



SHOUT!

The magazine of Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union

Thursday, 12 May 2005

RFU
Serving the community

The View From Here

One of the most common questions we get from RDS firefighters is when they can apply for WDS positions in HFRS. Certainly it is the RFU's aim that one-day, the two roles will be exactly the same and transferring from one to the other will be more than possible. We recognise this as HFRS's long-term aim and they have been extremely proactive in moving towards this mutual goal, however it is fair to say there is a way to go.

The Story So Far

New recruits entering HFRS are now put on the same course, irrespective of their final position so at the conclusion of training they will be almost equally qualified. It is important to note that for a new RDS firefighter this may take up to 3 years if they do not have the time to stay on the one course.



HFRS have very recently proposed that they will accept applications for positions from those who;

"...have attended a Local Authority Wholtime Trainee Course as part of their full time employment"

I.e. those who are outside of an actual fire service, such as those privately employed perhaps with BA Airports. This is a radical change and is a strong move to accepting applicants based on their abilities and qualifications rather than their source.

We asked DO Andy Bowers for his comments on our suggestions, he replied:

"As you say the steps we are implementing are aimed at making the transition for new personnel so that everything they go through is directly comparable.

In terms of existing personnel I would echo your sentiments that we are working towards being able to achieve the same for them, however we do not yet know how we can achieve this or by when.

Certainly it is HFRS's intention to bring the recruitment, training, and development of wholtime and retained duty system firefighters to the point where they are identical. However this is not currently possible and that we will be letting people know when it does become possible.

This is fine for new recruits, however still leaves existing RDS firefighters who hope to apply for WDS roles. Unfortunately the waters are still extremely murky because, as far as training is concerned, although the results are the same you **have** been trained differently from WDS firefighters so it is hard to compare one against the other. Perhaps HFRS will, one day be able to supply a chart on which you can compare yourself and your experience and training, identify your training needs after which you could apply. For example, (and these are arbitrary figures) after five years service you will need to complete a first aid, BA qualification, HAZMAT and RTA courses and on successful completion will then be deemed suitable.

A Look Into The Future?

Fire strike threat

Ruth Winters, president of the FBU, said at its annual conference that firefighters could begin a fresh campaign of strikes because of growing anger over jobs and pensions. She said that campaigns would intensify to prevent the closure of fire control rooms and to resist plans to raise the pension age. [The Times Newspaper Wednesday 11th May 2005]



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

RFU part of the solution not the problem



Community Fire Safety

Colin Ive

With the many changes we are seeing taking place in Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service today it is only too easy to focus on those which are at best difficult to understand and at worst which reduce our effectiveness to the communities we serve. There are though two very notable positive changes that HFRS are to be applauded for enabling us to make a real and direct impact on saving lives within our communities.

The first of these are the Co-Responder schemes the second welcome initiative is that of the Home Fire Safety Checks. Currently all whole time stations are very actively engaged in providing this service within their areas and a pilot program involving Retained stations in the New Forest and Yateley in the north has been running for several weeks and, from the feedback we have had from our members involved in this, this pilot is from their perspective already a clear success.

What is CFS at a retained station?

In short each station is provided with simple training on how to present the scheme to a householder and how, when and where to affix smoke detectors. This is a properly paid duty for all ranks, complying fully with grey book pay agreements, and six hours per week are allotted to this allowing 2 firefighters



working together to visit and service 3 households in their area. With some stations we know that such is the interest in this that it is hoped that a more flexible approach be introduced at the end of the pilot which will provide for more hours to be allocated and so allow more households to benefit from this and in turn of course more firefighters.

It is felt by some that that calls are going to reduce in the future and some individuals are concerned at

the potential loss of earnings this may bring with it. The Home Fire Safety Check scheme will help mitigate that loss but also importantly protects the households of our community, and in particular, when targeted correctly, to those of them at most at risk. We expect HF&RS to enable ALL Retained firefighters to take advantage of providing this service and urge each Retained Station Manager to follow the progress of the pilot scheme and upon its completion request the Community Safety Department at HQ to provide them with the training and equipment to undertake this work.

CFS does save lives

Lets face it—Community Fire Safety is not ‘sexy’ and doesn’t carry with it the same thrill as attending a shout, however, as we said earlier in this article it’s about saving lives within our communities, that’s why we joined the fire service in the first place.

A Yateley Family has spoken how a smoke alarm donated to them through a scheme part funded by Hart District Council saved the lives during a house fire earlier this year.

