

Members Update (Southern Region)

20 January 2006

FBU Demand Government act on attacks on Firefighters

EC member Dean Mills put our case this week on Sky News

The News Report circulated after the interview highlighted the problems members face.

A spokesman for the Fire Brigades' Union has called for improvements to the way fire fighters are protected and trained to put a stop to the rising numbers of attacks that fire fighters are being subjected to in towns and cities across the UK.

FBU executive member Dean Mills argued that without any special training to deal with attacks or, indeed, a specific system for recording attacks on fire fighters, that the problem was likely to continue to grow until precautions were taken.

Speaking on Sky News, Mr Mills said: "The situation is very difficult for fire fighters at the moment and the frequency of attacks is growing daily.

"One of the problems fire fighters and control officers face is that there are no nationally co-ordinated statistics to give us a breakdown and a true reflection of the number of attacks which are going on, which we believe to be 120 a week."

Mr Mills continued: "For example, in Greater Manchester, the official figures for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister show that there were nine attacks over a given period whilst our own analysis shows there were 158, so there is a great deal of under reporting going on.

"What we are seeing is the growth of recreational violence and that can be youths being bored, the attacks on fire fighters can be anything from stabbings, being spat at, being driven at by vehicles and, in the most extreme cases being shot."

He added: "It is not unusual now for fire fighters to be lured into ambush situations as well. The job is difficult enough without fire fighters having to deal with such situations.

"Fire fighters do not receive any specific training in dealing with incidents such as this. Our role is, after all, that somebody picks up the telephone and says they need help and fire fighters and control officers across the UK simply go and help them."

He advised: "That is our role and function and that is what we want to continue to do. But we cannot do that if we are coming under attack and we believe there should be a national strategy and training programme properly funded by the ODPM to help counter the attacks which fire fighters are suffering.

"We need specific training on how to deal with such incidents, there should be properly co-ordinated statistics for the number of attacks and education within the local communities we live and work in."

Mr Mills concluded that local fire stations served local communities and wanted to integrate 'so we are still a part of local communities and educate the youths and others which may attack us.'