



# WORD BACK



No.36/2018  
20 December 2018

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## PFAS REPORT

Preliminary test reports on Largs North Station and the MV Gallantry have been received by the MFS. The UFU has only a verbal report at this point however we understand that:

- Largs North Station backyard soil is contaminated at levels above residential standards.
- The fruit and the aloe-vera plant used by some for skin conditions, which are grown on station, have tested at a high level and should not be consumed or used at this or any other fire station.
- The test on eggs is inconclusive and further testing will be carried out. Meanwhile consumption of eggs produced on a fire station continues to be warned against.
- The appliance cab was cleared however the tanks showed evidence of contamination.
- Further testing will be carried out dirt and dust swabs from inside the station.
- The wheelhouse carpet of the MV Gallantry has returned a high-level test result.
- The bilge area and bilge pump of the MV Gallantry has returned a very high result.
- The drinking water on the MV Gallantry has been cleared for drinking.

The UFU is advised that the MV Gallantry is to be immediately taken out of service in preparation for the decontamination process.

**A meeting at 09:00 hours tomorrow, Friday 21 December 2018 will be conducted at Largs North Station to hear a full report of the tests and actions proposed.**

I note that the offer of free testing to family members of those affected by high blood level tests continues; the UFU urges participation in this program.

The union recognises and thanks Commander Mick Tisbury of the MFB who came to Adelaide this week to assist with this issue. Mick has been deeply involved in the identification of this hazard and in the exploration of methods of remediation. Mick will shortly be providing a report with recommendations for action.

Meanwhile all members and retired members are urged to participate in the PFAS Testing Programme even if you do not believe you have had exposure to the firefighting foam in the past. Greater numbers involved in the exercise will increase the validity of the results, so you will also be helping others while ensuring you receive and record important information.

The UFUSA understands that while there are a range of health conditions associated with the presence of PFAS in the human body, these are not yet scientifically/medically accepted as a direct link. Nevertheless, the evidence of impact on humans, particularly in the US, is compelling and we urge members to take this matter very seriously as we believe this is an emerging health issue, not just in Australia but globally.

You can get the referral documents for the blood test from the MFS through Clara Cipriani 0436 406 905 or by email [Clara.Cipriani@sa.gov.au](mailto:Clara.Cipriani@sa.gov.au) or Steve Pavlich on 0419 806 295 or by email [steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au](mailto:steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au)

Retired members continue to be encouraged to seek a referral and have a blood test done.

If you have any difficulties, please do not hesitate to contact the UFU office on 8352 7211 for assistance.

**Members in country areas are advised that you *are* able to have blood taken for testing at a number of regional locations, rather than have to come to Adelaide – please email [steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au](mailto:steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au) to make the necessary arrangements and obtain the written referral.**

### **UNDERPAYMENTS**

The UFU was recently advised that 87 employees had been underpaid. The amounts varied from 73 members being owed under \$100; 11 between \$100 - \$200 and 3 over \$200 and the error occurred in relation to the calculation of monies due for acting up in a higher-level position. While the matter has reportedly now been rectified and payments made, it's a timely reminder to check your pay slips regularly and to take up any concerns as soon as possible.

Kudos to UFU members who picked up the error and approached Shared Services. Result.

### **SOIL UPDATE**

The UFU met with MFS management once again this week to try to resolve the differences between us in relation to the application of "SOIL" - the time off you get when you undertake training out of normal working hours. Your employer committed in the latest EA, to deliver training in paid work time wherever possible. They said there may be times when that is not possible, in which case "SOIL", (which under the EA has PHL status) will apply.

Of course, from the start there have been many occasions when it hasn't been possible, and members have accumulated "SOIL" by attending in a period which would normally be considered "overtime". The MFS continue to assert an interpretation of the clause which is unacceptable to the UFU as it makes it difficult for our members to take the "SOIL" leave that they have accumulated.

Equally concerning is how the MFS is communicating on the matter to employees as we believe that the MFS has constructively misrepresented the matter to you.

While this is highly disappointing and unhelpful, the UFU remains hopeful that the MFS will focus on delivering training in the employer's time as was always intended. Recognising the proper PHL status of "SOIL" and allowing either a day shift or a night shift to be selected together with organising training such that short blocks do not occur, have also been proposed as resolutions.

Unfortunately, one of the key messages to UFU members from this experience is – do not believe *everything* you read, or is implied, in MFS's Employee Relations News or Memoranda.... ALWAYS check with your UNION.



## **REMINDERS:**

### **PAY INCREASE**

In accordance with the MFS Enterprise Agreement 2017, the pay rates of those employed under this EA will increase by 1.6% from the first full pay period on or after 1 January 2019 (17 January 2019). This is in addition to the midterm pay increase of 2% which applied from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2018. (these rates were implemented, and back pay was paid from September 2018).

### **UNION SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE**

Members are reminded that your union subscription also increases in the 1<sup>st</sup> full pay period on or after 1 January of each year in line with the increases in the above EA. Accordingly UFUSA subscriptions will increase by 3.6% from the first pay period on or after 1 January 2019 (17 January 2019).

### **DIARIES**

The new UFU diary is back from the printers and is on its way out to you. The new diary has some special new features and is proving very popular, to the point where more people are asking for it than indicated in the survey we conducted some time back. Please let us know if you wanted one but didn't get one and we will endeavour to get a diary out to you as soon as possible.

### **MERRY CHRISTMAS AND OFFICE CLOSURE**

Members are advised that the union office will be closed from 24 December 2018 and reopening on 2 January 2019. UFU President Chas Thomas (0413 002 656) and UFU Vice President Michael Riggs (0400 211 325) will take calls during this period in relation to matters which require immediate assistance. I will be taking leave until 9 January 2019 but UFU Industrial Officer Kathleen Galvin and Project Officer Rhiannon Newman will be available in my absence, so if you do need assistance early in the New Year, please call the union office on 8352 7211.

As the year draws to a close, thank you all for your great support and commitment to our union and I look forward to continuing our important work together in 2019.

Very best wishes for the festive season to you and your families on behalf of all of us here at the UFUSA, the State Council, the Shop Stewards and the Staff, may it be a happy, peaceful and safe one.



In solidarity

**Max Adlam**

**UFU Secretary**

