



Absence Management

14th August 2012

Supporting workers with illness under-pins both the N.Z. Professional Firefighters Union and the N.Z. Fire Service's commitment to its members and workers respectively.

A level of worker absence due to illness is an expected element and indeed a normal feature of a caring and supportive work environment that is concerned about families.

However, absenteeism due to illness can be a significant issue that adversely affects productivity and puts pressure on other workers to cover absences.

Levels of absenteeism in the Fire Service are high compared to levels in other parts of the State Services. Consequently, a project is currently underway to develop an Absence Policy that will ensure:

- All workers are treated in a consistent and effective manner consistent with Collective Agreement provisions;
- That privacy issues are respected;
- That where necessary and appropriate, workers are assisted to return to optimum health.

This is a collaborative approach that intends to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of workers and members is given top priority.

Individuals who are absent due to sickness will receive support from their Watch Officer and Assistant Area Manager (AAM) to support their return to work and if necessary, to agree a Wellness Plan to mitigate future absences – such a Plan may include a consideration of reasons for absence due to sickness and necessary support to mitigate such absences.

A.A.M. Ken Cooper intends to meet with a number of Watch Officers and AAMs to explore and discuss the subject of illness related absenteeism. It is accepted that aggregated absence figures can identify individuals with higher than average levels of absenteeism, but rather than rely on numerical data alone, it is accepted there is a need to engage with workers on their specific factors concerning the absences.

There currently exists substantial support for those experiencing illness.

The project work being carried out is also designed to give the relevant levels of management the tools, training and confidence to ensure firefighters are healthy, fit and supported to carry out their duties.

The role the Officers play in managing absence, and in other key leadership and management activities, will be taken into consideration as part of the overall scope of their role in the work that is being done jointly between the NZFS and NZPFU on firefighter and officer remuneration.

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Derek Best
Secretary
New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Baxter', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Paul Baxter
Chief Executive / National Commander
New Zealand Fire Service