



Ministerial Statement

By

The Hon. Michael Weeks, JP, MP
Minister of National Security

Airport Fire Rescue Services

July 1st, 2022

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide an update on the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service Airport Operations Division.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service operates the Airport Rescue Firefighting Services which provides aircraft rescue and firefighting services for the L.F. Wade International Airport. This is an essential service that enables the airport to serve international commercial flights.

Mr. Speaker, Skyport is the LF Wade International Airport's Aerodrome Certificate Holder. The certificate is issued by the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority to Skyport.

Mr. Speaker, The Airport Rescue Firefighting Services is a Retained Government Service as part of the airport project agreement between Skyport and the Bermuda Airport Authority. The Bermuda Airport

Authority are responsible for managing the Retained Government Service and have transferred responsibility for the delivery of the Airport Rescue Firefighting Services to the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service by way of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2007 with an amendment in 2017. There is no fee paid by Skyport to the Bermuda Airport Authority or the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service for this service.

Mr. Speaker, since 1995 the accepted minimum duty strength at the airport has required three crews of five firefighters which has enabled the airport to provide a response category rating of 9. A rating of 9 is required for large commercial jets including British Airways' Boeing 777 aircraft to service to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, a February 2022 Skyport Audit of the Airport Operations Division increased the required firefighter minimum duty strength from five (5) per crew to fourteen (14), in order to maintain a category 9 response rating for the airport.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Airport Authority have retained a UK Civil Aviation Authority Rescue Fire Fighting expert to review the revised requirements and minimum duty strength. The expert has completed his on Island review and his report is expected shortly. This will form the basis of further discussions on the minimum duty strength requirements at the airport with Skyport and the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Speaker, in the interim, meetings with the stakeholders including airlines have resulted in agreement for an interim variable Category 5 to Category 7 response for the airport with British Airways continuing to provide service with the Category 7 rating. In order to meet the Category 7 rating, the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service have to provide eight certified aircraft rescue firefighters per crew as well as have a firefighting vehicle positioned adjacent to the runway for each arrival and departure. To meet this requirement, existing firefighters have been required to work significant extra shifts and overtime hours. This is unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, not all of Bermuda's firefighters are certified aircraft rescue firefighters. In order for the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service to meet the staffing requirements at the airport in the short term we have had to source overseas firefighters that are certified aircraft rescue firefighters to bolster numbers. To that end, we have sourced ten 10 suitably qualified firefighters to come to Bermuda in July, initially for 3 months to give our local airport firefighters the relief they need.

Mr. Speaker, I can also advise that we have begun a local recruitment campaign for an initial batch of eleven (11) firefighters to further bolster the ranks of the service. To be certified aircraft rescue firefighters, the firefighter recruits require specialist overseas training and this with their other local training can take over 3 months.

Mr. Speaker, the ten (10) overseas firefighters are a temporary measure to ensure that the airport continues to operate as normal. Once we have agreed the final minimum duty strength requirements for the airport, we will look at all options for meeting those requirements and I will provide an update to this Honourable House at that time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to thank the women and men of the Bermuda Fire Rescue Service for their service and in particular to those who have stepped up at the airport to meet this challenge. I would also like to thank the executive of the Fire Service Association for their support in this matter.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**