

20.2 MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

- 20.2.1 The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) operates under the *aegis* of the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. Its overriding purpose is to ensure that the Republic of Mauritius is safe for the residents, visitors and businesses by protecting life, property and environment against fire and carrying out rescue operations and intervening during natural calamities and major incidents.
- 20.2.2 With the promulgation of the MFRS Act 2013, the Service has been assigned new responsibilities such as rescue and new mode of issuing Fire Certificates. The Act has also consolidated its various roles and functions as an all-hazard response agency. Henceforth, the Service has to play a more active civil protection role at the forefront of today's society for a safer, stronger and more resilient community by laying emphasis on prevention, education and emergency preparedness. It is also mandated to provide pre-hospital emergency care and life support to seriously injured persons at a fire/accident scene. Furthermore, in line with the Government policy towards digitalisation, the MFRS has already embarked on the e-licencing project for the issuance of fire certificates. The Service is also working towards achieving the six-minute response time to a fire emergency as set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710.
- 20.2.3 A Chief Fire Officer is at the Service pinnacle. He is responsible for the overall corporate management and operational activity of the MFRS and is supported by different levels of the Firefighter Cadre ranging from Firefighter to Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The MFRS has a total workforce of 1141 officers and presently, operates 10 Fire Stations.
- 20.2.4 Representations made by both Management and staff side pertain mainly to: change in appellation of some grades; creation of grades in view of the e-licencing system; increasing manpower in view of the re-engineering process; upgrading and alignment of salaries; review of certain aspects of the general conditions of service; grant duty free exemption; provide training courses; revise the quantum of allowances; and to set up a Prosecution Unit.
- 20.2.5 Taking heed of the nature of duties being performed, we are restyling a few grades. As regards its request for the creation of a grade of IT Project Officer for its e-licencing project, Management was apprised that it is the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation which recruits IT Professionals and thereafter, makes their postings to Ministries/Departments. With reference to its request for upgrading/alignment of salaries, both Management and Unions were informed that same would be dealt with in line with the Bureau's general framework for pay determination. Management was also advised to carry out a Human Resource Planning (HRP) exercise to assess the rightsizing of staff as an appropriate structure has already been provided by the Bureau. All stakeholders were also notified that all matters related to the conditions of service would be dealt with holistically. For a training course in Management for senior officers as from the rank of Divisional Officer

and upward, Management was made aware that the onus rests with the Ministry. Management did not concur with Union's request for the setting up of a Prosecution Unit, as the Attorney-General's Office is already looking into all legal matters of the Service.

- 20.2.6 In line with the strategic vision and the re-engineering process of the MFRS, we are making appropriate recommendations to enable the Service to deliver on its mandate effectively and efficiently.

Firefighter Cadre

- 20.2.7 Pursuant to the MFRS Act 2013, officers of the Firefighter Cadre are now required to provide pre-hospital emergency care and life support to injured persons as well as to rescue trapped people and animals, amongst others, besides attending to fire and other emergencies. **These elements have been taken into consideration in arriving at the salaries recommended for the grades.**

Restyling of Grades

- 20.2.8 Both Union and Management have requested for a change in appellation for various grades to better reflect the duties devolving upon incumbents therein. We are agreeable with same.

Recommendation 1

- 20.2.9 **We recommend that the following grades be restyled as hereunder:**

From	To
Sub-Officer	Sub Fire Officer
Station Officer	Station Fire Officer
Senior Station Officer	Senior Station Fire Officer
Divisional Officer	Divisional Fire Officer

Lead Firefighter

- 20.2.10 In our last Report, provision was made for a departmental grade of "Lead Firefighter" as rank and command are central for the smooth running of the operations in the Disciplined Forces. It has been represented that the philosophy behind this provision is facing implementation issues to the effect that Firefighters are presently assuming leadership roles in various operations without being remunerated or acknowledged as "Lead Firefighter" as the operations are not classified as 'emergency' by Management. This is causing much frustration and the Unions have requested the Bureau to come up with an appropriate and implementable recommendation on this issue.

20.2.11 The Bureau has studied the request in line with the MFRS Act 2013, which defines the word 'emergency' as '*a serious, unexpected and potentially dangerous occurrence such as fire, flood, storm, explosion, landslide, terrorist act, accident, sea surge on land, leakage of harmful substances or oil spill*', which requires a significant and coordinated response" and views that "Lead Firefighter" should be remunerated accordingly when shouldering additional responsibilities and duties. To this effect, we are making appropriate recommendation.

