

24.1 MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

- 24.1.1 The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS), *formerly Government Fire Services*, has been renamed following enactment of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Act 2013. Its vision is to have a Republic of Mauritius free from the dangers of fire and other emergency threats and make it a place safe to live, work and visit anytime and anywhere.
- 24.1.2 Further to the change in the legislation, the role of the MFRS has shifted from a firefighting agency to that of a full-fledged rescue service. It is now responsible for ensuring that the people of the Republic of Mauritius are supported by and benefit from effective fire emergency and disaster management services, emergency rescue, as well as from natural and technological disaster management services. It aims at taking all necessary steps for the prevention and suppression of fires and the protection of life, property and the environment in case of an emergency.
- 24.1.3 The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for the overall functioning and administration of the MFRS. He is supported by officers of the Firefighter cadre. The activities are organised under various Divisions/Units: Fire Safety Division; Service Mobilising and Control Centre; Training Division; Logistics Unit; and Organisational Performance, Compliance and Good Governance Unit.
- 24.1.4 In the context of this Report, Management and Unions have submitted that the right structure and incentives should be provided in view of the changing role of the MFRS. In arriving at the recommendations made for this essential emergency service, the Bureau has taken into account the main orientation of this Report to have a public sector committed to serve the interest of the citizens. In this respect, consideration has been given to strengthen the existing structure, improve conditions of work with the introduction of new allowances and consolidation of existing ones. A new concept of time off and posting on a rotational basis has been provided, coupled with the grant of a Performance Bonus to operational staff with a view to keeping a motivated and efficient personnel of the MFRS.

Lead Firefighter

- 24.1.5 Union Members have highlighted that at times officers in the grade of Firefighter encounter a problem of leadership and authority when they embark on an emergency operation where the crew does not consist of an officer of a higher rank to take command. Moreover, in the absence of a Sub-Officer, Firefighters are called upon to assume responsibilities of the higher rank without any additional compensation. The Bureau has carefully examined the issue and strongly views that the elements of rank and command are very critical in the smooth running of operations in the Disciplined Forces. In this context, after consultation with Management and Unions, we are providing for a designate

position of Lead Firefighter to address these issues which are impeding service delivery.

Recommendation 1

24.1.6 We recommend that:

- (i) Firefighters should be departmentally known as “Lead Firefighter” on completing 15 years of service in the grade subject to being favourably reported on their performance, conduct and attendance. The Lead Firefighter should be given the authority of leading and taking charge of a team of Firefighters, whenever the situation requires; and**
- (ii) the Lead Firefighter, should be paid a monthly allowance equivalent to two increments at the point reached in the salary scale.**

24.1.7 We further recommend that Management should strongly consider the advisability of increasing the establishment size of the grade of Firefighter.

Performance Bonus

24.1.8 During consultations, the Bureau has been made aware of the constant challenges being faced by officers of the disciplined forces in a continuously changing environment. We consider that for the extraneous effort being deployed by these officers to cope with the new demands in their respective fields, incumbents should be provided with some kind of reward for their sustained performance. After careful study, the Bureau has opted for the grant of an allowance to officers performing at operational level in lieu of incremental movement beyond top salary, as the latter option would have led to distortions in pay relativities.

Recommendation 2

24.1.9 We recommend that officers in the grade of Firefighter up to Senior Station Officer should be paid a one-off performance bonus equivalent to twelve times the value of one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scale provided that they have:

- (i) been consistently efficient and effective in their performance as evidenced by their Performance Appraisal Report during the preceding two years; and**
- (ii) have not been adversely reported upon on ground of conduct.**

24.1.10 However, since the grant of the bonus is linked to performance, we strongly believe that the payment of the one-off bonus should be deferred so as to give full substance to the recommendation.

Recommendation 3

24.1.11 We recommend that the above recommendation should take effect as from 01 January 2018.

Time Off

24.1.12 Senior Officers i.e Senior Station Officers and above as well as Junior Officers working as Daymen are required to be on call after normal working hours on a roster basis and have to attend duty in case of emergencies. In this perspective, Management and Unions have strongly requested for the payment of an on-call allowance as well as an in-attendance allowance for the disruption caused in their social life.

24.1.13 The Bureau wishes to point out that Disciplined Forces operate differently from other organisations in the Civil Service. The pattern of work, the duties performed, the fundamental elements of rank and file, command, discipline and authority, the nature of services provided, the national importance of these organisations, among others, all contribute in classifying the Disciplined Forces as a special category, distinct from the others. The specificity of the disciplined forces is the presence of officers and their readiness for action at all times, particularly in cases of emergencies, irrespective of the fact that the officer is off duty. These elements in the disciplined forces have been considered by the Bureau whilst determining salaries. We are therefore strongly convinced that on-call and in-attendance allowances should not prevail in the disciplined forces.