Peter Jones had been working on an extension to the home he shares with his wife Fiona and their daughters Rebecca 14 and Kirstie 10.

Shortly after he had gone to be after finishing work for the evening he and his wife were woken by the alarm of a smoke detector.

“It was a fire in the garage extension,” explained Mrs Jones.

“We went to bed and were woken by a smoke alarm going off, which was in the bedroom and when we turned on the lights our bedroom was filled with smoke.”

The alarm raised, Mr and Mrs Jones got their daughters out of bed and called the fire service.

Looking back, Mrs Jones said; “That was the first thing I said was: thank goodness for the smoke alarm.”

The alarms were given out to schoolchildren in Yately, Eversley and Blackwater.

Coming Soon



CFO Interview

This month we are offered the opportunity of an interview with the Chief. Make sure you catch next months edition for the start of this fascinating interview



Building Pressure

Admin seems to be taking over from our real jobs with the increasing demand for data and statistics. We look into the increase in more detail.

DON'T FORGET

hrfu.org.uk

Have we got your views right? Come on line and tell us? - www.hrfu.org.uk



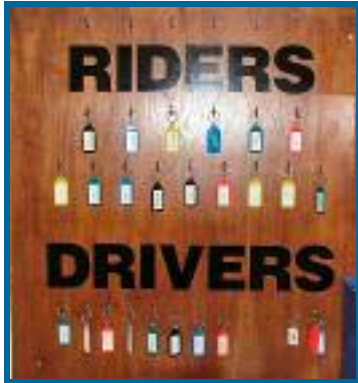
Rota Riding Systems—trials now starting

HFRS are pushing ahead with trials of rota riding systems on six RDS units/stations. At RFU/HFRS consultative meetings we have consistently stated that these systems are only appropriate on stations where the need for a rota is demonstrable and entirely station driven. The seeming intent of putting these systems in place on every RDS station irrespective of a demonstrable need is misguided. HFRS state that Rota Riding Systems will be introduced for Health and Safety reasons—ensuring that each and every firefighter has the opportunity to get a ride and experience.

And the lucky six stations are:

Winchester
Andover
Waterlooville
Alton
Portchester
Hayling Island

A Proposed System—an example



Generally speaking the proposed system will run as follows:

- The appliance must turn out within 5 minutes of mobile time.
- The appliance is expected to wait 4 minutes (unless exceptions are realistically identified i.e. do not wait for FF who you know are away) for every available firefighter to get to the station
- The appliance is then crewed by those as displayed on the Rota Riding System
- Those who attend fall to the bottom of the board and the system cycles

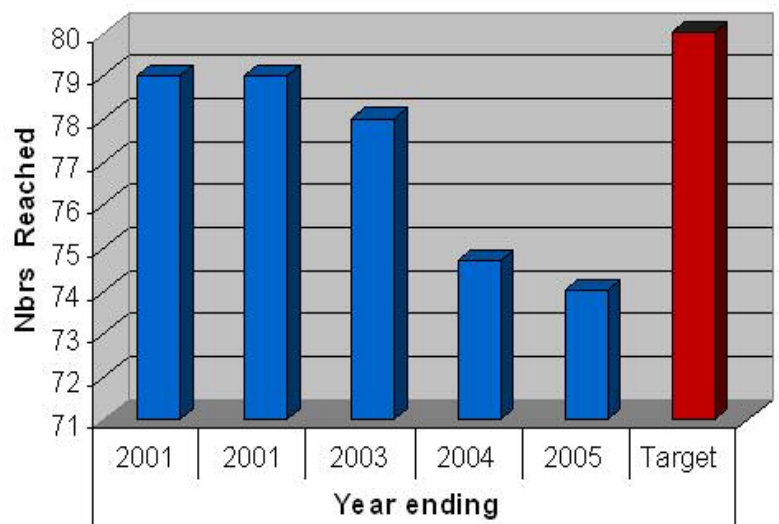
However there are many other stations who have initiated their own systems. Are you one of these stations? Come online and let us know your thoughts at: www.hrfu.org.uk and post your comments on our noticeboard.

There are of course obvious exceptions HFRS state that—in the event of 'Fire—persons involved' or 'RTA— persons trapped' the above is not considered and the appliance leaves as soon as it can be crewed. The Rota system is strictly aligned to HFRS definition of emergency and non-emergency calls.