Recommendation 2

20.2.12 We recommend that:

- (i) Firefighter should be departmentally known as "Lead Firefighter" on completing 15 years of service in the grade subject to being favourably reported on his performance, conduct and attendance;**
- (ii) Management should assign additional responsibilities and duties to the "Lead Firefighter"; and**
- (iii) a monthly allowance equivalent to two increments at the point reached in the salary scale should be paid to the "Lead Firefighter."**

Attending duty during emergencies formerly Time-Off

20.2.13 Presently, officers of the Firefighter Cadre, from the rank of Firefighter to Assistant Chief Fire Officer, who do not form part of the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme and who are required to attend their site of work to cater for normal interventions whilst being on leave or off duty, are granted equivalent time-off for the number of hours put in. In case time-off cannot be granted within a period of four months, the officers are paid an allowance based on their normal hourly rate for every hour put in, subject to a maximum of four hours per day.

20.2.14 Management has requested that the provision be extended up to the level of Deputy Chief Fire Officer as these officers are regularly required to attend to emergencies to lead and command the operations. The Bureau has examined the request and considers that it would not be practicable to extend the provision up to that level as all necessary elements have been taken into consideration while determining the salaries of all grades of the Disciplined Forces according to their specificities. On the other hand, union members have submitted that the current provision is, somehow, unfair as officers are paid only after having completed four hours per day. Moreover, they indicated that due to emergencies and exigencies of service, they are regularly required to be on duty and therefore do not have the opportunity to avail from any time-off. Following consultations with the Chief Fire Officer and Unions, we are reframing the recommendation to make it implementable as well as to align with what obtains in other Disciplined Forces.

Recommendation 3

20.2.15 We recommend that officers of the Firefighter Cadre, from the rank of Firefighter to Assistant Chief Fire Officer who do not form part of the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme and who are required to attend their site of work to cater for normal interventions and emergencies whilst being on leave or off duty, should be granted equivalent time-off for the number of hours put in. In the event time-off cannot be granted within a period of four months, the officer should be paid an allowance based on his normal hourly rate for every hour put in.

Trainer's Allowance

20.2.16 Officers who act as Trainer in the Training Unit of the Service and who possess the Trainers Certification Course of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) are currently paid a Trainer's allowance equivalent to one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scale. The staff side has claimed that, although the Service has a pool of highly qualified officers, the present provision is facing implementation problems as the latter do not possess the Trainers Certification Course of the MITD. After consultation with Management, we are bringing some form of redress in the provision whilst reviewing the quantum.

Recommendation 4

20.2.17 We recommend that qualified officers possessing the necessary skills, as approved by the Chief Fire Officer and who are posted in the Training Unit to act as Trainer, should be paid a monthly allowance of Rs 1545.

Special Duty Allowance

20.2.18 As per the existing provision, officers in the Firefighter Cadre, who are posted in Specialised Units of the Service, are paid a monthly Special Duty Allowance equivalent to one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scale, for performing specific duties of a specialised nature.

20.2.19 Both Management and Unions have apprised the Bureau that with their changing mission, the nature of work of officers in the Firefighter Cadre has evolved substantially. Moreover, along with the Fire Safety Division, Management Support Unit, Control and Mobilising Centre and Aerial Firefighting and Rescue Unit, the MFRS has created additional Specialised Units to improve its services. Firefighters posted in these Specialised Units need to possess a multitude of skills and talents to be able to cope effectively and efficiently with the ever-increasing public demands. In this regard, both Management and Unions have requested that the allowance be reviewed to motivate these officers as well as to help the Service in achieving its set objectives. We have examined the request and are providing for an enhanced allowance.

Recommendation 5

20.2.20 We recommend that officers in the Firefighter Cadre who are posted in the Specialised Units should be paid a monthly Special Duty Allowance equivalent to two increments at the point reached in their respective salary scale, for performing specific duties of a specialised nature.

Risk Allowance

20.2.21 At present, a monthly Risk Allowance is paid to officers of the Firefighter Cadre up to Assistant Chief Fire Officer as they must, apart from attending to fire, intervene in cases caused by natural disaster, accidents, chemical incidents and oil spills amongst others. As these operations involve high risk, the Bureau is maintaining the allowance whilst revising the quantum.

