

# **FIRE BRIGADES UNION**

FOR IMMEDIATE USE, 1 JULY 2011

## **PRIVATE FIRE ENGINE FIRM CLOSE TO COLLAPSE AS BRIGADE BOSSES REFUSE TO DISCLOSE CONTINGENCY PLANS**

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has demanded that London Fire Brigade managers come clean and disclose what contingency plans are in place in the event that the private company which owns and maintains the capital's fleet of fire engines goes out of business. The demand comes the day after it was revealed that AssetCo – which was handed the multi-million pounds 20-year contract in 2001 – has formally applied for an administration order.

The company, which in recent months has been hit by serious financial difficulties and has seen its share price plummet, admitted that it had made an application to enter administration during a hearing at the High Court yesterday to consider a winding-up petition from its bankers.

The union has raised questions about the impact on London's fire cover in the event of an AssetCo collapse. Executive council member for London Ian Leahair said today: "Over recent months, we have witnessed AssetCo in meltdown, and this prompted us to seek assurances about what contingency plans were in place. Regrettably, brigade managers have obstinately refused to disclose this information, telling us at a recent meeting that they had 'no desire' to share details with us.

There has been speculation of a takeover of AssetCo by foreign investors – some of whom may have potentially dubious links – meaning that London's fire engines could fall into the hands of various businessmen halfway across the globe with legitimate questions as to their suitability for this role.

"There are huge implications for the safety of Londoners, and it is simply unacceptable for the London Fire Brigade to refuse to reveal how it will keep the capital safe if AssetCo goes to the wall. If there *are* no contingency plans, they should say so.

"The relationship with AssetCo has been a catastrophe for the brigade. We always said that selling off large chunks of an emergency service was dangerous folly, and we have been proved right."

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