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MAKE A CLAIM
Make Your Workplace Safer

by **Patrick McGuire**
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"I can't be bothered"; "I wasn't seriously injured anyway"; "The Senior Officers won't forget"; "That'll just make me part of the compensation culture - I am not like that".

These are just some of the standard reasons given for not making a claim. Maybe it is the macho firefighter image, but the sad truth is that the Fire Service is not very safe at all and injuries to firefighters are at an unacceptably high level. Despite this fact, the number of Firefighters who make claims when they are injured at work is very small indeed.

Why Not Claim?

The reasons mentioned above for not claiming are based on myths. In fact, it is worse than that, the quotes show the extent to which we are all influenced by that blight of modern politics and modern living

modern politics and modern living – Spin. Different people have defined spin in different ways – here is my take on it:

Spin is designed to deflect public scrutiny and criticism from the wrongdoer and onto a scapegoat. This allows the wrongdoer to keep doing wrong with impunity. In the work context that means continuing to operate, promote and permit unsafe systems and the use of unsafe equipment.

Benefit to Others

Accordingly, the next time you have an accident and you start to think along the same lines as the quotes at the start of this article, ask yourself this *"what about the next person?"*. You may not have suffered a serious injury but the next person might be killed making them and their family another HSE statistic.

The sad fact is that employers are a bit like the characters from the Wizard of Oz: like the Scarecrow they do not have the brains to see a risk and do something about it; like the Lion, they lack the courage

to improve Health & Safety without prompting; and like the Tin Man they will not make things safer out of the goodness of their hearts.

Hit Them Where It Hurts

It seems that employers have only one Achilles heel that you can strike to make a difference. It is only when you hit them where it hurts, in their wallets, that things improve and safety is taken seriously. Be under no illusion that budget driven Chief Fire Officers are no different.

Accordingly, if you have an accident and think about making a claim, think about your co-workers, their family and making things safer for everyone.

This is, after all, not new territory to the FBU and its members. Together Thompsons Solicitors and the FBU have a proven record of forcing through Health & Safety changes through collating statistics and making claims.

Together we can make a difference.

Summer Re-Launch of Legal Services

Scottish Regional Officials have been working with Thompson's Solicitors to revitalise the legal services available to members.

A launch of the services available to members will take place over the summer. This will include a number of new services and will utilise IT to keep members informed and up to date.

There are numerous legal services available to members that are under used. The re-launch will hopefully assist in ensuring that members get the most out of their legal services.

Look out for information in the Branches and on the FBU Scotland website.

SERVICES INCLUDE

- Personal Injury Claims
- Employment Law
- Work Related Accidents & Diseases
- Non Work Related Accidents & Diseases
- Health & Safety
- Family Law Service
- Criminal Law Service
- Property, Mortgage & Estate Agency
- Free Wills, Trust & Executry
- Independent Financial Advice
- Benefits & Consumer Law
- Human Rights
- Road Traffic Scheme

FBU SCOTLAND CONTACTS

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FIRE BRIGADES UNION SCOTLAND
NEWSLETTER

June 2007 For Fire Brigades Union Members in Scotland Issue 1

New Scottish Executive & FRS Boards
Herald New Era for Scottish Fire & Rescue Services

As Members will be aware, the recent Scottish Parliament & Local Government Elections have changed the political landscape of Scotland.

Re-Appraisal

This new era in Scottish Politics represents an excellent opportunity to take a fresh look at the Fire & Rescue Services in Scotland, to re-appraise the many changes that have taken place and that are proposed to take place.

The pace of change over the past few years has been relentless. Many changes clearly don't constitute improvements to the Service. The time has come stop and reflect.

Scottish Officials have been

working extremely hard in the run-up to the elections, lobbying candidates for both the Scottish Parliament & Local Government elections, on Fire Service Issues.

Opportunity

This included the now new First Minister Alex Salmond MSP. Officials are seeking a meeting with Mr Salmond now that he is



Alex Salmond: New First Minister

In office and hope to explore a more positive change in direction for the Service.

Changing Face

The new dynamics of the Parliament and the significant changes to FRS Board Memberships and balances of political parties, will present different challenges in how we engage with senior & local politicians, but will also present new opportunities.

One thing is for sure - the next 4 years are likely to be the most significant for the Fire Service in Scotland. This is a golden opportunity to influence change for the benefit of the Communities we serve and to stop the Cuts Agenda in the name of 'efficiency' savings.

CABINET SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE

Kenny MacAskill MSP heads the Justice Department
which has responsibility for Scottish Fire & Rescue Services

In the new Scottish Executive, Fire & Rescue Services in Scotland now come under the auspices of Kenny MacAskill MSP.

Mr MacAskill was appointed the Cabinet Secretary for Justice in the new Executive. His department oversees Scottish Fire & Rescue Services.

Mr MacAskill's background is in law. From 1984 to 2000 he was a senior partner in a law firm in Edinburgh. Scottish FBU



Officials have met with Mr MacAskill on several occasions in his capacity as Shadow Minister for Justice in the previous Parliament.

He is assisted by Fergus Ewing MSP, who is the Minister for Community Safety within the Justice Department.

The next 4 years will see further changes within the Service. The drive for further reforms continues. The Fire Brigades Union looks forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with Mr MacAskill & Mr Ewing. Professional Firefighters &



Emergency Fire Control Operators know what is best for the Service. It is only right that their representatives play an active part at the highest levels in order to positively influence & shape the Fire & Rescue Services for the future.

We look forward to a positive and productive relationship with Mr MacAskill & Mr Ewing.

NO₂ Fire Deaths

ZERO TOLERANCE for ALL Fire Deaths!