Recommendation 6

20.2.22 We recommend that officers of the Firefighter Cadre up to Assistant Chief Fire Officer should be paid a monthly Risk Allowance equivalent to 1½ increments at the initial point of their respective salary scale, subject to a maximum of Rs 950.

20.2.23 We further recommend that in the event the quantum of the above allowance payable to eligible officers is lower than that drawn as at the eve of the publication of this Report, incumbents should continue to be paid the higher quantum on a personal basis.

Pregnant Firefighters

20.2.24 A specific recommendation was made in our previous Report for pregnant Firefighters. Considering this to be a safety measure for the female Firefighters, the Bureau is reiterating the existing provision.

Recommendation 7

20.2.25 We recommend that Management considers the advisability, to the extent possible, of relieving pregnant female Firefighters from performing extra hours or night shift or duties that involve continuous standing for at least three months before their confinement.

Bank of Fire Officers Scheme

20.2.26 Officers in the grades of Firefighter, Sub Fire Officer *formerly Sub-Officer* and Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer*, who form part of the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme and who are recalled for duty whilst on leave or off duty, are, presently, paid a uniform allowance of Rs 640 for working up to three hours and on a *pro rata* basis for any additional hours put in. The quantum payable is inclusive of travelling time involved in reaching a site.

20.2.27 During consultations, union members have informed that during an operation, officers carry out their duties according to their respective grade. That is, a Firefighter performs the duties of a Firefighter while a Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer* executes the duties of a Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer*. In that sense, it has been submitted that the rate should be paid according to the respective grade. Management has also echoed the same submission by highlighting that there is clear demarcation between the roles played by each grade in an operation. It has further pointed out that the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme is functioning properly and is helping the MFRS in delivering efficient services to the community. The Bureau has studied the request and is making the appropriate recommendation in view to harmonise with what obtains in other Disciplined Forces. **Alongside, it is suggested that the MFRS should carry out an HRP exercise to assess the adequacy of its staff at different levels of the Firefighter Cadre with a view to addressing the shortage of staff.**

Recommendation 8

20.2.28 **We recommend that officers in the grades of Firefighter, Sub Fire Officer *formerly Sub-Officer* and Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer* who form part of the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme and who are recalled for duty whilst on leave or off duty to perform in emergencies or at private premises regarding fire prevention or to palliate any shortage of staff, should be paid an allowance as per the Table below for the first three hours put in and thereafter on a *pro rata* basis for any additional hour put in:**

Grade	Amount (First 3 hours) (Rs)
Firefighter	675
Sub Fire Officer <i>formerly Sub-Officer</i>	730
Station Fire Officer <i>formerly Station Officer</i>	790

20.2.29 The MFRS has another mechanism, where officers are paid an allowance (Returning Leave) when they are retained on duty to perform extra hours beyond their scheduled shift. Request has been received to convert extra hours for working beyond the normal working hours into leaves. **The Bureau reiterates that 'Returning Leave' is an administrative arrangement and any review of its mode/rate should be dealt with administratively.**

Physical Training Instructors' Allowance

20.2.30 Currently, officers of the MFRS who have successfully followed the Physical Training Instructors Certificate Course of the MIE and who act as Physical Training Instructor are paid an allowance. We are retaining this provision.

Recommendation 9

20.2.31 We recommend that eligible officers should continue to be granted a monthly Physical Training Instructors' Allowance equivalent to one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scale.

Maintenance and Repair Allowance**Recommendation 10**

20.2.32 We recommend the payment of a monthly allowance of Rs 405 to officers of the Firefighter Cadre who perform maintenance and repair duties in respect of radio telephone equipment and breathing apparatus.

Allowance to drive Heavy Specialised Vehicles

20.2.33 Presently, officers possessing the Heavy Vehicle Driver's Licence and who are designated to drive heavy specialised vehicles are paid an allowance for driving same. Union has made request for a driving allowance to officers who have been entrusted to drive light duty vehicles. The issue was raised with Management who informed that Firefighters are required to perform duties according to their scheme of service. We are, thus, maintaining the current provision.

