



SHOUT!

The magazine of Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union

Monday, 24 October 2005

HRFU
Serving the local community

The View From Here

Retained Management System (RMS) - some new developments

Early this year the new RMS was introduced to all RDS stations and units in Hampshire. You will recall that the main selling points were that it would enable RDS personnel to manage their HFRS commitment, primary employment and family obligations more effectively and that it would enable personnel to monitor their own performance week by week. This was to be achieved by changing the emphasis from monitoring calls responded too during the contractual period to monitoring the number of hours committed against the hours in the contractual period. A logical move as it removes the random nature of calls from the equation. Local flexible management has largely overcome the problems since the implementation in April. So far so good.

Those of you who spend your spare time reading Service Orders like I do will have noticed that the RMS SO does not cover the level of commitment required under the different types of cover arrangements nor the method of monitoring these agreements. As this is the RDS monitoring system, vaunted as a legitimate management tool, I find it very strange that the SO collates statistics but has no inherent method of determining them and has no inherent benchmarks.

The only commitment benchmark that RDS personnel have ever had is the requirement to meet 70% of all calls in the contractual period. Prior to this figure "arriving" in July 2000 the level of commitment was down to local management. The 70% was arrived at without any consultation or negotiation by any representative body; however, we saw the benchmark as being fair. This figure was increased to 75%, once again without any consultation, enough was enough, so we made representations both at our consultative meetings and the more recent JTU meetings. Our SMT agreed with us that 70% is the correct figure.



One would of course assume that the 70% figure would naturally be subsumed into the RMS and would be applied to the relationship between the contractual period and the actual performance in hours. After all if you are available for a minimum of 70% of the contractual time you will, all things being equal, catch 70% of the calls. If there are no or few calls during your available period and the emphasis is supposed to be on the hours committed the time should be credited and give a real time measure of commitment. This method removes completely the anomalies.

At the last RDS Working Group meeting the RMS system was reviewed. Surprisingly the group decided to apply the 70% commitment level to the call average percentage column. The following line will be inserted in the RMS SO paragraph 3 Performance Management. "As a guide personnel are requested to attend 70% of calls during their declared "available" hours" There seems to be little if any connection between contractual obligations. In fact the minute from the RDS meeting goes on to say that contractual hours are not monitored by the RMS at present.



Recognise this, you will soon!
Turn to page 3 for more information.

What is the purpose of the RMS? It seems now that it is merely a time wasting academic exercise that has no connection to the reality of monitoring RDS personnel's individual performance.

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

RFU *part of the solution not the problem*



IRMP3

You may have heard or read about IRMP3, essentially Hampshire Fire and Rescues planned development over the next 12 months. At this stage the developments are up for discussion, nothing is decided but some radical changes are proposed. These changes are a breath of fresh air through the service as SMT think out of the box and start to deliver a more flexible solution based on the actual dynamic requirements of the county. No longer is the fire service driving the service but the predicted and statistically proven requirements placed on it are now the drivers.

There are a number of important changes considered; Changing the wholetime duty shift pattern, testing fast response vehicles, a changed system of attending AFA's, the relocation of resources names just a few but there is one fundamental, great big hole, within the whole plan. No mention is made of RDS stations or the Fire fighters who serve within them.

Firstly lets consider the driving forces behind IRMP3. Essentially these can be broken down to providing a more cost effective, efficient service to the residents of Hampshire. Whereas HFRS are working hard to deliver this in major populated areas, there seems to be absolutely no effort to consider those outside of major conurbations.

There are issues with recruiting and retaining RDS firefighters, nearly every RDS firefighter is now bored of hearing about CFS and still not actually getting a chance to undertake it and we want more opportunities. Opportunities to improve our skills expand our capabilities and serve our local community better. But instead, we seem to have been almost ignored.

To help HFRS, the government has very kindly supplied a 156 page document with no less than 51 recommendations as to how fire service can serve their RDS employees better.

Who knows, maybe IRMP4?



WAITING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW FEEDBACK?

For those of you who applied for the whole time recruitment course you were advised;

"If you are unsuccessful at any stage of the process your application will be terminated at that point. However, the reason for this will be explained to you."

If you then indeed fail you would have received a letter advising;

"I regret to inform you that on this occasion your results do not meet the pass mark set. Unfortunately we are unable to provide specific feedback relating to the results."

Bit of a contradiction there and not what you would describe as helpful if you want to improve your skills to be considered for future applications.

Following a number of complaints made to us we made representations to HR who have been very open. It seems that on some elements HR were not exactly sure what would be delivered to them or how the test would be marked or the results returned. We are however still surprised that a pilot was actually tested on 'live candidates' without explaining that what was promised may not be delivered and that such an important function was outsourced to such a degree.

However, we are happy to report that this situation arose from the psychometric test and you will now be receiving a letter explaining which actual component you failed on although the actual mark is not available.

We thank HR for their efforts.

