



New Zealand Fire Service

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Derek Best
Secretary
New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union
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PETONE

- 2 FEB 2012

Dear Derek

Industrial Action - Impact on Rehabilitation of Ill and Injured Employees

As you are aware, the current strike action being taken by NZPFU members on Blue, Red, Green and Brown watches prevents them from undertaking any tasks other than responding to emergency incidents and restoring equipment to operational readiness. This has the effect of preventing employees on return to work duties as part of an agreed injury or illness rehabilitation plan, from participating fully in their own rehabilitation.

This can have a negative impact on an individual's physical and psychological recovery, as early return to work has been shown to enhance recovery times. As the current industrial action has now been in place for over six months, the NZFS is very concerned that non-participation in early return to work plans may impact on the recovery of individuals, and on the broader effectiveness and acceptance of our rehabilitation programmes.

Employees on black watch are able to undertake a wider range of duties under the current strike notice than their coloured watch counterparts, which would enable employees on black watch to participate in an agreed return to work plan. For employees who are ill or injured, but medically certified to return to work in some capacity, NZFS intends discussing transferring them temporarily onto black watch under an agreed return to work plan, until they regain full operational fitness.

However, we also know that undertaking work as close as possible to a person's normal work routine, during early return to work, is more beneficial for the individual's continuing recovery. As some employees have been subject to alienation where their return to work aspirations are viewed as acting outside the strike action, NZPFU endorsement of non-emergency duties for people on return to work plans would encourage support from their colleagues.

We are therefore writing to ask that you consider altering your strike action to allow injured or ill employees to participate fully in agreed return to work programmes so that their recovery is not impeded any further by the current industrial action.

Yours sincerely

Janine Hearn
Director of Human Resources
www.fire.org.nz