24.1.14 Nevertheless, we do acknowledge the disturbance and hardship caused to the officer whilst being on call and attending duty after normal working hours. Against this background, we are providing some sort of compensation to these officers.

Recommendation 4

24.1.15 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 are required to attend their site of work to cater for normal interventions 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, subject to a maximum of four hours per day.

24.1.16 The above recommendation should, however, not apply in cases of natural disasters, major emergencies and in times of crisis.

Trainer's Allowance

24.1.17 Officers posted in the Training Unit are required to dispense training both theoretical and practical, to new recruits or serving officers. These officers are

selected to act as Trainer based on specific skills and competencies held. Request has, therefore, been made for these officers to be compensated for the specific skills and competencies held and which are used by the MFRS, to which we are agreeable.

Recommendation 5

24.1.18 We recommend that officers possessing the Trainers Certification Course of the MITD and who are posted in the Training Unit to act as Trainer, should be paid an allowance equivalent to one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scales.

Special Duty Allowance

24.1.19 Management has apprised that in line with the organisation's revised mandate and the new challenges faced by the service, many specialised units namely Fire Safety Division, Management Support Unit, Control and Mobilising Centre and Aerial Firefighting and Rescue Unit, have been created. Officers posted in these units are called upon to perform duties which require additional competencies, skills and knowledge in specific fields such as architectural engineering, high angle rescue, laws regulating buildings, analytical analysis/tendering advice in crisis/panic. Management has, therefore, strongly made a case to the Bureau for these officers to be financially incentivised in view to motivating them for continued deliverables in these units. We have examined the submission and are making provision for the payment of a Special Duty Allowance.

Recommendation 6

24.1.20 We recommend that officers in the Firefighter cadre who are posted in the Specialised Units be paid a monthly Special Duty Allowance equivalent to one increment for performing specific duties of a specialised nature.

Risk Allowance

24.1.21 At present, Firefighters, Sub Officers and Station Officers performing operations duties are paid a Risk Allowance. It has been submitted that in cases of emergencies and major fires, all officers, including senior officers irrespective of their posting, are required to participate in these interventions along with the operational staff. In view thereof, request has been made to extend the payment of risk allowance to these senior officers.

24.1.22 The Bureau has carefully examined this request and considers that as the nature of interventions has evolved and given that the participation of senior officers is also solicited on site during emergencies, there is need to extend the payment of risk allowance to them. We are, therefore, reviewing the recommendation regarding Risk Allowance.

Recommendation 7

24.1.23 We recommend that a monthly Risk Allowance should be paid to officers of the Firefighter Cadre, up to Assistant Chief Fire Officer equivalent to 1 ½ increments at the initial point of their respective salary scales, subject to a maximum of Rs900.

Pregnant Firefighters

24.1.24 The Bureau has received persistent representations to the effect that much hardship is endured by female officers of the Disciplined Forces as they are required to work on night shift and perform duties necessitating continuous standing. The Bureau has carefully examined the issue and views that a specific recommendation should be made for female officers of the MFRS who are in this state.

Recommendation 8

24.1.25 We recommend that Management should strongly consider the advisability of not requiring, as far as possible, pregnant female Firefighters to perform extra hours or night shift or duties involving continuous standing for at least three months before their confinement.

Bank of Fire Officers Scheme

24.1.26 Presently, there is a Bank of Fire Officers Scheme under which the MFRS avails the services of Firefighters, Sub Officers and Station Officers who are on leave or off duty, whenever additional staff are required for fire prevention duties on private premises or to palliate any shortage of staff. These officers are then paid an allowance of Rs 610 for working up to three hours and on a pro-rata basis for all hours of work put in beyond the specified number of hours. It is of note that the quantum payable is inclusive of travelling time involved in reaching the site concerned.

24.1.27 The Bureau has been informed that having recourse to officers from the Bank to palliate any shortage of staff has enhanced service delivery as minimal disturbance is caused to the smooth running of operations. We are, therefore, maintaining the Bank of Fire Officers Scheme whilst revising the quantum payable.

Recommendation 9

24.1.28 We recommend that officers in the grade of Firefighter, Sub Officer and 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 duties of a Firefighter in emergencies or at private premises regarding fire prevention or to palliate any shortage of staff, should be paid an allowance of Rs 640 per hour.

