

THE LESSON OF KINGS X: FIRE SAFETY



Rail unions and the FBU have united to defend fire safety regs, calling for a national demonstration Nov. 26 on the 18th anniversary of the Kings Cross Fire.

Eighteen years after the King's Cross fire, Britain's rail and firefighting unions have launched a joint campaign to keep in place essential fire-safety regulations for sub-surface stations that were introduced after the 1987 disaster that claimed 31 lives.

RMT, ASLEF and the FBU have called a national demonstration at King's Cross on November 26 to highlight the threat to public safety posed by plans to abolish the 'Section 12' regulations that prescribe safety standards for sub-surface stations all over Britain.

The regulations stipulate minimum safe staffing levels, means of detecting and warning of fires and means of escape and firefighting, as well as standards of fire-resistant construction, training and various other precautions, which are not specified in the Fire Safety Order the government wants to replace them with.

"The government must not replace the current regulations until they can guarantee the same level of safety for the public, rail staff and emergency services. If they cannot it would be a serious blow to public safety," FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said today.

Guarantees of effective enforcements needed

"The essential elements of the current regulations must be maintained. We need guarantees there would be effective enforcement to underpin any safety regime," Matt Wrack said.

"We will be using every parliamentary device again to highlight the risk to the travelling public and workers in underground stations," said MP John McDonnell, secretary to the FBU's parliamentary group.

"After July nobody in their right minds would be seeking to reduce safety measures on the Tube. We shall be demanding an early debate on the floor of the House to ensure that the government addresses these serious concerns," said John McDonnell.

The demo starts 10.30am at Kings Cross station.

Early Day Motion 549 - Fire Precautions Regulations, has been tabled by John McDonnell and signed by 45 other MPs.

Get your MP to sign it - visit www.fbu.org.uk and follow the Lobby Your MP link.

West Mids action continues with members' 100% backing

Industrial action for compensation for working anti-social hours and for additional travel costs following the introduction of a new shift system continued in West Midlands today.

Members took strike action from 0400-0700. The strike was 100% solid and caused major disruption to the management of the brigade. The next strikes are:

- Wednesday 23rd November 0700-1000
- Saturday 26th November 1800-2100

Members and officials elsewhere in the country are urged to show solidarity with West Midlands members. Donations can be made to:

WEST MIDLANDS HARDSHIP FUND
LLOYDS TSB
SORT CODE 30-96-12
A/C NO 3664068.

Solidarity with Notts members fighting co-responding

Nott members are paying a minimum voluntary levy of £5 per week into a Hardship Fund to assist the 34 members at Retford. Send your donation to:

Details of the fund are:

BANK DETAILS: NAT WEST BANK PLC
ACCOUNT NAME: NOTTS HARDSHIP FUND
ACCOUNT NO: 68013868
SORT CODE: 55 - 61 - 17

Control Campaign

Following the decision to launch a wide-ranging ODPM Select Committee Inquiry into the Government's regional fire controls project, members are asked to give every assistance to FBU officials to help the Union prepare its evidence to put to the ODPM Select Committee. Members are also urged to:

- Keep your MP informed of the issues and any new developments in the campaign (MPs can submit written evidence to the Select Committee)
- Get as many signatures as possible for the petition against the establishment of remote regional fire controls - petitions are on the control care website and

are being sent to all members in the next issue of Firefighter magazine

- Attend your branch meetings – and the regional “open forums” (see below) to ensure you are up to date and to participate in the campaign
- Keep informed of the campaign and obtain campaign materials from www.controlcare.org.uk, the FBU’s official website for the campaign.

Pensions/Controls meetings

Regional “open forum” meetings on the Union’s pensions and controls campaigns are continuing across the country.

The dates for those remaining are:

Region 3 – 30 November
Region 5 – 24/25 November
Region 6 – 22 November
Region 7 – 28 November
Region 10 – 5 December
Region 11 – 24 November
Region 12 – TBC
Region 13 – 28 November

Take the opportunity to hear from national FBU representatives (General Secretary/President) about the issues and how the Union is taking the campaigns forward.

Contact your local FBU official for more details.

Mid Sussex councillors denounce “madness” of cuts to emergency response

If there is a major incident in East Grinstead full-time firefighters who are out on fire prevention duties would not be called back to help, according to Mid Sussex deputy district commander Keith Parvin.