Recommendation 11

20.2.34 We recommend that an allowance equivalent to one increment at the initial of their respective salary scale should be paid to officers possessing the Heavy Vehicle Driver's Licence and who are designated to drive heavy specialised vehicles.

20.2.35 We further recommend that in the event the quantum of the above allowance payable to eligible officers is lower than that drawn as at the eve of the publication of this Report, incumbents should continue to be paid the higher quantum on a personal basis.

Rent Allowance**Recommendation 12**

20.2.36 We recommend that the monthly Rent Allowance payable to officers of the MFRS who do not occupy government quarters should continue to be as hereunder:

Grade	Amount (Rs)
Firefighter	735
Sub Fire Officer <i>formerly Sub-Officer</i>	790
Station Fire Officer <i>formerly Station Officer</i>	815

Grade	Amount (Rs)
Senior Station Fire Officer <i>formerly Senior Station Officer</i>	915
Divisional Fire Officer <i>formerly Divisional Officer</i>	1010
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	1180
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	1180
Chief Fire Officer	1930

Night Duty Allowance

Recommendation 13

20.2.37 We recommend that officers of the Firefighter Cadre who effectively perform night shift should be paid a Night Duty Allowance equivalent to 25% of the normal rate per hour for hours between 2300 hours and 0500 hours.

Early Retirement Scheme

20.2.38 Union members have submitted that many officers of the Firefighter Cadre die at an early age or soon after their retirement as they have been exposed to various types of occupational diseases. Consequently, they have requested for retirement with full pension to be paid after 25 years of service. Given that the present provision is adequate, we are maintaining the Early Retirement Scheme.

Recommendation 14

20.2.39 We recommend that officers of the Firefighter Cadre who have been appointed as from 01 July 2008 should be:

- (a) allowed to retire on a proportionate pension after completing 28³/₄ years of service; and
- (b) eligible to earn pension at an enhanced rate of 1/414th of pensionable emoluments for each additional month of service to enable them to qualify for full pension after completing 34¹/₂ years of service.

20.2.40 We also recommend that officers in post as at 30 June 2008 should continue to benefit from the Early Retirement Scheme applicable as at that date.

Medical Examination

20.2.41 According to existing provisions, Management is required to make necessary arrangements for officers of the Firefighter Cadre to undergo a medical examination to ensure their fitness for the job once every two years and every year for officers who have reached the age of 60. As they are prone to various diseases, the Bureau deems it imperative for the officers concerned to undergo regular medical checkups and is recommending accordingly.

Recommendation 15

20.2.42 We recommend that Management should make necessary arrangements for officers of the Firefighter Cadre to undergo a medical examination, every year, to ensure their fitness for the job.

Posting of Officers on a rotational basis

20.2.43 In our previous Report, emphasis was laid on the fact that officers of the MFRS should be provided with appropriate training and be posted on a rotational basis to different operational units in the Service in order to enhance their knowledge and competencies and to make them polyvalent. **We consider that this provision should continue to prevail.**

Officers posted to Agalega on a tour of Service

20.2.44 In view of the project of the construction of an airstrip and other amenities in Agalega, a Fire and Rescue Service has been set up there to ensure fire prevention measures. Presently officers of the Firefighter Cadre who are posted there are paid a monthly allowance for providing a 24-hour coverage. We are revising this allowance.

Recommendation 16

20.2.45 We recommend that officers of the Firefighter Cadre who are posted to Agalega on a tour of service should be paid a monthly allowance of Rs 5250 for providing 24-hour coverage and effectively working over and above their normal working hours.

Special Provision for officers of the Disciplined Forces working on shift

20.2.46 The purpose of leave is to allow employees time away from duty so as to return to work refreshed. Managing leave devolves upon a Responsible Officer, who should ensure that, wherever possible, officers take their leave entitlement in the leave year it is allocated.

20.2.47 Yet, the above is not an easy task when it pertains to essential services. The ILO defines essential services as that which, if interrupted, would endanger the life, health or personal safety of the whole or part of the population. Frontline workers form part of the essential services and are those who cannot feasibly work from home and need to be physically present at their workplace.