24.1.29 Management has apprised that the Fire Services has devised another mechanism, with the concurrence of the MCSAR, to pay officers who are retained on duty to perform extra hours beyond their scheduled shift. The latter are paid an allowance (Returning Leave) at a lower rate than that payable to officers in Bank, for every extra hour of work put in. Given that this rate is lower than that in force in the Bank Scheme, these officers are not willing to perform beyond their scheduled shift. In this context the Bureau has been requested to bring some form of harmonisation between these two rates.

24.1.30 We have studied the issue in depth and have come to the conclusion that as the payment for the "Returning Leave" is an administrative arrangement, any review regarding its mode/rate of payment should be dealt administratively. Moreover, we strongly view that the Fire and Rescue Service should consider **increasing its establishment size with a view to addressing the problem of shortage of staff.**

Physical Training Instructors' Allowance

24.1.31 At present, 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 maintaining this provision.

Recommendation 10

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

Maintenance and Repair Allowance

Recommendation 11

24.1.33 We recommend that the monthly allowance payable to officers of the Firefighter cadre who perform maintenance and repair duties in respect of radio telephone equipment and breathing apparatus be revised to Rs 385.

Allowance to drive heavy specialized vehicles

Recommendation 12

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

Rent Allowance

Recommendation 13

24.1.35 Officers of the MFRS who do not occupy government quarters should continue to be paid Rent Allowance per month as hereunder:

Grade	Amount (Rs)
Firefighter	735
Sub-Officer	790
Station Officer	815
Senior Station Officer	915
Divisional Officer	1010
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	1180
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	1180
Chief Fire Officer	1930

Night Duty Allowance

Recommendation 14

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

Early Retirement Scheme

24.1.37 An early retirement scheme exists for officers of the Firefighter cadre. Officers who have been appointed as from 01 July 2008 may be:

- (a) allowed to retire on a proportionate pension after completing 28¾ 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 34½ years of service.

24.1.38 As regards officers in post as at 30 June 2008, they benefit from the early retirement scheme applicable as at that date.

24.1.39 We are maintaining the Early Retirement Scheme as per paragraphs 24.1.37 and 24.1.38 above.

Medical Examination

Recommendation 15

24.1.40 We recommend that Management should continue to make necessary arrangements for officers of the Firefighter Cadre to undergo a medical examination to ensure their fitness for the job:

- (i) once every two years; and**
- (ii) every year for officers who have reached the age of 60.**

Posting of Officers on a rotational basis

24.1.41 The Bureau has been apprised that a few officers are posted in specific units to perform specialised duties, and where the shift system is not applicable. The Bureau views that officers should as far as possible be polyvalent and be given opportunities to perform in various areas to expand their knowledge and develop their competencies. In this respect, the Bureau strongly considers that officers of the MFRS should be provided with appropriate training and posted on a rotational basis to different operational units in the Service.

MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

SALARY SCHEDULE

Salary Code	Salary Scale and Grade
07 000 100	Rs 101000 Chief Fire Officer
07 079 094	Rs 53200 x 1625 – 62950 x 1850 – 68500 x 1950 – 74350 x 2825 – 80000 x 3000 – 83000 Deputy Chief Fire Officer
07 066 081	Rs 35275 x 925 – 37125 x 1225 – 40800 x 1525 – 49950 x 1625 – 56450 Assistant Chief Fire Officer
07 058 074	Rs 28625 x 775 – 32500 x 925 – 37125 x 1225 – 40800 x 1525 – 45375 Divisional Officer

Salary Code	Salary Scale and Grade
07 054 071	Rs 25525 x 775 – 32500 x 925 – 37125 x 1225 – 40800 Senior Station Officer
07 048 068	Rs 21475 x 475 – 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 32500 x 925 – 37125 Station Officer
07 046 065	Rs 20525 x 475 – 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 32500 x 925 – 34350 Sub-Officer
07 033 062	Rs 15750 x 325 – 17700 x 375 – 19575 QB 20050 x 475 – 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 31725 Firefighter
25 049 063	Rs 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 32500 Workshop Supervisor
25 041 060	Rs 18450 x 375 – 19575 x 475 – 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 30175 Foreman
25 023 052	Rs 13010 x 260 – 14050 x 275 – 15150 x 300 – 15750 x 325 – 17700 x 375 – 19575 x 475 – 21950 x 625 – 23200 x 775 – 23975 Automobile Electrician General Assistant Mason Motor Mechanic Panel Beater Plumber and Pipe Fitter Welder
24 015 041	Rs 10950 x 250 – 11450 x 260 – 14050 x 275 – 15150 x 300 – 15750 x 325 – 17700 x 375 – 18450 Handy Worker
24 001 038	Rs 7800 x 200 – 8000 x 205 – 8820 x 230 – 10200 x 250 – 11450 x 260 – 14050 x 275 – 15150 x 300 – 15750 x 325 – 17375 General Worker
