

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Lifting the lid on what is in store for emergency control room staff

The Fire Brigades Union today reacted to yesterday's statement by Derek Davis, Chair of Staffordshire Fire Authority, that Government plans to merge emergency fire control rooms are nothing more than a multi million pound smokescreen to slash employee pay irrespective of the effect this will have on safety.

Chris Wood, FBU regional official for the West Midlands, said: "I am appalled that elected members who make up the regional management board are prepared to pretend to the public and emergency control staff that every thing is fine with the new project, when they know it is not true. In secret, they have decided to cut pay in the emergency control centres by £ 10.000 a year. Quality of staff will plummet, and we will end up with a call centre instead of a emergency control centre. This will put lives at risk."

FBU Assistant General Secretary Andy Dark added: "The Fire Brigades Union applauds Derek Davis for lifting the lid on what is being planned for emergency control room staff. It's a disgraceful attitude and displays utter contempt for the people that work tirelessly out of public view to ensure that the fire and rescue service delivers to the public when they need it most.

"We believe that what Mr Davis has exposed may well be what is being planned across England.

"Our control room members are an integral part of the fire service team and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. The Executive Council and our national conference are meeting over the next couple of weeks. We shall be recommending the strongest possible action if fire authorities and these new companies fail to guarantee no redundancies or refuse to honour current pay, terms and conditions."

ENDS

For more information contact:

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NOTE TO EDITORS.

On 6th April Mr Davis released the following press release:

County Councillor Derek Davis
Chair of Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Fire Authority
Issued in a personal capacity

Safety Compromised by Cut Backs

Derek Davis, Chair of Staffordshire Fire Authority, says Government plans to merge emergency fire control rooms are being undermined by a number of Fire Authorities around the country putting

savings before safety. Mr Davis, a long term supporter of the plans, is concerned that there may be a hidden agenda emerging, when the new regional centres are up and running.

Around three years ago Government called on Fire Authorities to form Regional Centres to answer emergency calls from the public and co-ordinate services. Fire Authorities in the West Midlands came together to organise a new centre, just completed in Coven, near Wolverhampton. The process is now underway to organise the staffing and management of the new centre.

Cllr Davis, who has served as Chair of the Staffordshire Authority for nearly 15 years, said:

“I have been astonished by what I have recently heard. High level meetings in the West Midlands region during the planning of the Regional Centre discussed promising decent pay and working conditions to lure highly skilled staff to the new regional centre.

“It has now been made clear that this is only a pretence until the centres are up and running. There would then be a major attack on pay and conditions, with talk of pay cuts of up to £10,000.

“I am certain this will undermine public firefighter safety in Staffordshire and across the region. A problem that could be mirrored across the country.

“I have personally assured highly skilled emergency fire control personnel in Staffordshire that their pay and conditions are assured, if they move to the new centre in Wolverhampton. I was astonished therefore to find out that this may not occur and the opposite could happen as soon as the centres are up and running early next year.

“It is obvious that this project will not deliver the safer and better system it promised if we cannot take highly skilled and motivated staff with us and retain them. This appalling hidden agenda undermines both the project and the promises which have been made to our workforce.

“I have been a long-term supporter of this project and I cannot in all conscience go along with making promises which I have recently learned will be broken as soon as it is possible to do so.

“I will be discussing these issues with fire service personnel and my colleagues on the fire authority.”

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