

**Questionnaire for participants to the EPSU/ETUI firefighters'
seminar
10-12 June 2010, Vienna**

As a working basis for the seminar, we would like the participants to answer the following preliminary questions. Please send a copy of your answers to Fabienne Scandella (fscandella@etui.org) before the seminar and also bring a copy with you to the meeting.

Name and country: United Kingdom

1. How many firefighters are there in your country according to the different categories mentioned below?
 - Professional public sector firefighters 36,669 (31ST MARCH 2010)
 - Voluntary (i.e., also work in another job) public sector firefighters 17,457 (31ST MARCH 2010)
 - Military firefighters Unknown
 - Other firefighters NOT KNOWN

2. What would you say are the 5 main tasks carried out by (public) firefighters in your country? (If you can give figures / examples please do.)
 - Firefighting (fires 2009-10 -primary 102,000 –secondary 132,100-chimney 7,300)
 - Road Traffic Crashes (2009-10 34,000)
 - Spill/leaks (6,400)
 - Water Rescue/flooding (15,400)
 - Community Fire Safety (77,500 audits for regulatory compliance)

3. How is the public fire service funded?

Local and national government funded through taxation

4. Who is responsible for the operation and standards of the fire service (e.g. Ministry of the Interior, Local Authority, etc.)?

Department for Communities and Local Government

5. By whom (and how) are personal and other equipment used in the fire service selected, financed and maintained?

Each Local authority Fire and rescue service is funded by a combination of income tax and local community tax. Each local fire and rescue service, and there are 57 of them UK wide, has to produce a 3 yearly integrated risk management plan which should detail the number of firefighters, and equipment and the expected outcomes of the services provided. Firefighter selection and training follow national processes and guidance.

6. How is training of the firefighters organized? (i.e. length, frequency, content, etc.) Does it involve health and safety issues? Does it comply with national training standards?

There are no national training standards. Local fire and rescue services should follow national guidance for training.

The Health and safety executive, the national body responsible for enforcing health and safety law across the UK are very concerned with standard of training across the UK and the process for assessing risk and producing suitable control measures.

7. What about the medical examinations? How is the health of the firefighters monitored?

All UK fire and rescue services (FRS) have a medical examination process that should follow national guidance, however the frequency of which varies throughout the UK. Most FRS have occupational health departments either in house or contracted private services.

8. According to you, what is the major health and safety problem faced by the firefighters of your country?

Lack of training and funding leading to firefighter fatalities increasing.

Most injuries come from Manual handling equipment/casualties . in 2009/10 there were 3,840 injuries including 3 fatalities.

9. How do working time arrangements impact on the health of firefighters?

E.g.:

- Length of working time
- Rest periods
- Retirement age
- ...

Working arrangements including working/rest periods are determined through national agreement between the Fire Brigades Union and FRS employers. The length of working time, rest periods are described in detail below.

Retirement age change in 2006. For firefighters who joined the service prior to that date the normal retirement age is 55. for firefighters joining after 2006 the normal retirement age is 60. The current national guidance for fitness standards would exclude most current firefighters over the age of 55.

Although the number of firefighter injuries and ill health retirements continue to fall year on year, they are still very high compared to other industries in the UK. Firefighter deaths are a major concern to the Fire Brigades Union and the Health and Safety Executive the national body responsible for regulating health and safety law in the UK

All working arrangements operate on the basis that employees will undertake the duties appropriate to their role and be deployed to meet the requirements of the fire and rescue authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan. This may include a requirement to work at different locations. Full-time and part-time employees on any duty system are free to undertake retained (part-time) duties where appropriate.

Duty systems need to meet the requirements of the fire and rescue authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan. Any proposed system should be discussed with the recognised trade unions and be based on the following principles:

- (1) Basic working hours should average forty-two per week (inclusive of three hours of meal breaks in every twenty-four hours) for full-time employees. Hours of duty should be pro-rata for part-time employees.
- (2) There should be at least two periods of twenty-four hours free from duty each week.
- (3) It should comply with relevant United Kingdom and European law, including the Working Time Regulations 1998, and Health, Safety and Welfare at Work legislation.
- (4) It should have regard to the special circumstances of individual employees and be family friendly.

Shift duty system

The hours of duty of full-time employees on this system shall be an average of forty-two per week. The hours of duty of part-time employees shall be pro-rata. The rota will be based on the following principles:

- (1) Each period of twenty-four hours shall be divided into a day shift and a night shift.
- (2) The night shift shall not be less than twelve hours.
- (3) There shall be at least two complete periods of twenty-four hours free from duty each week.
- (4) Leave days shall change week by week in a regular progressive manner.
- (5) No rota system shall include continuous duty periods of twenty-four hours.
- (6) Three hours shall be specified for meal breaks in every twenty-four hours. The timing of these periods is at the discretion of the authority. Account shall be taken of meal breaks interrupted by emergency calls.

Day-crewing duty system

The hours of duty of full-time employees on this system shall be an average of forty-two per week. The hours of duty of part-time employees shall be pro-rata. The rota will be based on the following principles:

- (1) An average of thirty-five hours per week shall be worked at the station.
- (2) An average of seven hours per week shall be on standby at home. Employees are required to respond to any emergency call received during this standby period.
- (3) Employees on this system may be requested to undertake retained duties outside the hours at (1) and (2).
- (4) There shall be at least two complete periods of twenty-four hours free from any duty each week.
- (5) One hour per day shall be specified as a meal break. Account shall be taken of meal breaks interrupted by emergency calls.

