

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL FIRE CONTROL CENTRE – MINIMUM OF FIVE CONTROL OPERATORS ON DUTY AT NIGHT, DOWN FROM CURRENT 23, UNION WARNS

The controversial regional fire control centre at Taunton will have a minimum of 5 control operators to deal with emergency calls at night from across the whole of the South West. At other times of the day under normal crewing levels there will be 9 on duty, slightly more than one for every fire brigade.

The news has alarmed the Fire Brigades Union which says such a low number of staff will put the public and firefighters at risk. It said the Department for Communities and Local Government, which is demanding staff cuts to make savings, had “lost the plot”.

At present there is a minimum of 23 control operators, based in brigade control rooms to take calls and help manage emergency incidents. Under the controversial plans every fire brigade emergency control room in the South West would be closed and a new region-wide control opened in Taunton.

Tam McFarlane National Executive Council Member for the South West said: “The Government plans for regional fire control rooms go from one disaster to another. Cutting staff is the only way to make savings but these numbers show national Government has truly lost the plot.

“The official minimum number of 5 Control Operators to take calls and mobilise fire appliances and officers to emergency incidents is bad enough. This assumes that no one will leave their desk for a break during a 12 hour night shift, which is unlawful, so the actual figure will be as low as 4.

“We have been constantly asking for the proposed minimum and normal staffing figures for the South West regional control. It is now confirmed that normal crewing for the RCC will be nine operators and the minimum number of operators required would be five.

“Currently there are 23 emergency fire control operators available at any one time in the South West so these are very significant cuts. This will not only put our communities at great risk, but also increase the chances of injury or worse to firefighters and officers attending incidents.

John Drake FBU Regional Secretary for the Region said “A single night time incident in the South West involving more than 10 fire appliances could take up much of the time of all 5 control operators in the south west. There are fewer incidents at night, but the fires tend to be more advanced and more likely to kill.

“It is unthinkable that so few control operators are to be available for an area almost the same size as Belgium. This project is a poor replacement for the current system and this should be stopped now before another penny is wasted.

Ends

Media contacts:-

Tam McFarlane Executive Council Member 07813170279

John Drake Regional Secretary 07813 170755