KEYWORKERS

Hampshire RFU would like to congratulate Firefighter Ian Stones who is the first member of Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service to directly benefit from the key worker housing program. As a result of this scheme Ian and his partner Amy were able to enter the housing market in Fleet, an area of notoriously high property prices, and following a transfer from Yateley fire station is contributing to improving the cover provided at Fleet fire station. Ian said " We are incredibly grateful and delighted to be able to take advantage of this fantastic opportunity."



The aim of the key worker housing programme - Key Worker Living - is to tackle recruitment and retention difficulties being experienced by front line public services and workers in the health, education and community safety areas. It was recently announced that retained duty system firefighters across the UK would qualify for direct financial help under this key worker housing programme from April 2006. The RFU has been urging the extension of this programme to encompass all retained duty system firefighters for sometime as is demonstrated by Recommendation 46 contained within the ODPM Retained Review Team Report upon which the RFU was the only representative body to fully participate and make sure the retained voice was both heard and listened to.

"RECOMMENDATION 46: ODPM should monitor the Key Worker Living programme and review, by Summer 2005, the effectiveness of the scheme and whether participation in future programmes of this nature should be recommended."

We are delighted that our work in this area is already improving the lives and welfare of our members and we are sure that its effect upon the recruitment and retention of firefighters will enhance further the important service our members provide to the safety of their



Regional Fire Control South East Region

Tuesday 11 October ODPM announce the new location for South East Fire Control. Arguments still rage for those for and against Regional Controls. We are waiting for more information from our head office and the actual plans implementation plans for the control centres before we make any judgments. But until then, for those of you who have not read this on the web we offer the following copy taken from the ODPM website.

Kite's Croft is a 35 acre site located a short distance from Junction 9 of the M27 between Segensworth and Fareham in the heart of the Southampton/Portsmouth conurbation. Kite's Croft is centrally situated for access to all parts of the region. It is close to Southampton Airport, the Ports, the M3 and A3(M) and the rest of southern England and the Midlands.

To date, the first two phases have been constructed, which comprise a speculative development of 4 units comprising 135,000 sq ft and a bespoke headquarters building comprising 200,000 sq ft. The FiReControl Centre will comprise the remaining two plots of land.



One of those fantastic 'artist impressions' - John Bonney and Dave Curry having a chat leaning against Kevin Butchers Smart Car. Note: No uniforms!!

The site is well located on a major public highway and is therefore readily accessible by public transport links for staff. The environment within which the Centre will be constructed provides you with a self contained secure environment that is not overlooked by other occupiers. The location on site has a single point of entry and egress and benefits from no passing traffic to other buildings on the Estate..

Situated on a picturesque coastline, Fareham provides a unique opportunity to explore a rich heritage of maritime history, peaceful woodland walks, conservation areas plus an attractive safe coast line..

The new RCC at Kite's Croft will be well situated for access to retail, leisure and other amenities. Southampton and Portsmouth city centres are both approximately 10 miles away, and there are also local amenities in Fareham, Lock's Heath, Titchfield and Whiteley. Fareham is an important commercial and business centre, which also has a thriving community. There is much for local residents and visitors to see and do. Whether you enjoy sports, entertainments, walking in the countryside, shopping, museums, or historic buildings – there are many attractions within the area to suit everyone's interests.



FIRE EXPRESS

We were pleased to recently be invited to the Fire Express demo. This system as mentioned in IRMP 3 is the unit which fits into the rapid response vehicle. In essence the unit comprises of a water reservoir, a petrol driven pump and sophisticated delivery lance. The unit can deliver either a water fog or for with additional mixes (such as a foaming agent in one and a detergent in another).

The system is earmarked as being useful in cities where the unit transporting it can obviously move around quicker than a fire engine. And during the pilot stage will be backed up by a fire engine.

As far as we know the unit will be manned by two fire fighters.

There are currently no plans to use it in retained areas.

www.hrfu.org.uk

See more pictures online



The unit fits into the back of a large family car



To use the system the unit is pulled out and started.



Simple controls allow water or two 'mixers' to be used.



The unit can project liquid 25—30 metres.



In action on a car fire



A selection of branches is available (the inset shows the fogging unit on the main branch)

From the Firepress website

This is a revolutionary new way to tackle fires.

The unique Firepress is a compact firefighting system that packs into the back of a car – or a smaller version even goes on a motorbike - yet has a 300ft hose and can be used to douse blazes including car, rubbish, grass, house and even complex fuel fires.

The system is designed to use a small amount of water which it then transforms into a fire-drenching water fog or mist. This means only 12 litres of water is needed to tackle a car fire, around 10 litres to put out an inferno in a small room and far less than that to suppress and control small rubbish, grass or skip fires.

CONTACT US

Whether you feel impressed or threatened the Firepress is one of the most revolutionary departures from what we all know as Fire Fighting.

Come online and let us know your thoughts NOW!

www.hrfu.org.uk