



# The Fire Brigades Union

GENERAL SECRETARY: MATT WRACK

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Dear Sir or Madam

## **Firefighter fatalities at fires in the UK: 2004-2013: voices from the fireground**

Please find enclosed an independent report by Professor Andrew Watterson, a highly-regarded occupational safety and health specialist from the University of Stirling. Commissioned by the Fire Brigades Union to assess recent UK firefighter fatalities, we asked Professor Watterson in particular, to examine the deaths of firefighters at fires.

In the UK over the last ten years, 14 firefighters have died in the line of duty. Through exhaustive research on official reports, investigations, legal documents and interviews with key stakeholders, the report identifies significant lessons from past fatalities that need to be learned.

The FBU wanted this report to focus minds on what can be done to improve public safety and firefighter safety. We believe it does that and much more.

Professor Watterson concludes that 'good practice has sometimes been ignored'. The FBU is acutely aware that all risks cannot be removed from the service, but we insist that the risks can be reduced by positive action from fire and rescue services, local and central government, and regulatory and inspection bodies.

We fear that radically reduced budgets for the service will lead to more firefighter deaths and injuries. This report demonstrates a need for investment, not cuts to the fire and rescue service. Budget cuts mean reductions in training, staffing, equipment and fire stations and continued operational duties of older firefighters. This will lead inevitably to further fatalities in the future.

This report cannot be filed, ignored or left for another day. Fourteen have died at fires in the past decade. We owe it to the firefighters killed and injured in the recent past to review all our systems now.

FBU officials will be seeking urgent meetings with all stakeholders to discuss this report and what action will be taken for our safety.

Yours faithfully

Matt Wrack  
General Secretary

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