Day duty system

The hours of duty of full-time employees on this system shall be an average of forty-two per week. The hours of duty of part-time employees shall be pro-rata. The rota will be based on the following principles:

- (1) The normal working day shall cover the period of normal office hours.
- (2) There shall be nine working days per fortnight, which shall fall on Mondays to Fridays.
- (3) One hour per day shall be specified as a meal break.
- (4) Where work (such as lectures and inspections of clubs) must necessarily be undertaken outside the normal working day, equivalent time off in lieu should be given during the normal working day.

Flexible duty system

This duty system applies only to employees in the roles of Station Manager and above.

The hours of duty of full-time employees on this system shall be as set out in paragraph 10 below. The hours of duty of part-time employees shall be pro-rata. Employees on this system shall perform two types of duty:

- (1) Managerial duty, which is rostered for operational command, managerial, supervisory and/or specialist duties appropriate to the employee's post (managerial duty is also known as 'positive hours').
- (2) Standby/call-out duty, which is rostered so that the employee is available on call for the urgent performance of managerial duty and to perform those duties if called upon.

The rota will be based on the following principles:

- (1) The sum of the rostered managerial duty hours and the rostered standby/call-out duty hours, the latter divided by four, shall be forty-eight per week on average over a cycle not exceeding eight weeks.
- (2) No rota shall contain more than five consecutive periods of twenty-four hours during which a duty of either type is performed.
- (3) In any two-week period commencing on a Monday there shall be at least two pairs of rota leave days.
- (4) Any period of standby/call-out duty shall be all or part of a period of twenty-four hours duty (starting at the normal starting time) and shall be rostered immediately before or immediately after a period of positive hours, unless it is an entire period of twenty-four hours standby/call-out duty.
- (5) On any day on which managerial duty is performed, the hours for that duty shall be rostered consecutively except where an evening duty is required in addition to a normal day duty (for these purposes one meal break in each period of twenty-four hours will be treated as a period of managerial duty).
- (6) Travelling time to or from a rostered evening commitment of managerial duty shall itself count as managerial duty.
- (7) Rota leave shall be rostered no less frequently on a Saturday or Sunday than any other day of the week.
- (8) The total sum of managerial hours shall not average more than forty-two per week.
- (9) The sum of the weekly hours of both types of duty shall not exceed seventy-eight on average.

An employee on the flexible duty system may:

- (1) in exceptional circumstances, be allowed periods of 'short leave' during which he or she may be completely detached from duty, out of touch and beyond recall, subject to the approval of his or her line manager, which shall not unreasonably be withheld; and
- (2) have freedom of movement, during periods of standby/call-out duty, in and around the area within which his or her normal duties are performed and subject to the

arrangements for him or her to be notified of incidents occurring within his or her standby/call-out area.

An employee on the flexible duty system shall be notified of the geographical area within which he or she will be required to be based for the performance of standby/call-out duty.

Transfer onto the flexible duty system will be voluntary. In view of the pension implications, employees will not be transferred from the flexible duty system against their will, except as a result of a disciplinary reduction in role to a level where there are no posts in that fire and rescue authority on the flexible duty system.

Retained duty system

The hours of availability of employees on this duty system shall be agreed between the fire and rescue authority and individual employees. An employee on this duty system shall be required to attend for duty as follows:

- (1) At the station to which the employee is attached for training, development and maintenance duties for an average of two hours per week (or three hours at the discretion of the fire and rescue authority).
- (2) Promptly at the station to which the employee is attached in response to an emergency call at any time during the employee's period of availability.
- (3) At any incident or other occurrence or at any other station for standby duties during the employee's period of availability.

The duties and hours of availability of volunteers carrying out operational firefighting duties shall be agreed between the fire and rescue authority and individual volunteers.

10. We know that in several countries regulations or agreements covering firefighters fail to comply with the Working Time directive.¹ These include Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain and relate to:
- achieving a maximum working week of 48 hours;
 - ensuring that on-call time at work is counted as working time; and
 - ensuring that there are minimum daily rest periods of 11 hours.
11. Are the working time arrangements for firefighters in your country in line with the Working Time Directive?
- Yes No Don't know

If no, can you explain in what way they fail to meet the Directive?

Most FRS employers comply with WTD through collective agreement with the Fire brigades Union described in our answer to question 9. However some are making arrangements outside of this agreement by using the UK's personal opt out. Some firefighters are working in well in excess of 48 hours per week without proper rest breaks and health monitoring.

If your working time arrangements have been changed to bring them into line with the Directive, could you explain the changes particularly in relation to the 48-hour week, on-call time and rest periods?

The main area of potential conflict with WTD is the use of 'on-call arrangements. Fire service managers must provide positive hours and stand-by callout hours. These should not exceed 42 management hours and total hours must not 78 hours per week on a maximum eight week rota.

Part time firefighters work what is called a retained duty system. They must do a minimum of two hours on station training per week and provide 120 hours per week standby/on call hours per week.

Full time firefighters are also working the retained duty system in addition to their full time work.

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¹ See the European Commission's 2008 draft report on the implementation of the Working Time Directive mentions and EPSU paper on the current consultation.....