20.2.48 At present, officers in the grades of Firefighter up to Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer* are required to work on shift to provide a 24-hour service. It has been submitted that these officers do not have the opportunity to avail of their leave entitlement, be it sick, casual or vacation leave as they are very often called to attend duty due to exigencies of service. The Bureau has examined the request carefully and considers that as the officers are foregoing their leaves to ensure the operational efficiency of the MFRS, there should be a mechanism to compensate them for the untaken casual leave. We are, therefore, making a recommendation to that effect.

Recommendation 17

20.2.49 We recommend that officers in the grades of Firefighter up to Station Fire Officer *formerly Station Officer* who effectively work on shift, should, up to the next Overall Review of Pay and Grading Structures and Conditions of Service in the Public Sector, be refunded annually their unutilised casual leave up to a maximum of six days at the rate of 1/66 of their last monthly salary per day in the corresponding year.

20.2.50 We further recommend that unutilised casual leave in respect of those officers who proceed on retirement or pass away while in service should be refunded on a *pro rata* basis in that particular year.

Once in a Career Performance Bonus**Recommendation 18**

20.2.51 We recommend that officers in the grades of Firefighter up to Senior Station Fire Officer *formerly Senior Station Officer*, who have never benefitted from the payment of the Performance Bonus in their career, should be paid a 'Once in a Career Performance Bonus' equivalent to 12 times the value of one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scale provided that they have:

- (i) served for a period of at least 10 years in the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service;
- (ii) been consistently efficient and effective in their performance as evidenced by their Performance Appraisal Report during the preceding two years; and
- (iii) not been adversely reported upon on ground of conduct.

MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**SALARY SCHEDULE**

Salary Code	Salary Scale and Grade
07 000 108	Rs 113250 Chief Fire Officer
07 085 101	Rs 57600 x 1700 - 64400 x 1800 - 69800 x 2000 - 75800 x 2150 - 82250 x 3000 - 88250 x 3125 - 91375 Deputy Chief Fire Officer
07 070 088	Rs 37450 x 950 - 42200 x 1300 - 46100 x 1575 - 49250 x 1650 - 54200 x 1700 - 62700 Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Salary Code	Salary Scale and Grade
07 062 081	<p>Rs 30700 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 37450 x 950 - 42200 x 1300 - 46100 x 1575 - 49250 x 1650 - 50900</p> <p>Divisional Fire Officer <i>formerly Divisional Officer</i></p>
07 058 078	<p>Rs 27400 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 37450 x 950 - 42200 x 1300 - 46100</p> <p>Senior Station Fire Officer <i>formerly Senior Station Officer</i></p>
07 051 075	<p>Rs 23425 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 37450 x 950 - 42200</p> <p>Station Fire Officer <i>formerly Station Officer</i></p>
07 049 072	<p>Rs 22625 x 400 - 23425 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 37450 x 950 - 39350</p> <p>Sub Fire Officer <i>formerly Sub-Officer</i></p>
07 037 069	<p>Rs 18650 x 275 - 18925 x 300 - 19525 x 325 - 21475 x 375 - 22225 x 400 - 23425 QB 23950 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 36550</p> <p>Firefighter</p>
25 052 070	<p>Rs 23950 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 35650 x 900 - 37450</p> <p>Workshop Supervisor</p>
25 044 067	<p>Rs 20825 x 325 - 21475 x 375 - 22225 x 400 - 23425 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 34825</p> <p>Foreman</p>
25 026 059	<p>Rs 15745 x 260 - 17825 x 275 - 18925 x 300 - 19525 x 325 - 21475 x 375 - 22225 x 400 - 23425 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 x 825 - 28225</p> <p>Automobile Electrician General Assistant Mason Motor Mechanic Panel Beater Plumber and Pipe Fitter Welder</p>

Salary Code	Salary Scale and Grade
24 025 058	Rs 15485 x 260 - 17825 x 275 - 18925 x 300 - 19525 x 325 - 21475 x 375 - 22225 x 400 - 23425 x 525 - 26050 x 675 - 27400 Driver
24 018 048	Rs 13745 x 230 - 13975 x 250 - 15225 x 260 - 17825 x 275 - 18925 x 300 - 19525 x 325 - 21475 x 375 - 22225 Handy Worker
24 001 045	Rs 10250 x 175 - 10775 x 200 - 11775 x 205 - 12595 x 230 - 13975 x 250 - 15225 x 260 - 17825 x 275 - 18925 x 300 - 19525 x 325 - 21150 General Worker

