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Date: 31 October 2004

Ref: ALC-04-67

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

HOURS OF WORK POLICY

Members will be aware of the Chief Executive's recent whole country e-mail regarding Hours of Work.

In Auckland the Regional Management has chosen to take the approach of rigorously enforcing the 72 hour time requirement and are choosing to ignore the overall policy and sensible aspects of the procedure, which has seen a common sense approach to its implementation and operation for at least the last four years.

During this period the Union is not aware of one single example of employee fatigue occurring causing a problem, or any incidence of an investigation to be undertaken from a Health and Safety point of view.

The Auckland Local has met with Brigade Management for long periods on both Wednesday the 27th and again on Saturday the 30th October. Unfortunately, Brigade Management has refused to accept a number of options that the Union has put forward in an effort to have a system in operation which would allow fire appliances to remain on the run and not restrict unreasonably, members' ability to have stand-ins and undertake additional overtime shifts on a voluntary basis.

Management in Auckland have stated that the 72 hours will be a complete cut off for duty hours, and when this occurs they will require staff to be stood down from duty and appliances put out of commission. Obviously the commitments given in the past few years regarding appliance manning have proven baseless, and in Auckland, Management is happy to reduce the service to the community, etc. etc. So much for providing a professional response to fire and other emergencies?

In an effort to monitor your hours of duty they intend to introduce a new system in Auckland and only Auckland. The proposed new system is known as the Duty Hours Schedule. Essentially this system requires individual roster staff to record hours worked for each firefighter or officer, i.e. stand-in and overtime shift and any project work and training activities.

Once this information is recorded, members undertaking rosters will be required to ascertain whether or not an individual can work either an overtime to maintain Minimum Shift Manning (MSM), or undertake any stand-ins.

This system is based around a six-day cycle and includes the inappropriate figure of 72 hours. The 72 hours and the six-day cycle is a hangover from the “CST” regime and is totally inappropriate in terms of our current shift system.

The Union’s position is clear and its recommendation to members is:

That members should not implement the new system as being proposed by Brigade Management known as The Duty Hours Schedule.

There are a number of reasons that have led the Union to adopt this position. Some are detailed for members’ information.

- The Union believes that members should not be deciding to put appliances out of commission based on the 72-hour requirement.
- Brigade Management has advised they will be running a parallel system behind the scenes waiting to pounce on roster staff who, for whatever reason, may slip up in their record keeping. They don’t trust you to do it!
- Brigade Management realises the complexity of complying with a rigid 72-hour request and not allowing a sensible ongoing operation of a long-standing system. In doing so they are happy to offload the operating of this system to roster staff along with the responsibility and blame if things go wrong.
- Brigade Management wants you as members to restrict and ultimately refuse other members’ stand-ins, etc., based on your recording and operation of this new system.
- The Union believes that fatigue management issues are as much the responsibility of each individual as detailed in the existing policy. By roster staff taking on the responsibility of this new form and procedure, you are then taking on the responsibility for individuals who may exceed the 72-hour requirement.

- This is significantly new work that we have not agreed to its introduction and further, the Union has proposed an alternative that has operated in the past and does ultimately place the responsibility for working voluntary overtime shifts, etc., back on the individual who chooses to work it.
- The Union had some time ago worked with Management and taken action to ensure the Hours of Work Policy was complied with. This has been now rejected for the introduction of a punitive Duty Hours system.
- Brigade Management would not advise what action they would take against any roster personnel who allowed a staff member to work on to keep appliances in commission, nor would they say what action they would take if the Duty Hours Schedule could not be implemented.
- The Union was also informed that if there was non-compliance with the rigid 72 hours requirement or there was no satisfactory introduction of the Duty Hours Schedule, then Brigade Management would remove the task of rostering from stations. (The Union would be interested in feedback from staff working at rostering stations with regard to the Brigade's stated intention.)
- The Auckland Local is still willing to reach a suitable agreement with Management on this issue, however, until such time as agreement is reached, the Union reiterates its position.

That members should not implement the new system as being proposed by Brigade Management known as The Duty Hours Schedule.

Auckland Local Committee