

Summer readiness

Investigating how prepared the London Fire Brigade is to deal with wildfires

Key information

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Introduction

The Fire Committee is investigating how prepared the London Fire Brigade (LFB) is to manage wildfires, following a major LFB incident review to fire responses in July 2022.

These are the investigation's terms of reference, and key issues the committee will examine:

Aims and objectives (terms of reference)

This investigation examines how prepared the London Fire Brigade is to deal with the wildfire risk in summer 2024. It follows up on previous committee work, scrutinising LFB's response to its major incident review. This was declared on 19 July 2022, when fires broke out across London, and LFB declared its "busiest day since World War II."

It will look into:

- LFB's capability and resource when dealing with fires, and/or wildfires in public spaces within (or in adjoining) urban settings.
- whether LFB firefighters have sufficient training, equipment and support to keep Londoners safe.
- how councils interact with LFB, to prevent fires breaking out in public spaces.
- LFB's public communication with Londoners, on public space fire safety.
- emergency wildfire responses (nationally and internationally).

Key issues

- LFB declared a major incident in summer 2022, as firefighters dealt with “significant fires across London”. LFB completed a major incident review in January 2023, resulting in 15 recommendations. These included needing to improve equipment, increase safety messaging for communities in extreme weather, and introduce new extreme weather training courses for LFB staff. LFB’s Extreme Weather Response report noted many recommendations were not completed, as of May 2023.
- Met Office forecasts for June-August 2024 state there is 2.3 times the normal chance of hot weather, with an increased heatwave (and heat-related impact) likelihood.
- The London Climate Resilience Review Interim Report (published January 2024) stated that “Wildfires are a growing threat at London’s rural/urban interface.” The London Fire Commissioner stated in February 2024 that “we [LFB] are now operating in what I have described previously as continental firefighting conditions.”

Key questions

- How has LFB's emergency planning and response changed since the major incident in summer 2022, when fires broke out across London during an extreme heatwave?
- How does LFB coordinate with London boroughs/borough commanders while planning wildfire responses?
- Are LFB firefighters equipped to deal with wild (and other) fires in hot conditions, and are there any provision gaps to address?
- What lessons can LFB take from fire and rescue services dealing with urban wildfires in other cities?
- What public awareness and communications are LFB doing, to help vulnerable communities prepare for potential fire risks?

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