



Hampshire Retained Fire Fighters Union

**RFU**

Wednesday, 19 January 2005

*Part Of The Solution*

## The View From Here

Firstly may we take this opportunity to wish all of our members and readers of the newsletter a very happy New Year and what a new year it should be. For those who have not yet heard, on December 15th 2004 Deputy Chief Officer Dave Curry acknowledged Hampshire Retained Fire Fighters Union full consultation and negotiation rights. This now means that we are a fully recognised union with HFRS representing our members interests.



It was often a point of opinion that the RFU was not an officially recognised union and as such was toothless. Formally our recognition had been on the basis of the Cambridgeshire agreement (1980) where we were formally recognized for consultation purposes of issues specifically relating to retained personnel.

As things moved on at national level with the RFU taking seats on the Combined Fire Brigades Advisory

Council (CFBAC) a further agreement was reached with HFRS to reflect this position. This was the Model Agreement (RFU/HFRS) signed in July 2000 by CFO Malcolm Eastwood and the then Hampshire RFU Chairman Colin Ive. This status meant that we have been involved in meetings, have had HFRS request our opinion and been involved as union representatives. We now are officially recognised and can join many other representative bodies in Hampshire. It is important to note that this recognition is greatly welcomed though will make little difference in how we work or what we stand for. We are still apolitical and still maintain our non-strike action pledge.

You may have read that this development has not received the approval of the FBU who now refuse to sit in meetings with us. We are saddened by this and would like it known that we have no argument with them and look forward to their dispute being resolved. Currently they are not able to properly represent their members at important meetings within HFRS and we look forward to joining them at meetings where we can both represent our particular members.

We are the number one representative body for retained fire fighters - and have always been. Occasionally the interests of Retained and Wholetime Duty System Firefighters will clash and it is for this reason that we believe that the two should be represented separately ensuring more level conclusions.

## Why join a union?

First they came for the Communists but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out.

Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists but I was not one of them, so I did not speak out.

Then they came for the Jews but I was not Jewish so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.

Martin Niemoeller

## In This Issue

On the back page of this issue we introduce a new section. Every month we have new issues which we represent you in meetings with Hampshire Fire and Rescue.

To ensure we are providing good and accurate feedback and managing to present strong 'business cases' for some of our proposals, we need your feedback.

Make sure you read this and let us know—so we can represent you!



**The RFU newsletter—designed to educate, inform and entertain.**

**RFU** *part of the solution not the problem*



## What Changes Can YOU Expect?

You will shortly have a questionnaire to complete for 'Working Time Regulations'. Officially we will not recommend you to either complete the form or the opt out. This will be entirely your choice. What we do ask however is that you read the details carefully. We have been actively involved with the production of this questionnaire and think HFRS have done an excellent job in providing an easy to read and user friendly literature. It certainly beats the useless 'Routine Notices'.

**Community Fire Safety** will be growing in importance throughout 2005 and onwards. Retained Fire Stations will be offered more of a chance to get involved and actively help their local community. We are carefully monitoring HFRS's expectations of retained fire fighters, the procedures and protocols which will be employed for such things like Home Fire Safety Assessments but, in general, we fully support being proactive in Community Fire Safety and working towards fewer fire deaths in Hampshire.

The 'Response Times' project (8/80) which we have been reporting on will be coming up with some conclusions in the early part of this year. Full consultation with the Union has been agreed prior to any decisions being taken but it does look like the changes will affect Retained Fire Stations.

**Retained Management Systems** - These are already being rolled out throughout the county and if you do not have them at your station - you will soon. Generally, those we have spoken too have found the forms easy to complete and useful. In addition, turnout rota's are being introduced. HFRS argument that it gives an equal opportunity to all ride cannot be argued with, but we are still cautious at change for changes sake. If your station has a system, or has no system and EVERYONE is happy - why change?

