dislodged while in use.
- Have provision for adjustment within the mask so that they do not cause the wearer discomfort.
- Be removable for the purposes of servicing and cleaning.
- Have thin frames so that they do not restrict visual field.

#### **ATV suitable for use on the fireground when not wearing breathing apparatus**

4.3 Firefighters who need to use spectacles should be supplied with two pairs. The spectacles should:

- Comply with EN166.
- Incorporate abrasion resistant coated polycarbonate lenses to minimise misting and provide a significant degree of eye protection.
- Have an acceptable cosmetic appearance because unattractive spectacles are not worn.
- Be carefully fitted so that they are unlikely to slip or fall off.
- Be robust.
- When necessary, incorporate bifocals that cause minimal disturbance to vision.
- Allow air to circulate between the face and spectacle lenses to minimise misting.
- Be allowed a period for familiarisation, so that firefighters can become accustomed to spectacle correction before wearing them on the fireground.

## **Contact lenses**

- 4.4 It is permissible for you to wear soft lens type (silicon hydrogen) contact lenses for use with and without breathing apparatus. The Brigade will not provide and/or be responsible for the provision and/or maintenance of such items. If you wish to use contact lenses, then you can do so at your own volition and cost.

## **5 Wearing ATV**

- 5.1 ATV is for use on the fireground or in any other environment where fire gear has to be worn (e.g. drills, etc). ATV may also be used by an individual whilst performing other operational duties at station level, including the completion of paperwork.
- 5.2 ATV is not a form of eye protection. It is specified to a standard to ensure that any accident occurring to an individual wearing ATV would not be worse than that of an individual not wearing ATV. Therefore, when non-ATV personnel are required to lower their visors or don additional eye protection, the individuals wearing ATV must do the same.
- 5.3 As detailed in paragraph 4.1 above staff do not have an obligation to take up and/or make use of the ATV provision made available by the Brigade if they wish to make use of their own contact lenses as detailed in paragraph 4.4 above.

## **6 Wearing other forms of eye correction**

- 6.1 As stated in paragraph 5 above the ATV are designed for use on the fireground and similar environments. This means that the prescription and settings (bi-focal etc.) may be unsuitable for other use. If individuals require spectacles for other uses these should be provided under NJC Conditions of Service as detailed in [Policy number 514](#) – Subsistence and public transport expenses policy or under [Policy number 422](#) – Display screen equipment (DSE) procedure.

## **7 Wearing sunglasses**

- 7.1 The only staff allowed to wear sunglasses are:
- (a) Staff undertaking driving duties.
  - (b) The fireboat crew when mobile on the river.
  - (c) Base console operator for aerial appliance operations.
- 7.2 Staff who fall into categories (b) and (c) and require ATV will be provided with clip-on sunglasses for use with ATV.
- 7.3 Staff who fall into category (a) and (c) but do not require ATV will have to provide their own sunglasses which must meet the following conditions:
- Sunglasses must have conventional black, or polished metal frames with non-mirrored lenses and conform to the requirements of British Standard No 2724.
  - The Brigade will not be responsible for the provision of sunglasses nor for the reimbursement of any part of the cost. In addition, you must bear the cost of any repair or replacement necessary as a result of breakage, damage or loss irrespective of how it was caused.
- 7.4 Sunglasses (whether used with ATV or not) are only to be worn subject to the following criteria:
- Except in the case of the fireboat crew, the wearing of sunglasses is restricted to bright sunny conditions only.

- Vehicle drivers are to remove the glasses from the face immediately driving ceases, and before any other duties are undertaken.

## **8 Identifying individuals requiring ATV**

- 8.1 There are three ways in which you can be referred for an ATV vision test to determine whether the prescription and manufacture of ATV is necessary:
- You may be identified as potentially requiring ATV by screening during their routine periodic medical (RPM).
  - You may be referred via your line manager.
  - You may refer yourself via your line manager if you already wear ATV or have been advised to do so following a private eye examination.
- 8.2 If there are any doubts about an individual's ability to safely carry out their operational duties prior to receiving their ATV, they must be placed on light duties.
- 8.3 When an individual has been identified as requiring an ATV test, the Wellbeing team, must be contacted to make the necessary arrangements.

## **9 Testing process**

- 9.1 When an individual has been identified by one of the means in Section 8 above the Wellbeing team will arrange for the individual to see the Brigade's optician.
- 9.2 The Brigade's optician will test you to ensure that your unaided vision meets the standard laid down in Section 3. A prescription will then be provided to enable you to meet the requirements laid down in Section 3. The prescription will then be forwarded to the specialist manufacturer contracted by the Brigade to provide ATV to the specifications laid down in Section 4 above.

