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All Branch Reps – Briefing Note 03/20

COVID-19

**Please find below a clarification note the NFCC has sent to all chiefs today
(01 April 2020)**

Contract of employment

1. The employer should satisfy itself that any additional activities are part of the contracts of employment for the fire fighters concerned and that fire fighters can be required to undertake them as part of their duties.
2. The employer should explain to the employees who are to be carrying out the work, what the additional duties are, what will be involved and if required, what additional training will be offered and what if any additional payments will or may be made. If no additional payments will be made it would be wise to make that clear now. The employer should also set out the timeframe for over which the new duties are to be carried out and/or the period at the end of which the continuation of the duties will be reviewed.
3. If some or all of the duties are not part of the contractual role of a firefighter then these will need to be agreed.

Training

Adequate training should be given for any aspects of the duties where training is required. The Risk Assessment (see below) should highlight any areas where additional training is required, either before the additional duties are commenced or identified during the carrying out of the work.

Risk Assessment

The employer should carry out a comprehensive risk assessment of the activities involved and also individually risk assess any individuals who may be thought to be at higher risk when carrying out the additional activities, even though it is unlikely that individuals facing a high risk from Coronavirus will actually be at work at all, but it is worth checking this. Also consider other risks like stress, trauma, lifting injuries and pregnancy and how risk associated with these can be minimised or mitigated. If the employer needs to remove individuals from a group of employees who are to carry out this work, it is better that this is done by individual risk assessment than on the basis of characteristics such as age, sex or disability, as there is a risk that such sweeping decisions may attract claims of unlawful discrimination.

The risk assessment should also ensure, as far as possible-

- (i) a safe system of work (including working hours),
- (ii) the provision of proper and effective protective equipment, and
- (iii) should also consider risk arising from the other parties involved - such as health professionals and the general public, including risk arising from anti-social behaviour.

Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should be reviewed urgently where something of concern to health and/or safety is reported (see below).

Reporting Mechanism

The employer should put in place a reporting mechanism so fire fighters can report both things that work well and things that go wrong. Where things that go wrong and could have an adverse impact on employee health and safety, the employer should immediately take steps to minimise the risk of such incidents reoccurring and to minimise the risk of adverse consequence if they do reoccur. Remember, it is important that employees are aware of the reporting procedures and they should be encouraged to provide feedback. Reporting procedures should be easily accessible to employees and should be easy to use.

Oversight and Review

The employer should ensure management with sufficient seniority to take any steps necessary, take responsibility for overseeing and reviewing the operation of the new tasks

Ends

Tristan Ashby

Chief Executive Officer