A ZERO TOLERANCE Policy for ALL Fire Deaths MUST now Form Part of All Scottish Fire & Rescue Board's Integrated Risk Management Plan

For far too long, Scotland has had the highest number of casualties & fatalities in fires per capita, in the UK.

According to the Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin, published in March 2007, this trend is continuing. Figures in Scotland for 2005 show **13 Fatal Casualties per million population** and **334 Non-Fatal Casualties per million population**.

This equates to **65 Fatal Casualties** and **1,667 Non-Fatal Casualties**. This is during a period when the number of Fires has slightly risen from the previous year.

UK Figures

This compares extremely badly to other UK Countries.

Equivalent figures in England show **8 Fatal Casualties per million population**, with Northern Ireland showing **5** and Wales showing **10**.

English figures show **217 non-fatal casualties per million population**, with the figures in Northern Ireland & Wales **224** & **250** respectfully.

In Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway, Tayside, Strathclyde and Grampian show the highest levels, with **20, 18, 15** & **15 Fatal Casualties per million population** respectfully.

The
Fire Brigades Union
is the Voice of
Professional
Firefighters
&
Emergency Fire
Control Operators

Response Times

This is no coincidence, as these Fire & Rescue Services cover large and sometimes remote areas, which means longer response times to incidents.

Coupled with the fact that **1,667** people were rescued from Fires, these figures also show a **direct correlation between response times and casualty rates**.

The **LONGER** the Response Times, the **HIGHER** the Casualty & Fatality Rate.

Safety

Not only do longer response times compromise the safety of the Public, the safety of Firefighters is also compromised as they will have to deal with more developed fires and subsequently, more complex incidents.

Performance Indicators

In 2005, the Scottish Executive, on the advice of the HMI Chief

Inspector of the Fire Service in Scotland, Jeff Ord, abolished Response Times as a Performance Indicator. He stated that they were **"no longer relevant"**.

Professional Firefighters & Emergency Fire Control Operators find this viewpoint to not only be totally erroneous, but offensive and morally corrupt.

The figures show the need to re-establish a Response Times Indicator for all Fire Authorities in Scotland, through a **SCOTTISH RESPONSE STANDARD**, in order to ensure a consistent & safe approach for **ALL** our Communities.

"These statistics show in the clearest of terms that the quickest possible response times are essential in ensuring that members of the public have the best possible chance of rescue from Fire with little or no injury": Ken Ross, FBU Scottish Regional Secretary.

A **SCOTTISH RESPONSE STANDARD MECHANISM** is urgently required to set **MAXIMUM RESPONSE TIMES & MINIMUM WEIGHTS OF RESPONSE** in each Fire & Rescue Authority, incorporating a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**, for **ALL Fire Deaths** in order to make true **"improvements to community safety"**

E-Mail Updates for All Members

All Members are urged to register their Home & Workplace E-Mail Addresses on the FBU Scotland Website. This way Members will get automatic notification of all new information straight to their home and/or workplace.

FBU Circulars, Press Releases, Information Bulletins, & Newsletters are all available on the site. As well as regular updates on Local & National Issues, there are Legal updates & a link to an FBU dedicated Thompson's Website.

The Website also contains links to the **FBU Online Resource Library**. The Library contains all information in relation to the Union & the Fire Service, with a multitude of links to relevant sites.

Register Online
NOW

www.fbuscotland.co.uk

WHAT'S ON THE FBU POLITICAL AGENDA?

What are amongst the Political Priorities for Scottish Officials to Pursue on Behalf of Professional Firefighters, Emergency Fire Control Operators and the Communities we serve over the next 4 Years?

The Scottish Region will be engaging with Politicians, employers and management at local & national level, pursuing such matters as:



FRS Board Presentations

Scottish Regional Officials have offered to give a presentation to all 8 New Fire & Rescue Service Boards.

Roddy Robertson, EC Member for Scotland, has written to all FRS Board Clerks & Conveners, suggesting that as part of the new Board Members' training, that a contribution from the Fire Brigades Union would be both appropriate & helpful.

Industrial Relations

The Presentation will inform Board Members of the Structure and Role of the Union and will extol the virtues of Constructive and Meaningful Dialogue & Co-operative Industrial Relations.

It will also afford an opportunity for Board Members to meet with Scottish & local Brigade Officials

and establish the beginnings of what will hopefully be a new positive era in Scottish Fire Service Industrial Relations.

Issues for the Future

Officials will also take this opportunity to inform Board Members of the key priorities for FBU Members in Scotland over the next 4 years and will lay out our hopes as well as our concerns in relation to the Service we provide to local Communities.

Conveners

Roddy has also requested meetings with all 8 FRS Board Conveners. A constructive working relationship with the key politicians is vital in ensuring we deliver the best for Fire Brigades Union Members and our local Communities.

Log onto www.fbuscotland.co.uk and Register NOW for Regular Updates and Information

Official Profile



Roddy Robertson
Executive Council Member
Scotland

On 20th March 2007, Roddy was elected unopposed to the position of Executive Council Member for Scotland.

Background

He joined Grampian Fire Brigade in 1982, where he became a Leading Firefighter and the FBU Brigade Chair. After 10 years he transferred to Strathclyde, being based at Paisley Fire Station ever since.

It wasn't long before he was elected as the Regional Organiser then Regional Chair in 2001. In fact, until his recent election to the Executive Council, Roddy was the longest serving Regional Official in the UK, working at that level in Scotland for 18 years.

This has afforded him a wealth of knowledge and experience that is unique and invaluable.

The Future

Roddy's election comes on the threshold of a new era for the Union & Fire Service in Scotland. A fresh perspective from a new viewpoint will re-invigorate the Scottish Region that will benefit all FBU Members and the Communities we serve.