



THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

FIRE BRIGADES UNION WELCOMES ROYAL ASSENT FOR EMERGENCY WORKERS (OBSTRUCTION) BILL

The Fire Brigades Union has welcomed the Royal Assent given today to the Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Bill.

The new law will extend the protection to emergency workers that has recently come into force in Scotland, making it a specific offence to obstruct or hinder emergency workers such as firefighters.

This legislation will close gaps in the law in relation to ambulance workers, where no current offence of obstruction exists. It will also make clearer and easier to prosecute for obstructing or hindering fire crews dealing with emergencies.

Research commissioned by the Fire Brigades Union shows attacks on UK fire crews running at 40 a week with the problem getting worse. The research, the first of its kind in the UK, found that under-reporting suggested the figure could be as high as 120 attacks a week.

In some parts of the country, fire crews are served a diet of bricks, bottles and missiles as they fight fires. In other incidents ambushes have been set for firefighters to lure them to an incident to be attacked.

The attacks include scaffolding poles being thrown through windscreens of fire engines; crews being attacked with concrete blocks, bricks and bottles; being shot at; spat at; equipment tampered with or stolen; direct physical assaults on fire crews; and equipment being urinated on.

General Secretary Matt Wrack said:

“We welcome the Royal Assent given today to the Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Bill.

“I would like to thank MPs and Lords who supported this legislation and in particular MP Alan Williams, who tabled the original Private Members Bill.

“The number and ferocity of the attacks has been getting worse.

“If we can’t do our job because of violent assaults then it is our communities which are being put at risk. We are the targets, but it is our communities which are deprived of an emergency response which are the victims.

“The Bill needs to be part of a package of measures aimed at tackling some of the underlying problems. Central to this package is the need for a range of educational measures to try and stop these attacks happening.”

Media contact:- Press Office 020 8541 1765