

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
MANAGEMENT OF MEDICAL CERTIFICATES PROCESS

PART 1 – SCOPE

This process will be applied to all NIFRS staff, including those staff on the Retained Duty System (RDS).

PART 2 - CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS WHILST ABSENT

Staff when absent from work due to illness or injury, are required, under their terms and conditions of service, to present certification which states the duration of and reasons for their absence using approved documents.

Each member of staff, when absent due to illness or injury, **is individually responsible** for ensuring that their period of sickness absence is covered in its entirety by the presentation of a self-certificate for any absence lasting seven calendar days or less. They must also present a medical certificate or a series of medical certificates, if the absence lasts more than seven calendar days.

This certification is used to:

- (a) authenticate the reasons for absence,
- (b) assess the need for further interventions under the duty of care,
- (c) assist local management organise crewing levels,
- (d) contribute to the accuracy of the attendance registers, and
- (e) provide the assurance required by Payroll/Retained Payroll for the payment salaries or wages.

There are two types of certificate.

1 The SC211 - Self Certificate*

This is an NIFRS form and is used to cover absence due to illness or injury lasting seven calendar days or less.

2 The MED3 - Statement of Fitness to Work

This is a form obtained from your GP and is used to cover all calendar days lost due to illness or injury occurring after the seventh calendar day of absence.

* NOTE: The DHSS SC2 Self Certificate will be no longer used.

If the absence lasts 7 calendar days or less

The absent staff member will obtain and complete an SC211 upon their return to work. The member of staff, during the return to work interview, will then present the completed SC211 to their line manager who will countersign it.

If the absence lasts more than 7 calendar days

Once a member of staff knows they are going to be off for more than seven calendar days they should make early arrangements to obtain an SC211 form and have been seen by their GP who should provide a medical certificate of fitness to work (MED3) in circumstances where the employee is assessed as unable or partially unable to work.

Absent staff may obtain the SC211 either by downloading it from NIFRS website or contacting their nominated location* who will post it out. The SC211 must be completed by the absent employee and forwarded immediately by return post or by hand to their nominated location. * Please refer to Part 5 for a list of nominated locations.

The MED3 obtained from the GP must be forwarded immediately by post or by hand to their nominated location. Staff should fill in their details on the reverse side of the MED3 together with their Service Number.

There may be occasions when a MED3 is issued covering from the first day of absence. In these circumstances an SC211 is not required. It follows if a MED3 is issued during any other of the first seven calendar days, the deficit in certificated cover must be accounted for by an SC211 for those days not covered by the MED3.

PART 3 - METHODS OF RECORDING RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATES

Each line manager is responsible for recording the initial receipt and forwarding of self-certificates and medical certificates to their nominated location, also detailed in Part 5. This will be accomplished by entering the appropriate information on the comments section of the paper register of the week certificates are received. The comments should read; "SC211/MED3 received <date> from <name> covering <date from> <date to>". The relevant section of the SC228 audit sheet should also be completed, in line with current practice, with the date certification was forwarded.

To ensure a continuous audit trail, locations (eg District or Area HQs) receiving certificates from line managers, or directly from their own staff, are also responsible for recording the dates of receipt and forwarding of self-certificates and medical certificates to Payroll/Retained Payroll, in line with existing methods.

It is imperative that certificates are forwarded immediately after receipt is recorded.

Copies of presented certificates may be kept at receiving locations as proof of receipt, in a secure manner and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Payroll/Retained Payroll will keep all original certificates.

PART 4 - FOLLOW UP OF OVERDUE CERTIFICATES

As staff who are absent due to illness or injury are individually responsible for the certification of the reason for and duration of their absence, any failure to provide such certification may result, after verbal and written requests, in the suspension of salary/wage until such times as Payroll/Retained Payroll is in possession of the requested certification.

It may also result in consideration of disciplinary action for repeated failures.

All self-certificates and medical certificates must be forwarded without delay to the relevant nominated location. A period of normally **two calendar weeks** will be allowed before a certificate will be deemed overdue. Circumstances contributing to unavoidable delay will only be accepted if they are deemed exceptional by NIFRS and must be notified by the absent staff member to line management immediately. Repeated failure to present certificates when they are due will not be regarded as exceptional and may result in consideration of disciplinary action.

Verbal and written requests for overdue certificates will inform the absent employee by which date the certificate(s) must be received by NIFRS and to which nominated location the certificate(s) must be presented to.

Initially the staff member's line manager will make verbal contact to request any overdue certificates. A deadline will be given during this contact. The staff member will also be advised that failure to meet the deadline without acceptable explanation will result in the matter being referred to more senior management. A record of such contact will be entered by the line manager concerned on an SC210 Contact Form.

