

FBU wins £6m compensation for members

THE FBU won £6 million last year for members injured at work, statistics from FBU lawyers Thompsons reveal. Around 800 new cases were opened in England, Scotland and Wales.

Damages range from a few hundred pounds for members with relatively minor injuries sustained on duty or away from work, to many thousands for those more seriously injured and sometimes unable to return to firefighting duties.

Cases include that of Kieron Farrell who was off duty near his home in Sheldon, Birmingham, when he was hit by a speeding car. The impact shattered his knee and despite treatment his GP said it was unlikely that he could return to firefighting duties with West Midlands Fire Service.

Kieron was medically retired from the service and received £54,000 compensation, which consisted mainly of loss of earnings.

"It was night time and the 18-year-old driver cut a corner at speed and just didn't see me. I was pleased of course to get the money but at the end of the day I lost my job after 38 years service and that was a big blow," Kieron said.

David Williams, a retained firefighter with North Wales Fire Service, received £228,756.72 after his own career and his ability to

be a firefighter were ended when he shattered a leg falling from a ladder. Flames had suddenly surged through the roof of the building he was attending, causing him to lose his balance and fall onto a concrete floor.

Michael Thomas, another firefighter who could no longer work after being injured on duty, received £188,500.00. He fractured his right ankle when he fell through a hole in the floor at an industrial storage premises in Newport in January 2001.

John Brindley was carrying a ladder across the appliance bay ladder at Holloway Fire Station in North London when he tripped over broken pieces of concrete by a drainage gully. The state of the floor had previously been reported but it was only repaired after the accident.

John broke his index finger in the accident and was unable to work again as a firefighter. He received £40,000 compensation.

FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist commented: "It is unacceptable that so many of our members are being injured each year. But while no amount of money can compensate for injury, or the loss of a career, the fact that the FBU's legal service is winning so much for injured members is yet again proof of the value of union membership."



Andy Gilchrist: Awards prove value of union membership

MORE LEGAL WINS ...

TWO injury compensation claims have been settled recently with the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

One member suffered whiplash and psychological injuries when his fire engine skidded on mud and crashed into a tree. The authority admitted liability for the negligent driving of its employee and paid £7,500 in damages.

Another member, a retained fire fighter, was attending an emergency call to a factory fire. He fractured his tibia and suffered injuries to his knee and ankle when he was thrown off balance from the force of a suction which had become detached.

The authority admitted liability on the basis that the hard suction had been incorrectly connected. He received £5,700 in compensation.

Pregnant? Don't suffer in silence

WOMEN have served in the fire service for many years but employers still cannot come to terms with pregnancy.

When Sam Rye, Region 3 women's representative, became pregnant for the first time it all seemed a shock to her bosses.

"What were they going to do with me? I think a dark cupboard away from prying eyes might have been their preferred choice, but with some hard work from a National Women's Committee union rep we eventually got the matter sorted out," said Sam.

Her employer's attitudes have made being a mother a tough experience, but she hasn't been put off and recommends that other women members "go for it" too.

Since having her first child, Sam has moved brigade and decided to have another two children. "I have decided that nothing short of a rugby team is going to be enough for me now as I want to see my employers get it right without all the fuss. Anybody would think that I had been impregnated by an alien from outer space," Sam said.

"There are some brigades out there that are making an effort to make being pregnant in the fire service not such a commotion. But not nearly enough is being done.

"If any of you out there are pregnant, contemplating becoming pregnant or are on maternity leave and feel you have been treated without the dignity and respect that you deserve please don't suffer in silence."

If you are pregnant and want advice contact your region's rep on the National Women's Committee (details on www.nwcfbu.co.uk). The website also contains the FBU model maternity policy. All enquiries are dealt with in confidence.



Sam Rye: Go for it!

ON THE MOVE?



Members are reminded to advise their brigade membership secretary of any change of address.

Head office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.