

MERSEYSIDE FIRE CREWS STARTS BALLOT FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION OVER PLANS TO CUT FRONTLINE SERVICES

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Merseyside fire crews have started balloting for industrial action short of a strike over plans to cut frontline services. The cuts involve the loss of up to 104 frontline firefighter posts including 36 frontline posts being moved to non-operational work.

The fire authority has also extended the use of the controversial staffing system to Eccleston fire station which means longer response times, extended working hours and the loss of firefighter posts. The Fire Brigades Union says this breaks an agreement to seek the involvement of ACAS.

Les Skarratts, Merseyside FBU brigade secretary said: "There have been relentless cuts to frontline fire services in Merseyside. These cuts have already had a real impact on the number of frontline firefighters to crew fire engines and attend 999 emergencies.

"The Government demanded that £105 million of savings be made in fire services across England. The savings in this fire authority alone amount to nearly a quarter of that national total, far in excess of the savings demanded of individual fire services.

"This new set of planned cuts will mean even fewer firefighters spread more thinly taking longer to get to incidents. These are real cuts to the number of frontline firefighters in Merseyside which will impact on how we respond to 999 emergencies.

"Our ballot is aimed at taking the action needed to protect members delivering frontline fire services from yet another round of cuts in Merseyside. At this stage the fire authority remains committed to these cuts, but we hope they will re-think before any action is taken."