8/80

Those of you who eagerly read the HRFU newsletter from cover to cover every month, have probably noticed that we are coming out more and more against 8/80. Even without any changes being introduced, as can be seen from the bar chart below (updated 25/02/05) something is going wrong less appliances are achieving 8/80 and a trend is developing in the wrong direction.

We note from the LPI20 (The Local Performance Indicator which is used to assess HFRS's success in achieving its IRMP initiatives) information that due to a "technical error" the current figures include non-emergency incidents and as a consequence affect the response time statistics. However, a trend seems apparent prior to calls being defined emergency or non-emergency. The preceding years include non-emergency calls but of course they are now responded too in a different way. The change in response style appears to have made a difference of around 0.75%; where has the other 4% gone? What happened between 2002/3 and 2003/4?



The excellent IRMP2005 publication states that HFRS has set new challenging targets to respond more rapidly. However, the publication comments that there was confusion about what the target means and goes on to say that HFRS needs to work harder to explain that this target is an overall average and not a stand alone figure. Surely then, there are conflicts between the sentiments in the IRMP 2005 publication and what is actually happening at group level to "improve" the response performance.

As we have indicated in previous newsletters, to apply the 8/80 target indiscriminately to every station is self-defeating as a motivator. For targets to act as motivators they need to be realistic, achievable and relevant. The 8/80 target is a nebulous figure with no specific relevance to each unique RDS station. A view rapidly gaining ground is that this style of target is inappropriate at every level. For instance if a particular station target was set at 12/90 from previous data how would it act as a motivating factor for individual calls? If the call was close 12/90 would be irrelevant. If the call was at the extent of the fire ground once again 12/90 would be irrelevant. 12/90 would also be perplexing for the local community who would not have reliable specific information as to when they could expect help. Perhaps the old A, B, C and D risk areas were not such a bad idea after all. At least we all knew, including the community we serve, where we stood.



News Bites

WDS Firefighters & RDS Drill nights

A recent question which has come up in our circles is the question of what are the requirements of WDS firefighters who also carry out RDS and their attendance at drill nights: DO Barry Richards eloquently put HFRS case as follows:

"The requirement to attend is not solely driven by the need to maintain competence in their duties, but also to assist in the development of others as well as developing a sound working relationship with others in their team."



Consequently TB 11/05/9 identifies the need to attend make-up drills is applicable to all WDS personnel regardless of competence, duty systems and workplace.

HRFU Yearly AGM

We recently held our AGM at Bishops Waltham station and looked to identify our committee and all of our tasks for the forthcoming year.

You can view our new committee members list online at our website here: www.hrfu.org.uk



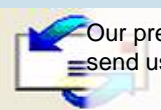
From the RFU website...

Co-responding Duties

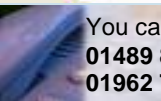
The National Employers have now issued advice, based on legal opinion, that co-responding is already incorporated in firefighters contracts and individuals have the obligation to participate in these duties. The RFU has always supported the involvement of RDS personnel in co-responder schemes, as both an improvement in service to our communities, and part of the reform of the priorities of the fire and rescue service. We hope all stakeholders will now support co-responding in the light of the legal opinion and in the interests of the public we serve.

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



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

Working Time Regulations—was it worth it?

The working time regulations questionnaire have now been completed by yourselves and are now back in headquarters for analysis—or are they. Currently 1/3rd have not been returned so if you have not completed the form, do so and get it returned.

Unsurprisingly the majority of returned forms have been opt outs, a fact which I think fairly firmly tells the MEP's and those who are interfering just a little bit too much into our private lives—butt out!

No Point!

However, for those of you who have been reading the news closely or keep up to date with our website some bad news was reported by the BBC on the 11th May 2005. The rule which allows workers to choose to put in more than 48 hours a week may end after MEP's voted to scrap it.

They voted to phase out over three years the right to opt out of the Working Time Directive.



The issue was about "freedom of choice", said the Director-General of the CBI, Sir Digby Jones.

"People who just do five hours a week overtime and use the money for a holiday. All I want to know is who's going to pay them for the money they lose."

MEPs also voted that on-call time should be counted as working time in most instances, and average working hours could be calculated over a full year, rather than the present period of four months.

Unions said the decision was a victory for UK employees, but business groups said competitiveness would suffer.

The RFU however do not agree with this sentiment. Our office states that:

"Without the opt-out and exemption for emergency workers not only will the health service cease to function as we know it but also the Retained Service."