

# SOMERSET MEMBERS VOTE FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION



## **Ballot returns 85.5% in favour of industrial action over lack of New Dimension insurance cover**

The ballot over lack of insurance cover for New Dimension incidents in Somerset has closed with 85.5% voting for industrial action short of strike action.

The ballot was held after Somerset Fire Authority's acknowledgement that some firefighters may have clauses in their personal insurance policies that exclude payouts if death or injury occurred while attending New Dimension incidents and its subsequent decision not to underwrite this shortfall even though it expected FBU members to train and turn out for ND incidents.

"This is a magnificent achievement for Somerset members and officials for their hard work over the last few months," says John Drake, FBU

South West regional officials. "Thanks also to all who have sent messages of support to Somerset members."

## **Regional Control centres announcement delayed**

The announcement expected today on the sites for the new regional fire control centres has been cancelled. One of the ODPM's expensive consultants has said that due to the London attacks, the Government will now make an announcement at an unspecified later date. "We will give more details as soon as we can," says PA Consulting's Alex Conder.

## **600+ Scottish care homes fail inspections**

Almost two-thirds of Scotland's care homes failed fire safety inspections during the past 18 months.

Of 958 homes visited by fire officers since February last year, after the death of 14 residents in a care home fire, 605 failed to meet basic safety standards. Faulty electrical equipment was blamed for the fire at Rosepark care home in Uddingston, Lanarkshire last year.

The inspection reports, which found the highest incidence of problems in Fife, Edinburgh and Grampian, said basic problems included a lack of fire extinguishers or fire doors, locked fire exits, and one case in which fuel oil was stored in the basement. Scottish Care, an umbrella group representing 900 care home providers, said there was "no excuse" for not having proper safety precautions, but said care homes were closing because they are underfunded.

After Rosepark, the Scottish Executive ordered safety checks in all 1800 care homes. It has required that all new residential care homes since May this year must have sprinkler systems fitted, and has given fire services the responsibility to enforce tougher standards.

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## **Union meets Cheshire brigade management**

A meeting was taking place today between Cheshire brigade management and FBU officials over the brigade's insistence that FBU members work six extra shifts - an additional 72 hours - without pay.

We will keep members up to date on this issue.

## **FBU fights Northumberland cuts**

Northumberland's Firefighters, Control Room Staff and Fire Brigade Union Officials have reacted angrily to Chief Fire Officer Brian Hesler's public comments regarding his plan to close four fire stations in south east Northumberland. They oppose the plan, which will provide only two new replacement fire stations.

The staff are appalled and insulted by his statement that they "know nothing about emergency cover" and that they are only campaigning against his plan due to "career or personal interests". The staff - most of whom have lived and worked in Northumberland all their lives - are concerned about the effect the closures will have on public safety.

Northumberland FBU spokesman Colin James said:

"The plain and simple fact is that any increase in response times will increase the risks to peoples' lives in an emergency situation whether in a fire or otherwise. Everyone in the fire service knows this, or should."

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