## **10 Dispensing of ATV and prescription records**

- 10.1 The manufacturer will return the ATV made to the correct prescription back to the Brigade's optician. You will then be recalled and the ATV dispensed with guidance on care and use. Copies of your prescription and dates of issue will be retained on your Occupational Health medical record.

## **11 Costs incurred**

- 11.1 All costs associated with the manufacture of ATV, except contact lenses, will be met by the Brigade.
- 11.2 All reasonable travelling expenses incurred following an appointment with the occupational health provider to determine suitability/eligibility for ATV will be reimbursed by the Brigade following submission of the appropriate claim form together with receipts.
- 11.3 All other optical claims, except those in respect of contact lenses purchase/maintenance, will continue to be met under conditions laid down in the respective policy documents – [Policy number 514](#) – Subsistence and public transport expenses policy or under [Policy number 422](#) – Display screen equipment (DSE) procedure apply.

## **12 Care and cleaning of ATV**

- 12.1 It is your responsibility to make sure that your ATV are inserted and removed from equipment as and when required and kept in a safe place within the storage equipment provided. You need to

make sure your ATV are kept in a condition whereby they are always available for operational use and that you have the equipment available to clean your ATV under all circumstances.

### **13 Loss or damage to ATV**

- 13.1 The ATV provided to you remains the property of the Brigade and as such any loss or damage will require a full investigation into the circumstances. If the loss or damage occurred due to the negligence of staff, they may be required to bear costs associated with replacement.
- 13.2 The ATV provided comply with EN166. Any tampering or modification of the ATV will nullify their compliance and consequently the safety cover provided.

### **14 Repair or replacement of ATV**

- 14.1 Any need to repair or replace ATV must be accompanied by reports from the individual's line manager and be forwarded to the Wellbeing team. The contracted specialist manufacturer has facilities for the repair of ATV. If the ATV are beyond repair and a considerable time has elapsed, the individual should be referred to the Brigade's optician who will assess whether a new prescription should be issued. If the prescription remains unchanged a duplicate prescription and ATV will be issued. Any damage or problems with BA inserts should be referred to the Brigade's BA manager located at Operational Support Group, Croydon.

### **15 Timescales for further testing**

- 15.1 The screening and subsequent need for new prescriptions for ATV personnel is to be linked to the RPM cycle (i.e. every three years). If you have a private eye test outside of this cycle and have the prescription for your private glasses altered, then you should contact the Wellbeing team who will arrange an appointment with the Brigade's optician to assess whether new ATV needs to be provided.

### **16 Records**

- 16.1 Please send records by email to [RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto: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.

### **17 Help and support**

- 17.1 Please contact the Wellbeing team by email to <mailto:WellbeingTeam@london-fire.gov.uk>.
- 17.2 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](mailto:communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk) to discuss your needs and options.

# Document history

## Assessments

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

EIA	08/05/24	SDIA	L - 31/07/23	HSWIA	01/08/2023	RA	
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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
All	Reviewed as current. No changes made	30/04/2010
All	Reviewed as current with no changes made.	27/01/2012
Page 6	Subject list and FOIA exemptions tables updated.	18/11/2014
Throughout	Reviewed as current with no changes.	10/06/2016
Page 1	Owner title changed from 'Head of Human Resource Management' to 'Assistant Director, People Services'.	23/07/2020
Throughout	Minor updates made due to role to rank and departmental name changes.	
Page 5	'PEG' replaced with 'Operation Support Group (OSG)'.	
Throughout	This policy has been fully reviewed and the content from Policy number 296 – Aids to vision (ATV) - operational staff, has been merged and is now cancelled – please re-read to familiarise yourself with the changes.	21/01/2022
Page 7	SDIA and HSWIA dates added.	04/08/2023
Page 6 para 10 Page 7 para 16-17	Prescription records consolidated into para 10. Records and Help and support details added.	30/10/2023
Page 2, para 1.4	Values included.	25/03/2024
Page 4, para 6.1 & Page 5, para 11.3 Page 6, para 16.1 Page 6, para 17.2	Reference to PN198 – Medical expenses replaced with PN514 – Subsistence and public transport expenses policy. Data protection details added. Access to alternative policy format details added.	18/04/2024
Throughout Page 6, para 16.1	Wellbeing team contact details updated. Records Services details added.	16/05/2024

## Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Spectacles/Glasses	Aids to vision
Assets	Equipment
Equipment - Protective	Eye correction
Eyesight	Glasses
Sunglasses	

## Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

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