



“THE GOVERNMENT COULD END THIS ACTION TODAY”

FBU LEADER THROWS DOWN THE GAUNTLET OVER CHRISTMAS ACTION



Firefighters campaigning against government attacks on their pensions will strike in England and Wales on both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, the Fire Brigades Union has announced.

Strikes will take place between:

- **7pm and midnight on Tuesday 24 December**
- **6.30pm on Tuesday 31 December and 12.30am on Wednesday 1 January**
- **6.30am and 8.30am on Friday 3 January**

FBU General Secretary, Matt Wrack, said: “Firefighters provide a first-class standard of service 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, and these strikes will remind government just how reliant they are on our members’ professionalism, commitment and flexibility.

“However, there should be no need for industrial action, and it’s absurd that firefighters’ concerns over pensions have not been addressed already.

“The government must stop claiming they are negotiating when they have refused to talk for two months and insist on forcing through proposals that are unaffordable, unworkable and unfair.

“By simply conceding common sense and allowing firefighters a fair deal, the government could end this industrial action today.”

As with previous strikes, on the three dates all FBU members in England and Wales will stop work apart from those working in control centres.

However, on top of these strike periods — the seventh, eighth and ninth to take place — on Christmas Eve all members in Scotland and those working in control centres across England, Scotland and Wales will refuse to work voluntary overtime, meaning every firefighter in the three nations will be taking part in industrial action together for the first time.

And between 7pm on Friday 27 and 7pm on Sunday 29 December, all firefighters in England, Scotland and Wales except those working in control will refuse to work voluntary overtime.

The ban on voluntary overtime comes after a second ballot of FBU members voted by almost nine to one for additional industrial action on top of strikes.

Although negotiations in Scotland have so far prevented strikes action, no settlement has yet been reached and the dispute remains live.

Firefighters’ pension schemes are amongst the most expensive for workers anywhere in the public or private sector, but amongst the cheapest proportionally for the government.

Most firefighters who take home approximately £1,650 a month already pay £320 or more a month into their pensions, and from April 2014 this would rise for the third year in a row to over £340 a month (£4,000 a year), with many facing a fourth consecutive rise of 2.2% in 2015.

On top of this, a large section of firefighters face an additional threat to their pensions as a result of the government refusing to honour long-standing agreements. As a result, they will not receive the pension they were promised despite paying into their scheme for many years.

The union claims that the government’s proposals are “designed to fail” because they ignore the physical demands and fitness standards required by the occupation.

Evidence suggests that at least two thirds of the current workforce will face dismissal or their pension reduced by almost half because they are unable to maintain the fitness standards required by the fire service beyond the age of 55.

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Rescue Service***



***Protecting Firefighters &
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