



Fire Brigades Union

Southern Region

Buckinghamshire - Berkshire - Oxfordshire
Hampshire - Isle of Wight - Dorset



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The FBU Pay Campaign For Control Staff.

- Q** Why are the Fire Brigades Union asking for a new pay deal for Control Staff?
A Firefighters have their pay set by a formula that is ¼ of a century old and it doesn't give them a fair wage for the job they do today. Control Staff are linked directly to the Pay of Firefighters at 92% of what a Firefighter earns. Not only should Control Staff have their work recognised as being just as important, but their pay must reflect this too.
- Q** Why isn't the pay of Emergency Control Staff fair?
A Firefighters are classed as manual workers yet they train for 4 years to qualify. Not only do Firefighters believe they should be classed as skilled professional workers but how on earth can Control Staff be classed as 'manual workers' as they are by the present pay link?
- Q** But Control Operators do get a lot of time off don't they?
A The majority of Control Staff work the shift below and their working week is set at 42 hours not the 38 or less that is a standard working week in industry.

Control Staff Typical Working Week:

Monday	9am to 6pm	=	9 hours
Tuesday	9am to 6pm	=	9 hours
Wednesday	6pm to 12pm	=	6 hours
Thursday	12pm to 9am then 6pm to 12pm	=	15 hours
Friday	12pm to 9am	=	9 hours
Saturday & Sunday	Off		

New week starts again on Tuesday moving the whole shift system forward by one day a week. There is some limited variation to this but the basic principles apply.

- Q** Are Control Staff often in dispute?
A No. Emergency Control Operators have only ever had one national strike in their history and any dispute since that in 1977 has been over preventing mergers of controls, amalgamating them, or the reduction in fire cover. All of which adversely affect public safety.
- Q** Wouldn't an extra payment help Control Staff who cannot afford to live in some areas of the country?
A Control Staff do the same job protecting the public across the country and the stress they face is identical from Kent to the Isle of Man, Plymouth to Inverness. Control Staff should all be paid a fair rate for the job they do and that job is identical no matter where they serve.
- Q** But surely Regional Pay would help Control Staff?
A Paying a higher rate in one area simply means there is a lower incentive to work in another where pay is lower. This isn't fair on either the Control Staff themselves or people living in an area where their Control Operators are paid less than others. Control Staff deserve a decent

basic wage not add-ons that would simply result in an even greater movement of staff around the country as has happened in other occupations where regional pay has been introduced.

There is enough of a problem as it is with there only being a single control in Brigades so travel is invariably worse for Control Staff. The last thing we should be doing is making them travel even further for the chance to earn a little extra in another part of the UK.

Q Don't some Control Staff work on their three days off?

A Some Emergency Control Operators do have to work on some of their rest days to earn enough to live where they are sent to work. A fair rate of pay would mean they didn't have to work their rest days to make ends meet. Some fire brigades even offer work like this as they know Control Staff are underpaid.

Q So the employers recognise Control Staff are underpaid too?

A Well some do and some are trying to separate Control Staff from Firefighters. The FBU will not allow this to happen. Look at what the Government have done with the Queens Jubilee Medal. The first chance they get they try to separate members of the Fire Service. We cannot allow a separation based on pay.

Q Has the Control Operators job changed much since their last pay formula claim in 1977?

A The practices and procedures used by control staff have changed hugely since 1977. No price can be put on that skill but a fair wage for making such decisions must be paid, and parity of pay with Firefighters maintained.

Q What about overtime payments and lower pension payments for Control Staff?

A This is the sort of question employers are using to divide the fire service but lets consider the facts for a moment. Firefighters on standby, cover moves or on Fire Calls can and do attract limited overtime payments too. A control operator may have 3 or 4 people to ask to cover for them for an exchange of duty. How many would a firefighter have? The pension is also payable at 65. In today's Fire Service not only should there be enough people in control to stop the need to fill in for sickness but there should be a fair pension in place too. Can it be right that Control staff after a lifetime in the Fire Service are also limited to the career ceiling of the equivalent of a DO?

Q What will Control Staff do if they don't win their demands?

Emergency Control Staff believe their call for a fair wage, which recognises their skill, is long overdue. They have continued to serve the public as dedicated as always but simply cannot afford to carry on as they are. A stockbroker can earn a bonus payment in a single year which would equal the pay of a Control Operator working for 50 years!! Control Staff simply want to be treated fairly and don't want to take any industrial action but will do along with Full Time Firefighters, Officers, and Part Time Firefighters if they are forced to.

Q What is a fair rate of pay for Control Staff?

A A rate of pay that recognises Emergency Control Staff have a job every bit as vital as that of a Firefighter and that the pay reflects the weight of responsibility placed upon them. Control Staff can and do receive commendations and public awards for lives saved. However, these don't help when trying to make ends meet on their present wage. Control Staff are skilled, dedicated and Professional. They must be paid as such.

Dean Mills
Regional Secretary