**Rank to Role** and the rewriting of the grey book. This is something we represent you on. However, most agree that as far as moving from rank to role there will be little change to those on active firefighting duty and changes will affect those further up the tree. However, we will be keeping a close eye to ensure that nothing detrimental slips through and that due consideration for Retained Duty System Firefighters will be made.



*Hear the truth here—not the rumours!*

**HRFU Developments** –this year we will be making great efforts to improve our communication both within and without of the Fire Service. Consequently you should be hearing alot more from Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union.

## Working Time Regulations

Very soon, you will be receiving the Working Time Regulation information sheet. In accordance with the Working Time Regulations (1988), it is Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services legal duty to ensure that the number of hours you work does not exceed European limits. This is part of the European strategy to ensure your quality of life - the EEC who are well known for their rounded and well thought through strategies! Further information on Working Time Regulations can be found on the DTI's website at [http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/work\\_time\\_regs/index.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/work_time_regs/index.htm).

The Working Time Regulations self assessment form will require you to keep an accurate record of the time that you work over a defined four-week time period (1-28 February) with a comprehensive question and answer sheet to help with individual

scenarios.

As a representative body in the development of the presentation of this, we are very satisfied with the professional and clear way that HFRS are presenting this information and your choices.

As a union we will not be offering any advice as to whether you should be completing the time sheet or the opt out form, instead we urge you to read through all the details and make your own decision. If you do require any further information or advice the RFU or HFRS Human Resources will be available.

The letter will be arriving through your letter box soon—make sure you read it!





## COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

Community Fire Safety is a perhaps not at the exciting end of working in the fire service, however prevention *is* better than cure and it would be a failing of any Fire Service to just extinguish fires and not use their skills and exposure in the community to be proactive and work to reduce the fires and fire deaths. Reducing fire deaths and injuries should be one of the most important tenets in any Fire Service

Community Fire Safety has been in existence for along time, but it is now taking a more central role in service activities. Indeed HFRS has already committed itself to ensuring that “...every household in Hampshire will have at least one smoke detector by 2010”.

Achieving this and other targets can only be expected if Community Fire Safety is not carried out by a single autonomous department within HFRS but becomes a part of every fire stations role right down to fire fighter level.

In support of this and with available funds, HFRS are now rolling out a number of trials throughout the county where Retained Duty System Firefighters are carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks. Working from leads generated within HFRS, teams of two trained retained personnel will visit homes, carry out a home fire safety check and install a smoke alarm if required.

The scheme will be voluntary and run over a period of 6 months and funding will be available for 6 hours payment per week at Fire Fighter rates – transport will also be provided.

The Retained Fire Fighters Union welcome this trial and welcome the opportunity for us to enhance our standards of service to our communities. At the same time we will be closely monitoring the trials. We do have a few concerns and we would welcome your feedback either if you are involved with the trials or if you have any thoughts.

Turn to **FEEDBACK** on the back page for more details.



*“...every household in Hampshire will have at least one smoke detector by 2010”.*

## Asian Tsunami—where were we?

**Although it is not really in the remit of Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union to comment on international catastrophe reaction we thought, with our contacts, it would be interesting to ask the above question of HFRS Senior Officers. We thank them for their responses, presented here.**

“Our team like all others is of course made up of volunteers and the fact that the team is a declared resource at all is purely voluntary by the HFRA- there is no statutory duty to provide one.

We come under an umbrella organisation nationally and at any given time only selected teams are on call on a rotational basis. Hampshire is not and was not at the time of the disaster on first response call. No UK team under the MOU was in fact called to respond. The trigger to be called actually rests with them. Great emphasis is placed on NOT freelancing in response and the teams that are signed up to the MOU wait until they are called and then they act under the umbrella organisation as part of an official UK coordinated response. I understand that there are questions being asked nationally about that from the on-call teams at the time, and we may hear more about that in time perhaps.

