



PARLIAMENTARY LOBBY | 29 NOVEMBER 2016

MAKE FIREFIGHTER SAFETY A PRIORITY

Firefighting is a physically and mentally demanding profession. Firefighters deal with hazardous situations every single day, but their families have the right to expect that they will return home from work safely.

Over the last decade (2006-15):

- **22** firefighters have died in work-related fatalities
- **16** fatalities took place at operational incidents
- **12** firefighter deaths have occurred at fires.

The FBU has pointed out repeated failures in areas such as risk assessment, incident command, training and BA procedures that led to the deaths of firefighters.

Firefighter **Stephen Hunt**, a member of the FBU in Greater Manchester, died attending the fire in Oldham Street, Manchester on 13 July 2013. Stephen's death was a tragedy that could have been prevented. It is a tragedy that must never be repeated.

On 18 May 2016, the inquest jury found that Stephen Hunt was unlawfully killed. On 8 June coroner Nigel Meadows issued a **Regulation 28** (previously Rule 43) report, outlining the circumstances of Stephen's death and making 10 important recommendations.

The FBU has examined the issues arising from the inquest into Stephen Hunt's death. A number of factors identified by the coroner are not new, but have been raised in earlier inquests or inquiries into safety in the fire and rescue service.

The union believes that these **lessons** have not been applied and that the **mistakes** have been repeated. The fragmentation of the service with respect to professional standards has played a key part in this.

The Westminster government says the new **fire inspectorate** in England will help. The FBU supports inspection – but we know inspectors cannot be on the fireground and supervise fire and rescue services daily.

The government says **national operational guidance** will help. The FBU contributes to the guidance, but fire and rescue services are not obliged to follow it.

The Westminster government says CFA is producing **professional standards**. The FBU must be given a place at the table in any forum producing professional standards.

The coroner rightly said FBU **safety reps** and **safety committees** are vital. But this means governments and principal managers need to engage with the FBU, listen to our members and give us a voice in making improvements.

The FBU wants a **professional standards forum** to oversee improvements in firefighter safety and other operational matters. The FBU must be centrally involved in this work.