

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

MEDIA RELEASE: MONDAY 10 NOVEMBER

“A catalogue of errors” led to death of my firefighter son

Firefighter’s father Dave Faust calls for “a change of attitude.”

Billy Faust was a 36 year old married firefighter with three young children. Along with his colleague, Adam Meere, Billy was tragically killed whilst fighting a fire in a shop in Bethnal Green on 20th July 2004.

And he might be alive today, if the Fire Service paid greater attention to the training and safety of its firefighters, says his father Mr Dave Faust.

Dave Faust says:

“It became clear at the Coroner’s Inquest into the deaths of my son, and his colleague, Adam Meere, that a series of basic errors were made at the fire. These errors in turn led directly to my son and his colleague being left without water whilst trying to extinguish a fire in the basement of the shop.

“There were also critical errors made in the command of the incident, and these too contributed to the deaths of two young, professional, dedicated firefighters.

“I do not seek to blame any individuals for the errors that were made, but I am absolutely clear that the catalogue of errors that led to my son’s tragic death were the result of systemic failures of the Fire Service to adequately train both firefighters and fire officers.

“The Health and Safety Executive’s report into the deaths of my son and his colleague is still not completed, four and a half years after the tragic fire which devastated two families. I know that the London Fire Brigade has made some changes since the fire, such as issuing two way radios to all operational firefighters.

“Whilst I welcome such moves, I still want to know that the HSE will ensure that changes are made to the Fires Service to minimise the risk of further firefighters being killed as a result of inadequate training.

“My son was passionate about carrying out Community Fire Safety work, and ensuring people had working smoke alarms fitted in their homes. As a father of three small children, he was acutely aware of the dangers of fire, and how it can devastate families.

“That said, I believe that the practice of forcing firefighters throughout the country to meet unrealistic targets for carrying out home safety checks and fitting smoke alarms means that there is not enough time left for firefighters to train for the demanding and often dangerous job that the public expects of them.

“The politicians who set the targets for Community Safety work are not experienced fire officers, and they are blind to the risks that modern firefighters are faced with as a result of poor training.

“This is the one area where I believe that action should be taken immediately to ensure that training for operational incidents is made a top priority.

“I remain gravely concerned that the Fire Service still allows inexperienced junior officers to ‘act up’ to carry out temporary promotion, instead of fully training adequate numbers of officers and maintaining their competence to command incidents.

“If the Fire Service were to move forward listening to the views of brave and dedicated firefighters, instead of listening to the list of targets set by politicians, then I am convinced that safety of firefighters would improve.

“The fire service owes that to my family, the family of all firefighters killed in recent years, and to firefighters throughout the UK.

“If lessons are learnt, and the leadership of the Fire Service throws its weight behind a back to basics campaign to train and equip firefighters to carry out the job safely, then my son’s death will not have been in vain.”

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