One of the reasons that our teams do not always attend overseas disasters is the fact that they exist primarily for search and rescue and not body recovery or community aid, which are tasks perhaps best suited to other organisations. This may have influenced the decision at the “centre” not to send a UK response. We have always taken the view that we are signed up via a MOU to a UK response organisation that fits into a bigger national and international plan. Part of this thinking is that we also have to play a part in resilience for both the UK and other parts of the world and need to be part of an organisation that could if necessary respond to simultaneous incidents.”

**DFCO Alan House**

“We don’t decide whether to go or not, the Department for International Development do and we were more frustrated than anyone not to be mobilised.

We were actually on secondary call in December so would have only mobilised if the team had been quite large or if multiple teams were deployed. The official reason given by Department For International Development for not deploying was the lack of specific needs analysis relating to search and rescue coming from the area.

As the DFCO House says DFID always try to only deploy teams to specific areas where our capability is needed. Unfortunately in this instance I believe this criteria should have been more flexible with a team or teams mobilised anyway. The teams are capable of far more than just search and rescue and could have undoubtedly done some good work.”

**DO Pete Crook  
Divisional Officer (Civil Protection)**

Image BBC (AFP)





## FEEDBACK

Welcome to this new section of the HRFU newsletter. To operate efficiently and ensure we are providing the correct feedback for you our members we want to encourage you to give us more feedback. Tell us what *you* think. We assure you at all times that your correspondence to us will be anonymous.

### OIC Retaining Fee

The RFU is currently discussing with HFRS the possibility of making all Retained OIC's payment based on 100% cover.

It is accepted that they are paid an administrative rate to cover the additional irksome task of form filling and filing however we are trying to identify and quantify the 'other' tasks. Our argument is that the running of station often calls for work outside of the usual remit, be it liaising with your crew to ensure cover, dealing with out of hours visitors and groups and generally keeping the station running day to day between shouts.

HFRS have asked us to supply a business case to support our argument and so we need your help. We are looking for all Retained OIC's to give us feedback and establish if this is something that we should pursue. If you are a retained station manager or OIC, please let us know.

- What is your current cover (100%/75%)?
- Would you welcome the above concession?
- Can you give us an idea of tasks which you carry out for HFRS as a Station Officer which fall outside of your designated duties?
- How much time a week do you estimate you spend on the above?

### Retained Management System

It has been reported that each Group Manager has at least one Station using this new system. We want your feedback.

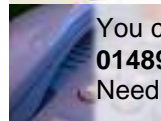
- Does the system work for you and do you think it is a reasonable management introduction?
- How much administrative time does it personally take you?
- Do you think there is a better way that management can monitor the availability of its employees?

### CONTACT US

You can contact us through any of the following channels;



Our preferred means of contact is by email. You can send us an email at: [admin@hrfu.org.uk](mailto:admin@hrfu.org.uk)



You can phone the RFU chairman, Rikki Noble on **01489 893980** or the RFU secretary, Andy Needham on **01962 723020**

### Community Fire Safety

As mentioned in a previous article, the profile of Community Fire Safety is being brought to the fore. How do you, as a retained Fire Fighter feel about this? So that we can serve you better, please provide us with your thoughts on the following:

- Currently we are assessing the implications of RDS Firefighters being required to carry out Home Fire Safety checks how do you feel about this?
- Do you agree with Retained Duty System Firefighters carrying out such a task or do you think another department should undertake it?
- How much time do you think you could spare to such a project at your station?
- Do you think your time could be better spent ?
- Given that resources are being made available to enhance Community Fire Safety at retained station level, do you think these resources could be better deployed?



### From the RFU website...

The Government has produced its consultation documents on changes to the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS). These include proposals that are very significant for personnel on the Retained Duty System, including:

- Major changes in the existing death and serious injury benefits that are currently paid to dependents and to disabled RDS personnel arising from an on-duty incident.
- The opportunity for RDS personnel to qualify in future for a retirement pension.

Full details of these proposal can be found on the RFU and ODPM websites.