

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

SOUTH WEST

Cornwall – Avon – Dorset – Gloucestershire – Devon & Somerset - Wiltshire

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South West Firefighters converge on Westminster to lobby MPs and protest against cuts to local Fire and Rescue Services

Firefighters, fire officers and control room staff from the counties in the North West will join thousands of colleagues from the length and breadth of the country tomorrow converging on Westminster to lobby their MPs and to protest against proposed cuts to their local fire service including many frontline cuts to 999 services.

All over the South West region fire chiefs are quoting the government's austerity measures to justify plans to cut frontline firefighter jobs.

Many of the proposals being hurriedly prepared will see corners being cut in standards of fire & rescue services and will mean those who dial 999 will have to wait longer for more thinly stretched fire crews to come to their rescue but will carry on paying the same for the service. This will put the lives of the public and the safety of firefighters at increased risk. It will also increase the cost of fire losses, increasing insurance premiums, and could leave businesses unable to recover, further exacerbating the loss of jobs.

A national YouGov poll released in September shows the public oppose cuts to their fire & rescue service:

- 85% of those polled oppose government plans to cut funding in the Fire & Rescue Service;
- 95% of those asked thought that despite the economic crisis, we need to keep at least the same number, or employ even more firefighters;
- 95% agreed that a rapid response to fires should be a high priority.”

John Drake FBU Regional Secretary said:

“Plans are being drawn up to significantly change the front line fire and rescue service in every one of our brigades. The government have said they will protect the front line of public services and lets face it, you don't get much more front line than the emergency 999 service fire crews deliver. The reality is that over the past decade the number of firefighters have been squeezed whilst the bureaucracy has grown year on year and extremely top heavy corporate empires have been created to justify the high levels of pay enjoyed by a precious few.

We are told that we are all in this together but firefighters are finding out some are more in it than others. Already, with our employers offering no pay rise this year, the governments 2 year public pay freeze coming in next year and 3% contribution hikes in our pensions announced last month by the Chancellor, firefighters are certainly paying a heavy price for the failure of speculating bankers.

We know that social deprivation caused by recession goes hand in hand with increased risks of fire and we will not stand back whilst the poorest and most vulnerable in our society are compromised by these cuts. Cuts cost lives, it is a simple as that but it seems those who are in favour of these cuts are those least likely to need the fire and rescue service. We will be calling on our local MPs and our fire chiefs to stand up for the fire service, to stand up for the public we serve and to stand up for the brave men and women who deliver our service on the frontline.”

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

YouGov surveyed 1,020 adults between 16 –27 August 2010. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from a YouGov Plc survey commissioned by The Fire Brigade Union. The survey was carried out online among a nationally representative sample of 1020 adults aged 18+ in the UK between 16-27 August 2010. Data is weighted to be nationally representative based on age, gender, social grade and region