



SITREP 28/15

Outduties and "mixed-roster" stations

SITREP 27 reported that a significant majority of 24/7 permanently-staffed stations are now working 24 hour shifts, but even at some of these stations there are still members who choose to remain on the default 10/14 Roster. The Union, the Department and the Award are all clear that they are entitled to work the 10/14, and that we will support their right to do so. This has given rise to the question of outduties - who should work them if a station with mixed-roster crewing (eg one member working the 10/14 and the rest working 24s) finds itself over-strength? It's a tricky (and highly topical) question that the Union's State Committee will grapple with again at next week's monthly meeting.

There are arguments for the 10/14 member to be exempt, as that is still the default roster. And there are counter arguments to say the majority of members should prevail and so the 10/14 member should be sent on any outduties.

There are many more arguments than that too, but in the absence of any ruling to the contrary then the answer (at the moment at least) is that any member can be sent on an outduty, regardless of their roster. This should be shared reasonably and fairly. It would eventually occur for everyone anyway, even if the members working one roster performed the outduties before the other roster's members did, because the Department (or, if it came to a dispute, the Industrial Relations Commission) could not be expected to allow one station to run one firefighter over strength while at the same time running a recall at an adjoining station.

24 hour gorilla

The above question about split shifts and outduties turns a spotlight on the gorilla in the 24 hour shifts' debate - should we change our stance to allow stations have a 24 hour roster as their default roster?

Numerous members are already saying yes, and yet on closer examination of their arguments we're often finding that they either haven't properly understood their options or - more concerning - that they haven't read the joint FAQs about PCOS and alternative rosters at all. That document is more than simply a series of popular questions and answers - it was negotiated and agreed between the Department and the Union and confirms the rules for members and management on the PCOS and roster flexibility. If you're a permanent member then you need to read it and understand it, and doubly so if you one of the great majority of members attached to a 24/7 staffed station.

There are other options before a default 24 hour roster is seriously considered, including a division of stations according to members' preferences (for example, 10% of stations working the 10/14 and the 90% on 24s). The universal view of members at station forums I've attended is that this makes sense, and should occur. Unfortunately, it is the view of those same members that the mass transfers required to facilitate this shouldn't happen to them.

More to follow on both questions in SITREP 29.

Jim Casey
State Secretary

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