

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Manchester fire crews' voice fears over moves to cut frontline firefighters and fire engines across the county

Manchester fire crews have hit out over plans for fresh cuts to Greater Manchester's fire service despite having already suffered one of the highest levels of cuts of any fire service in England. And Greater Manchester is one of only five fire services failing to meet a key fire death reduction target.

The target is for fire authorities to have accidental fire deaths in the home of no more than 1.25 the national average of fire deaths for each 100,000 of the population. Greater Manchester, Durham, Lancashire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire all failed to hit that target.

Although fire deaths have fallen overall, those five fire authorities have failed to keep pace with the reducing national average. Greater Manchester has the second worst record in England, behind Lancashire.

Outside of London, Greater Manchester fire service has the worst record for cuts - £29.4 million in the last 4 years. It represents nearly a third of the cuts demanded of fire authorities for the whole of England.

The Greater Manchester fire service was also heavily criticised for staff shortages in a private Audit Commission report. The comments were only recently made public after a Freedom of Information Act question filed by Fire Brigades Union Researchers.

One proposal is to cut the number of fire engines to one at almost all stations on 3 shifts a week. Specialist appliances will also lose crews, meaning the appliance will not be immediately available.

The Audit Commission, Operational Assessment of Service Delivery Report (2006) Greater Manchester found: "There is evidence that the *arrangements to maintain adequate crewing levels at stations identified within the FRAs IRMP* are not being achieved. The service has identified that it will maintain crewing levels of five personnel on the first appliance on all occasions but evidence shows that this level is not being attained on an increasing percentage of occasions over the last two years." The report remains valid until the end of 2009.

Now fire authority councillors are being asked to rubber-stamp the loss of another 50 frontline firefighter posts. It would bring the total number of lost firefighter posts in Greater Manchester to 475 since 2002.

Peter Taylor, Greater Manchester FBU brigade secretary said: "Greater Manchester fire service has the worst record for cuts outside of London. It is also failing to meet one of the very few fire deaths reduction targets and we're trailing behind other fire authorities.

"The cuts being looked at are significant and will hit services. We also believe they could impact on the safety of firefighters.

“One fire engine does not have enough firefighters to safely carry out a rescue from a house or building fire. It can place fire crews in the position of either attempting a rescue without enough back up and risking themselves or not attempting the rescue and risking the member of the public.

“This is a well known predicament for rescuers known as the ‘moral dilemma’ and which must be avoided at all costs. It is not acceptable to put fire crews and their officers in this position.

“The cuts are unnecessary and unwanted. Councillors must think very carefully before simply rubber-stamping what is put in front of them.”

Media contact: Peter Taylor 01617070069

Sources:

Dismore - Fire Services (Public Service Agreement Targets)

Mon, 26 January 2009 | House of Commons - Written Answer

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which fire and rescue authorities did not meet the public service agreement sub-target of having an annual fatality rate from accidental fires in the home of no more than 1.25 times the national average in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [250703]

Mr. Khan: Because of inherent fluctuations in the number of fatalities in individual Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) areas, the definition of this sub-target takes the average data across a five year period, and this runs from April 2005 to March 2010.

The comparable statistics that can be calculated now are for the five year period 2002-03 to 2006-07, and are shown in the table. However this should only be used for guidance purposes and not as a means of judging FRA performance or ability to meet PSA 3 targets.

Fire authorities exceeding 1.25 times the national average rate of accidental dwelling fires

Area	Average fatality rate (per 100,000 population) based on 2002-03 to 2006-07 data
England average	0.49
Rate 1.25* the National Average	0.61
Lancashire	0.87
Greater Manchester	0.74
West Yorkshire	0.66
Durham	0.64
South Yorkshire(1)	0.61

(1) The figure for South Yorkshire is higher than 1.25* the national average when taken to three decimal places.

Dismore - Fire Services

Tue, 27 January 2009 | House of Commons - Written Answer

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what efficiency savings have been made by the fire and rescue service in England in each region since 2003; and what such savings have been made by each fire and rescue authority over the same period. [250702]

Mr. Khan: The Government did not set an efficiency target for the English fire and rescue service prior to 2004.

The fire and rescue service was set a national target to achieve £105 million in cash-releasing efficiency savings across the period 2004-08. They exceeded the target and achieved approximately £197 million. The efficiency savings achieved by each fire and rescue authority are listed in the following table.

Fire and rescue authority	Total (£)
Avon	5,460,000
Bedfordshire	1,170,000
Buckinghamshire	1,187,000
Cambridgeshire	863,000
Cheshire	2,576,000
Cleveland	5,106,000
Cornwall	1,710,000
Cumbria	1,714,000
Derbyshire	2,481,000
Devon And Somerset(1)	3,508,000
Dorset	1,332,000
Durham and Darlington	1,779,000
East Sussex	1,883,000
Essex	4,396,000
Gloucestershire	785,000
Greater Manchester	29,414,000
Hampshire	4,958,000
Hereford and Worcestershire	2,245,000
Hertfordshire	1,256,000
Humberside	2,715,000
Isle of Wight	1,197,000
Isles of Scilly	4,511
Kent and Medway	5,285,000
Lancashire	5,732,000
Leicestershire	2,342,000
Lincolnshire	1,593,000
LFEPA	33,457,000
Merseyside	15,140,000
Norfolk	2,582,000
North Yorkshire	1,305,000
Northamptonshire	2,023,000
Northumberland	3,374,000
Nottinghamshire	3,652,000
Oxfordshire	950,000
Royal Berkshire	1,319,000
Shropshire	940,000

South Yorkshire	5,518,000
Stoke and Staffordshire	2,254,000
Suffolk	1,181,000
Surrey	4,641,000
Tyne and Wear	5,125,000
Warwickshire	594,000
West Midlands	7,734,000
West Sussex	1,849,000
West Yorkshire	10,347,000
Wiltshire	843,000

ENDS