

SHOUT!

The magazine of Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union

Thursday, 07 June 2007

HRFU
Serving the local community

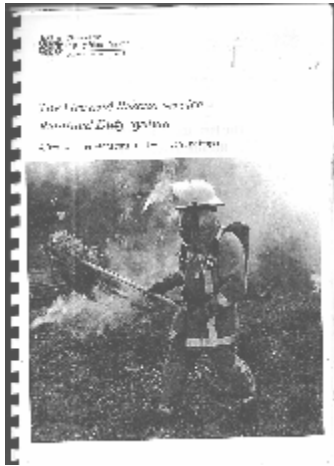
The View From Here

It has been a long, long time since the last newsletter and to all our readers we apologise. The reason was very simple - the newsletter is prepared and circulated by members who are of course RDS fire fighters. HFRS have made great demands on our resources over the last 4 or 5 months, resources which we have been happy to give as we welcome any opportunity to bring the 'RDS side' to the table. Plus, in addition our primary employment has also made some greater demands on our lives as normal so the one thing that had to give was the production of the newsletter, again our apologies.

However, to make up for it we have a bumper edition this month, with catch up information from the start of the year and some important developments coming up soon.

RDS PROJECTS - this directly concerns YOU!

Back in February 2005 the government published "The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System" a damning document which identified that "fire and rescue services had failed to take ownership of the issues or to fully integrate wholetime and retained duty system personnel into what conceptually should be seen as a single workforce". Off the back of this document meetings were arranged in Hampshire to look at the 51 recommendations within the document.



A lot has happened since February 2005, at least three 'Project Leaders' were appointed, then moved on, The Chief himself commented back in our June '05 newsletter that "sometimes too much distinction is made between Retained and Wholetime firefighters. As far as I am concerned these two are only methods of delivery of a service and in fact are part of the same service just from a different sources" referring to the fact that the document had been superseded

Consequently when the current Project Manager announced that three core projects were now being rapidly progressed and seriously investigated as a direct result of the Governments report, we looked forward to some results finally reaching fruition.

Unfortunately neither Firefighter union was invited to be part of the project team, although we were invited along as observers. We were therefore very interested to read the recent project reports published a few weeks ago and although we are still waiting for the overarching report for the three projects we have responded to HFRS with our views and

comments.

As far as we are concerned all of these details should be in the public domain so we have published the three project reports and our response on our website. May we invite you all to review both the projects and our response. We cannot stress strongly enough - **these are the most far reaching and radical recommendations affecting RDS firefighters** - be informed in reaching your decisions or making comments.

www.hrfu.org.uk/pages/rfu/case.html

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

RFU part of the solution not the problem



WORKING TIME REGULATIONS

The Working Time Regulations came into force in October 1998. Your normal working hours should be set out in your contract of employment. Unless you choose to you should not have to work more than 48 hours a week on average. You may choose to opt out whereby you cannot work more than 60 hours a week, all employment (with HFRS or other work that counts as working time). All records are based over a 17 week average.

The basic rights and protections that the Regulations provide are:

- a limit of an average of 48 hours a week which a worker can be required to work (though workers can choose to work more if they want to).
- a limit of an average of 8 hours work in 24 which nightworkers can be required to work.
- a right for night workers to receive free health assessments if they request it.
- a right to 11 hours rest a day.
- a right to a 24 hours off each week.
- a right to an in-work rest break of 20 minutes if the working day is longer than 6 hours.
- a right to 4 weeks paid leave per year.

As the opt out is going through a negotiating process in Europe, the UK law remains unchanged on this point and workers are still able to opt-out of the weekly working time limits. The UK will be given time to implement any changes to legislation and any future developments on this and other Working Time topics will be posted on, the HFRS website as available.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service's duty to you are two fold:

Firstly, if you have signed an opt out they must neither employ you for more than 60 hours a week nor add to you exceeding 60 hours work from all your employment in a week. If you have not signed an opt out, this figure is reduced to 48 hours.

Secondly, they must ensure you have been informed and understand the Working Time Regulations and have mechanisms to manage this which are clear and easily applied by both the Employer HFRS and the worker.

HRFU COMMENT

Lets be clear, HRFU (in opposition to some other unions) does not totally agree with the Working Time Regulations,. We feel they are an invasive and unnecessary affront to the individuals right to choose how they work - they are an enormous legal hammer to crack a very small nut. But be very clear this is not a Hampshire Fire and Rescue ruling, nor even UK law but European law . HFRS have worked very closely with all Unions and representatives to ensure the implementation of this law is as workable as possible.

DO YOU DRIVE AN HGV?

A new development has been handed down from our respected knowledgeable and informed government. In a nutshell it is this – if you are an HGV driver you will shortly have to seriously consider whether you can offer your RDS duties.

The Department For Transport has revised the regulations governing HGV drivers as follows, the following points which may most affect HGV/RDS employees:

- In each period of 24 hours, a driver must have a minimum of 11 hours consecutive hours rest.
- Every week a driver must have 36 hours rest
(note these are the more optimistic hours, they can be reduced further.)



So, you can work a maximum of 9 hours a day and must have 11 consecutive hours **dedicated** to rest. So you will have 4 hours spare a day.

In addition every week you must have 36 hours rest so 12 spare hours a week. In total you can supply cover for a little over 20 hours a week with no night time cover during the week and at least one and a half whole days when you cannot offer your services – will this suit your station?

HFRS is preparing action in response to loosing its HGV/RDS drivers as they advise there is nothing they can do to avert this. Will this affect you or your station? Let us know.