If the absent employee fails to meet the deadline given without acceptable reason, the matter will be referred to the relevant Payroll Department. The relevant Payroll Department will contact the staff member in writing using an established pro-forma letter requesting the overdue certificate. A copy of this letter will be placed on the personal file of the staff member concerned.

If the absent employee fails to meet the deadline given in writing, the matter will be referred without delay to the supervisor of the Payroll/Retained Payroll Office.

In the event of an overpayment of salary/wage as a result of an overdue medical certificate, or a certificate which is received after the cut off date for the payment of salary/wages, the employee will be contacted in writing to set out the method by which the overpayment will be recouped from future payments.

PART 5 – SUSPENSION OF SALARY/WAGE

Suspension of salary/wage will be given due consideration in the event of non-compliance with requests for overdue certification.

The supervisor of the Payroll/Retained Payroll Office will inform the Director of Finance or the duty senior manager in Finance who will discuss the individual circumstances of the case with the senior line manager of the employee concerned to determine if suspension of salary/wage is appropriate or not. A record of this discussion will be made and kept by the representative of the Finance Department.

If suspension of salary/wage is determined, the Payroll/Retained Payroll Office will be directed to inform the employee concerned in writing of the determination. This will be done using an established pro-forma.

The suspension will remain until such times as the certification requested is received in the Payroll/Retained Payroll Office.

If suspension of salary/wage is not deemed appropriate at the time, the matter will become the responsibility of the Payroll/Retained Payroll Office. Specific guidance will be developed within the Finance Department to ensure that this responsibility is discharged correctly.

PART 6 – NOMINATED PERSONS AND LOCATIONS

WHEN REQUESTING AN SC211

NOMINATED LOCATION (MUST HAVE ACCESS TO POSTAL FACILITIES)

STAFF GROUP	LOCATION
Whole Time	District Command
Variable Crew	District Command
Retained Duty Staff	District Command
District Staff	Line Manager at District Command
Area Staff	Line Manager at Area Command
RCC	Line Manager at RCC
STC	Line Manager at STC
HQ	Line Manager in HQ Department

Staff who have internet access outside of work can also download an SC211 self-certificate from the NIFRS website. The SC211 can then be completed and presented either by post or in person in accordance with the following table.

WHEN PRESENTING SELF-CERTIFICATES/MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

NOMINATED LOCATION

Staff Group	When presenting certificates on time	Forwarded To	When presenting overdue certificates
Whole Time	Watch Commander	District/Area Command who will forward to Payroll	As per verbal or written request
Variable Crew	Watch Commander	District/Area Command who will forward to Payroll	As per verbal or written request
Retained Duty Staff	District Command	Retained Payroll	As per verbal or written request.
District Staff	Line Manager at District Command	Area Command who will forward to Payroll/Payroll	As per verbal or written request
Area Staff	Line Manager at Area Command	Payroll	As per verbal or written request
RCC	Line Manager at RCC	Payroll	As per verbal or written request
STC	Line Manager at STC	Payroll	As per verbal or written request
HQ	Line Manager in HQ Department	Payroll	As per verbal or written request

PART 7 – REGISTER MARKINGS

WHOLETIME AND SUPPORT STAFF

REGISTER MARK	DESCRIPTION
S	Sickness (No Certificate)
SX	Sickness (Self-certified)
SC	Sickness (Medical Certificate)
C	Accident on Duty - Not Due to Service (No certificate)
CX	Accident on Duty – Not Due to Service (Self-certified)
CC	Accident on Duty – Not Due to Service (Medical Certificate)
G	Accident on Duty – Due to Service (No certificate)
GX	Accident on Duty – Due to Service (Self-certificate)
GC	Accident on Duty – Due to Service (Medical certificate)
H	Accident off Duty (No certificate)
HX	Accident off Duty (Self-certificate)
HC	Accident off Duty (Medical certificate)
SP	Part sick (First day of booking ill/injured while on duty)
SD	Stood down by Medical Advisor
SM	Maternity Related Sickness
A	Absent (May be used after attempts to obtain certificates fail.)

RETAINED DUTY STAFF

REGISTER MARK	DESCRIPTION
U	Sickness (Without a Certificate)
T	Sickness (With a certificate)
C	Fire Service Injury
V	Stood Down (No Med3 required and not attending drill night)
A	Absent (May be used after attempts to obtain certificates fail.)
Y	Ceased pay or after 4 consecutive absences

PART 7 – RETAINED DUTY PERSONNEL

Retained Duty personnel will be paid an average weekly wage whilst on sick leave, subject to the presentation of timely medical certificates.

An average weekly wage shall mean the employee's average weekly wage in the previous 3 months, paid each month in arrears.

Failure by personnel on the Retained Duty System to comply with the timely presentation of medical certificates may result in this average weekly wage being suspended.

PART 8 – REVIEW

The process will be reviewed regularly during the first year and at least annually thereafter to ensure that it reflects relevant best practice.