Mr Parvin made the statement following a question from Cllr Janette Wilson at Thursday's town council public services committee.

Cllr Wilson asked whether under proposed crew changes it would be possible to call in firefighters who were out on fire prevention if there was a major incident.

Mr Parvin responded by saying: "Firefighters would not be called back to the station. They would be dedicated to fire prevention duties."

He explained: "If there's an incident, immediately a number of appliances respond. If a fire happens it will be responded to by a whole-time appliance. A second appliance would be crewed by a retained crew on a four minute delay."

Cllr David Heasman described the changes as 'absolute bloody madness'.

Cllr Heasman said: "You could have firefighter out talking to people when you have a major incident nearby. You could have people burning to death."

"I am extremely concerned. If that was the police I would be on the phone straight away."

West Sussex County Council Fire and Rescue Service plans to cut crew numbers and change the working hours of full-time firefighters at the station to Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm. The proposed changes will see the crew at East Grinstead reduced from 14 to 10 which means there would only be a need for one full-time crew commander. At evenings and weekends the station would be staffed by retained firefighters.

Mr Parvin explained that this is all part of a shift in emphasis to free up firefighters to do more community prevention work and to make efficiency savings.

Councillors unconvinced that changes are necessary

Councillors were unconvinced that the changes were necessary and would work in East Grinstead.

Councillors will devise a strategy at the finance and general purposes committee meeting, on Friday November 25.

Following the meeting the FBU rep at East Grinstead, Ray Grindrod, said he wanted the general public and town council to raise "concerns and hopefully get it stopped, so we can carry on doing the job we are paid to do".

www.thisiskent.co.uk

FBU GMC welcomes sentencing of youths who attacked firefighters

Greater Manchester FBU has welcomed the six month custodial sentences handed out to youths in Manchester who attacked fire crews as appropriate to the crime. The union said it took no great pleasure in seeing youths so young receiving custodial sentences but that the punishment had to fit the crime and act as a deterrent.


Brigade secretary Kevin Brown said: "We take no pleasure in their sentences but these youths were old enough to know what they were doing. Our work is dangerous enough without having to face a diet of bricks and bottles.

"Attacking fire crews is recreational violence in some areas and the judge has it spot on. Six months is a significant sentence for youths of this age but the punishment must fit the crime.

Rising number of attacks

"There has been a rising number of attacks on fire crews in Manchester and across the country. In the UK they are running at between 40 and 120 attacks a week and they are totally unacceptable.

"We're being attacked in pre-arranged ambushes, when we are going to fires and even when we are at fires trying to save lives. We need to educate kids and work with them to help stop these attacks but if that fails then the courts need to send a clear message."



For more on our campaign for action over attacks on firefighters, visit www.fbu.org.uk and follow the link from the home page.

Stop the slaughter of trade unionists - Stop UK military aid to Colombia

As part of the Justice for Colombia/TUC campaign against UK military aid to Colombia, JfC have arranged for an Early Day Motion (EDM) to be put down in Parliament by Frank Doran and others.

The motion, EDM number 355, calls on the British Government to end their secretive military assistance project in Colombia - assistance believed to be benefiting Colombian military units that violate human rights, including those that attack trade union members.

This is an issue of life and death for many trade unionists, teachers, community workers, firefighters and predominantly poor men, women and children who continue to be murdered in Colombia.

Encourage your MP to sign. Visit www.fbu.org.uk and follow the 'Lobby Your MP' link.

For more on the campaign visit: www.justiceforcolombia.org

The FBU is affiliated to Justice for Colombia.

Workers and union struggles worldwide on LabourStart TV

LabourStart, the online news and campaigning service serving the

international trade union movement, last week launched LabourStart TV.

The site shows videos taken from mainstream and trade union sources of strikes, demonstrations and other actions by trade unionists the world over.

Log on and you'll be glued to videos of one of the largest mass protests in Australian history, with over 500,000 union members taking to the streets last week.

Take a look: www.labourstart.tv. There is also a link from the FBU website - follow the link to Links - Trade Unions.

Subscribe to the e-bulletin

Get the e-bulletin and other FBU campaign news by email. Go to www.fbu.org.uk, type in your email address on the bottom left hand side of the home page and hit the "Sign Up" button.