For further details

[<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgf/freight/road/workingtime/drivershoursandtachographrul3239?version=1>]



A New Retained Management System

Any one who avidly reads “**SHOUT**” , (and I am sure there are many of you !) will be aware that back in February 2005 your union, the HRFU encouraged HFRS to look at technology to help with managing the availability of retained fire fighters. Well, we are glad to announce that just two years later an alternative system to the RMS, is being looked at and a technological alternative being considered.

There are a number of different systems being considered and we are in a position to describe what such a system can do. **Please let us stress that we neither support nor oppose the following system neither have we had the opportunity to review any others.**

A very simple overview of the RAPPEL system describes it as a telephone number recognition system. Your personal number being recognised if you dial one of two numbers. (You can register as many numbers as your own).

Phoning one of the numbers will advise a central system that the owner of the number is available, or phoning another that the owner of the number is unavailable. A phone call back to the phone confirms the system has received your call - and note no phone is answered so there is neither a cost for

the individual nor the organisation.

For the RDS employee the beauty of the system is its simplicity. You can even have a speed dial option on your mobile for extremely quick signing in/out. There is also an online calendar to pre-book .



For management your ‘profile’ identifies if the station has enough riders/drivers/officers/ba firefighters etc.

We hope that the HFRS choice is based off a solid understanding of the way RDS employees work and long term benefits not a quick fix, cheap stop gap.

STOP PRESS: It has been revealed to SHOUT that the Regional Control Project Team will be adopting an RMS system with Rappel and another application by SophtLogic being considered. Even considering the obvious delay it would seem prudent and cost efficient to wait and adopt this chosen system rather than developing an application which we may to just throw away in a few years time.

Hay Job Evaluation



Recently a number of representatives from throughout the Fire Service – departmental heads, postholders and union representatives got together to undertake a Job Evaluation. Job Evaluation is a practical technique, designed to enable trained evaluators to judge the ‘size’ of one job against to others.

It is not possible to measure scientifically the contribution of a job, either in absolute or relative terms. However it is possible to make a judgement about the job’s contribution relative to other (different) jobs in the same organisation.

It is important to stress at this point that this is not Rank to Role, it should not really affect any of us so long as jobs are fairly placed in the organisation. By carrying out this process it is expected to not change the whole organisation but possibly identify jobs which are

incorrectly placed with regards to remuneration. Ultimately the system is being undertaken to ensure that sexual discrimination has not crept in to the organisation but its effects could be felt further afield such as in the comparison of uniformed to non-uniformed posts.

After a week of looking at over 100 posts throughout the organisation (with the unfortunate exception of SMT posts) I believe that all of the panels felt that the system was fair and sound. The system maybe run every few years looking at newly created positions and random other posts just to monitor the fairness of position, remuneration, sex etc.

Ultimately I do not feel that this will have any effects on Fire Fighters or other RDS ranks. But it will make for a fairer organisation for us all.



Arch Bishop urges end to diversity!

From BBC News
December 2006

The Archbishop of York has warned that community cohesion can only be achieved if there is an end to talk of multi-culturalism and diversity.

Dr John Sentamu urged people to "build our dwelling tent together" in his Christmas Day sermon at York Minster. He said people should focus more on the "common good" and on the values which had shaped the nation, and less on cultural diversity. Dr Sentamu also called for a society built on "giving and not demanding".



'Love your neighbour'

He told the congregation: "Together we can make a Britain in which many minority ethnic people will feel it is their dwelling tent too - without making the indigenous population feel that this is no longer the Britain of their fathers."

"Today, there is a great deal of talk about social inclusion and community cohesion.

"But surely we must go beyond inclusion and cohesion to a vision of true humanity as we see it in the face of Jesus Christ.

"I believe we should talk more about the common good and the values that have shaped this nation and less and less about multi-culturalism and cultural diversity.

"Let us resolve to love our neighbour as ourselves; and do to others as we would want them to do to us."

For further details:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/north_yorkshire/6210431.stm]

HRFU COMMENT

How refreshing! But it is probably only such a gentleman as Dr Sentamu who could have said such a thing. I firmly believe that multi-culturalism is endemic in the service but that maybe the Fire Service inadvertently works hard to create the divide. It is a common observation that those who experience minorities getting a job feel they have done so purely on the fact that they are minorities. Conversely the minorities feel that, because of this, they have to work extra hard to prove themselves. So let us hope that HFRS talk 'less about cultural diversity' and more about the common good!

The RDS WDS Transfer Wait....

Back in our November edition we were very excited to release the news that HFRS were working on a transfer policy for RDS firefighters, it was announced that they were working towards introducing a system in April 2007. To date in June there has been no mention of this policy so we contacted HFRS to ask "Where has the policy gone?"

T/ACO Ratcliffe has responded

"The honest answer is capacity and workloads..... we have been very busy with a number of key projects for the Service. In addition, we are managing a significant number of ADCs and promotion processes at the moment. The new process will be introduced within this calendar year."

So HFRS fail on two counts here:

Firstly: not recognising that this policy is an extremely anticipated one and bothering to keep RDS employees informed and Secondly: They have been unable to allocate

the correct resources to this project.

Even to date of this edition of going to press we have been promised to be able to share with you the likely criteria for applicants in the future but have heard nothing.

So the resources have been taken from RDS projects and directed towards WDS initiatives .

Level playing fields? - You decide.....



Shout November 06 Edition