

# Lies, damn lies and

## INTEGRATED 'RE-CLASSIFICATION' MANAGEMENT PLANNING. (IT'S STILL IRMP!)

FBU national IRMP advisor  
Dick Pearson on how fire  
authority fire death statistics  
are being used to justify cuts

**F**OLLOWING LAST month's feature 'How Many Firefighters does it take ...?' individual FBU members have been contacting us direct with further examples of the lengths some brigades are going to in an attempt to justify their IRMP proposals.

The FBU treats these contacts in the strictest confidence. Some members who have spoken to us are working at senior levels in brigades; in CFS, fire investigation and operational roles. Some of the examples they have told us about you may already have experience of in your own brigade; others may surprise you. From a professional perspective you may judge some of the examples to be absurd. But these are actual examples.

Let's not forget the motivation behind what is going on. IRMP has to produce the intended results to justify its introduction in its current form. Consequently if you are proposing to change something in a brigade you should be able to justify it with evidence. Of course if you've got any doubt about the likely strength of your evidence, well ..... you simply "re-classify".

Perhaps at this point, to avoid any confusion, we should state that the 'R' in the current government IRMP process stands for 'Risk', and not 'Re-Classification'.

But lets also recognise that everyone needs a helping

### TOP 10 IRMP RE-CLASSIFICATIONS

- 1** fire death doesn't count where the fire started somewhere other than the home;
  - 2** fire death doesn't count if the person dies as a result of a fire in the home that was started deliberately;
  - 3** fire death doesn't count where it occurs as a result of a fire in the home where the cause of the fire is not established;
  - 4** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where alcohol in the body is above a certain level;
  - 5** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where non prescription drugs are in the body;
  - 6** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where no working smoke detector was installed;
  - 7** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where you're killed escaping from the fire;
  - 8** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where multiple deaths occur;
  - 9** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) if the brigade classifies the death as not preventable for any other reason;
  - 10** fire death doesn't count (even a fire death in the home as a result of an accidental fire) where the incident is recorded as a False Alarm Good Intent.
- HOLD on a minute – you're not serious about numbers 8 & 10 ... are you ...?**

# statistics...



hand in life now and then. Statistics are no different – if they aren't telling you what you want to hear, just help them along a little (or a lot depending on how radical your proposals are).

Under IRMP the two main areas you must concentrate on to prove the effectiveness of the system are reductions in primary (property) fires and reductions in fire deaths. Below is a quick guide to the top 10 ways of making what's happening in the real world look a little more palatable in your IRMP.

## IF YOU WANT TO GET NOTICED... DIE IN A CROWD

HAVE you noticed how the media focus on those events where there is multiple loss of life? If 3 or 4 people are killed in a house fire, it may even make the national news. But some brigades are adopting an 'alternative' approach in their IRMP statistics.

They postulate that if multiple deaths occur in a house fire (even in a house fire where the cause of fire has been established as being accidental) then because these deaths disproportionately inflate their fire death figures they should be ignored; that if these deaths hadn't occurred then the brigades figures would look much better!

That's certainly true. The figures would be better if the deaths hadn't occurred, although this is cold comfort indeed for the relatives, or for the people who actually died in the fire.

Several years ago Mick McGaghey, the General Secretary of Scottish Miners attended the FBU Annual Conference in Bridlington as a guest of the Union. Commenting on press reporting of multiple fatalities he told Conference that for any notice to be taken when workers die, they had to die in a crowd. He clearly wasn't counting on the interpretation of IRMP that is being adopted in some brigades.

## WHEN IS A FIRE NOT A FIRE ...?

HOW could anybody die in a fire which the brigade has classified as a False Alarm Good Intent? Well here are a couple of reported examples of the way in which some brigades are attempting to record incidents. We'll leave you to work out where this could ultimately lead in the relentless drive to re-classify IRMP success.

### Incident 1

THREE large rooms of a hospital smoke logged to such a degree that 20 people had to be evacuated from the area. Smoke so thick firefighters could not see to the other side of an 8m x 8m room. PPV had to be used. The cause was burning food in a toaster. The Brigade classified the incident as a FAGI and not an FDR1.

### Incident 2

FIRE involving an industrial sized oven in a nursing home. Smoke logging of kitchen and dining room to such an extent that all staff and residents had to be evacuated. PPV had to be used. The Brigade classified the incident as a FAGI and not an FDR1.

Of course if you record an incident as a FAGI instead of an FDR1 you will appear to be driving down the number of recorded property fires that are occurring in your brigade. The reality is that nothing is changing in the real world – the incidents are still occurring – you're just recording

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them differently!

No sane person would attempt to argue that the recently reported reductions in primary fires aren't good news. The nagging doubt however is the accuracy of the figures reported under 'Integrated Re-Classification Management Planning'.

You have to wonder if in the future an incident where there is a fatality caused by the products of combustion of a chip pan fire which has burnt itself out before the arrival of firefighters will also be classified as a FAGI?

And in answer to the question "When is a fire not a fire ...?" – when it's a statistic!