



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 23 July 2010

Purpose of Report:

To brief Members on the situation regarding commemoration of 'Workers Memorial Day' and to seek their direction on whether to support this or not.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following lobbying by the TUC, the Government has agreed to officially recognise 'Workers Memorial Day' on 28 April each year. The day is a commemoration of workers who have died in the course of their work activities. The wider intention of the day is to promote safety within the workplace.
- 1.2 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has the option to support the day - or refrain from doing so. A decision either way is required, which can be passed to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) who have recently requested that NFRS support the commemoration day.
- 1.3 In particular, the Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Members need to decide if the Union flags flown on Service premises should be flown at half mast on the commemoration day. This report explains the background to the commemoration day, and the guidance relating to flying the Union flag.

2. REPORT

2.1 Flying the Flag

Following the publication of a White Paper, 'The Governance of Britain: Constitutional Renewal' (CM 7342-1), and the Consultation Analysis Document (CM 7342-3) on 25 March 2008, the Government decided to give UK Government Departments the freedom to fly the Union Flag on their buildings whenever they choose to. Local authorities and other bodies may choose whether or not to follow this guidance. However, the Government (Department of Culture, Media and Sport), hoped that when considering their own flag flying policies, organisations may like to consider the spirit of the changes reflected in the new guidance to encourage greater use of the Union Flag locally.

2.2 Prior to the guidance above, the specific dates recommended for flying the flag were, and still are;

- 20 January Birthday of The Countess of Wessex
- 6 February Her Majesty's Accession
- 19 February Birthday of The Duke of York
- 1 March St David's Day
- 8 March Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March)
- 10 March Birthday of The Earl of Wessex
- 17 March St. Patrick's Day

- 21 April Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen
- 23 April St George's Day
- 9 May Europe Day
- 2 June Coronation Day
- 10 June Birthday of The Duke of Edinburgh
- 12 June Official Celebration of Her Majesty's Birthday
- 17 July Birthday of The Duchess of Cornwall
- 15 August Birthday of The Princess Royal
- 14 November Remembrance Day
- 14 November Birthday of The Prince of Wales
- 20 November Her Majesty's Wedding Day
- 30 November St Andrew's Day

2.3 Flying the flag at half mast originates from the Royal Navy. During battles, the flag of the surrendering forces was lowered half way down the flag mast in order to allow the flag of the victor to be erected above it. Legend also says that, when a ship lost a crew member, the flag was lowered to half mast to allow the space above for the flag of the greatest conqueror of all – the Angel of Death.

2.4 As for flying the flag at half mast, the government guidance states that it should be flown at half mast as follows:

- from the announcement of the death, up to the funeral, of the Sovereign;
- the funerals of members of the Royal Family, upon command of the Sovereign;
- the funerals of foreign rulers, upon command of the Sovereign;
- the funerals of prime ministers and ex-prime ministers of the UK, upon command of the Sovereign;
- other occasions by special command of the Sovereign.

Beyond these official occasions, it appears that local discretion is allowed.

2.5 Historically this has developed into flying the flag at half mast as a sign of mourning when a prominent individual or numbers of people have died, especially in tragic circumstances.

2.6 **Workers Memorial Day**

In relation to the Workers Memorial Day, this is an event which stems from the Trade Union movements in Canada, and spread to America and beyond.

It is intended to commemorate those who have died as a result of work activities.

- 2.7 The wider intention is to raise the profile of safety within the working community. In addition to commemorating the day with moments of silence, other activities are also planned such as public marches and parades. In particular, it is suggested that organisations which fly the Union flag on their premises should show support for the day by flying them at half mast.
- 2.8 So far, the day has been relatively low profile in the UK, but with TUC lobbying, the previous government had recently officially recognised the day. The profile of the day may therefore increase.
- 2.9 No reference or guidance on supporting to the day appears on the Communities and Local Government (CLG), Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA), City, or County Council websites. The FBU website has the following notice:

Dear Brother/Sister

WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY 28TH APRIL

Attached is a poster produced by 'Hazards' to highlight International Workers Memorial Day.

International Workers' Memorial Day, 28th April, will this year 'Remember the dead fight for the living'. It is hoped that in conjunction with your management that an agreement had been reached to hold an event such as a minutes silence or fly flags at half mast.

World wide, hundreds of thousands of workers' die in workplace "accidents". Millions die of occupational diseases.

This year we are asking our members; do you remember who died at work?

Globally Unions are striving to protect workers'; in the Fire Brigades Union we are doing the same.

Find out if an event has been organised in your FRS and if not ask why not. Employers should not be allowed to ignore this day.

'Remember the dead fight for the living'

- 2.10 Although the intention of the commemoration day is entirely laudable, It is not certain that the public, or members, would support the NFRS engaging in what might be perceived to be an event with a 'political' agenda tied to it.
- 2.11 In particular relation to flying the Union flag at half mast it appears that whether or not we fly our flags at half mast on this day (or any other) is entirely down to our discretion.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no identified specific aspects relating to a disproportionate effect in respect of the key equality strands.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to handle our response to this event effectively might carry reputational risk through adverse media publicity.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That in the absence of any specific guidance in relation to Workers Memorial Day, the Service continues to fly the flag on the dates listed in Paragraph 2.2.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER