



London Fire Brigade Headquarters
169 Union Street London SE1 0LL
T 020 8555 1200 F 020 7960 3602
Textphone 020 7960 3629
london-fire.gov.uk

Anne Clarke AM
Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee
City Hall
Kamal Churchie Way
London E16 1ZE

The London Fire Commissioner is the
fire and rescue authority for London

Date: 5 September 2023

Dear Assembly Member Clarke

Thank you for your letter following the July Committee meeting detailing the follow-up information we agreed to provide and pleased accept my apologies for the delayed response. For the purposes of this letter we have provided data from the date of the Committee until the end of August. Please let us know how you would like the fortnightly reporting to take place during September.

Appliance Availability

Fire appliance availability is dynamically managed to ensure that we are able to meet our attendance times, as determined by our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). These are as follows, with their corresponding metrics since the July Committee:

- for the first fire engine to arrive within an average of six minutes from being dispatched (actual response time was 5 minutes 16 seconds).
- for the second fire engine (if required) to arrive within an average of eight minutes from being dispatched (actual response time was 6 minutes 45 seconds)
- for a first fire engine to arrive within 10 minutes in more than 90 per cent of occasions. Since 18 July we achieved this on 97% of occasions.
- for the second fire engine to arrive within 12 minutes in more than 95 per cent of occasions. Since 18 July we achieved this on 96% of occasions.

We are, therefore, able to manage appliance availability in such a way that ensures we meet our incident response commitments. This means that we can allocate resources to training and prevention work. In the event of a Major Incident, we are able to recall staff to work to make additional pumps available using text messaging and line management. We are increasing watch-based training so that we can recall whole watches more efficiently. We have a memorandum of understanding in place with the Metropolitan Police to utilise their minibuses to bolster our own arrangements for returning staff to work.

Daily resourcing of appliances is managed by the Establishment and Performance Team and Resource Management Centre, who predict staffing levels using data and experience. Dynamic fire cover arrangements are in place to move staff and appliances as needed depending on the daily risk.

To support this, weekly strategic meetings are held with representatives from across the Brigade to forecast the daily risk level for London. This is based on foreseeable risks, such as extreme weather and planned events, as well as historic data from some of our busiest periods.

This allows us to efficiently match our crews to the daily risk in London while at the same time ensuring there is always a standard level of resourcing which enables us to meet our response targets. Unforeseeable risks are mitigated through our recall arrangements.

We are focused on addressing our shortage of operational staff, which has reduced by half from around 400 after the pandemic to around 200 today. We are training new firefighters and recruiting transferees into the Brigade, with our latest campaign attracting over 100 candidates.

London Fire Brigade utilises pre-arranged overtime to support operations where there is absence. The number of staff working pre-arranged overtime varied from 0 to 71 individuals per shift over this time period.

In the committee meeting I said that we begin to look at additional resourcing options when we have over 15 pumps off the run, this is also dependent on external factors on the day such as extreme weather. As I have outlined above, we monitor the daily risk continuously and I want to assure the committee that this is extremely important to us. I have set out the data below as requested.

Occasions where above 15 pumping appliances are off the run: 18 July – 31 August 2023

July	Day	Night	August	Day	Night	August	Day	Night
20	17		1	18	15	16		19
21	19	19	2	16		17	17	15
22		21	3		16	18	18	17
23	16	23	4		15	19	19	15
24		15	5	20	15	20		
25		17	6	18	15	21		
26	17		7	15	16	22	16	
27	18		8		16	23	20	18
28	18	15	9		15	24	17	17
29	15	17	10	18	18	25	17	18
30	15	16	11	19		26		18
31	15	16	12	15	18	27		
			13			28		
			14	15	16	29	16	
			15		17	30	15	
						31		15

Fire Boat

The LFB sees the value in the provision of the river boat capability given the risks associated with the river Thames, but the provision of this service is not a statutory duty.

London Fire Brigade recently replaced both its fire boats. As with the previous iteration of the boats, only one is ever on the run at any one time, whilst the other is used for purposes such as training, routine maintenance or repairs.

These new vessels are a welcome upgrade from their predecessors, contributing towards the Mayor's emissions targets, representing an improvement in firefighting capability and navigational technology.

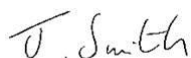
As a result, the staff who crew the fire boat require extensive training to operate it. This, in turn means that the resourcing of the fire boat at Lambeth River Fire Station differs from the rest of London's fire stations. Due to the length of training and specialist expertise of this small pool of staff who crew the fire boat it may mean that there are occasions when the fire boat is unavailable.

Unlike on fire appliances, crews on the four boat watches are not routinely supplemented by the other fire stations as they have unique qualifications to operate safely on the river, stipulated by the Port of London Authority. This means that the operational cover is maintained using the firefighters at Lambeth River Fire Station. Pre-arranged overtime is offered to staff as a priority to cover all shortfalls, but this is not always accepted.

Given the length and complexity of the acquisition course for these boats, it will take time to roll out training across the watches to an extent that we are able to provide resilience that maintains cover on the river at all times. Training also takes place on the boats themselves, so must be managed around availability of the vessels.

I hope this has been a useful update and please do let me know if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jonathan Smith

Deputy Commissioner Preparedness and Response