



**Anne Clarke AM**  
**Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee**

The Earl of Minto  
Minister of State (Regulatory Reform)  
Department for Business and Trade

(Sent by email)

15 September 2023

Dear Lord Minto,

I am writing on behalf of the London Assembly's Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee to raise its concerns about the regulation of e-scooters and e-bikes that are not compliant with UK standards and the fire risks associated with them.

The FREP Committee held a meeting on 28 June to investigate lithium-ion batteries and the increasing number of fires to which the London Fire Brigade (LFB) is called primarily due to faulty batteries or chargers, or from conversion kits for pedal cycles sold online.<sup>1</sup>

LFB has reported that in 2023 it has been called out to an e-bike fire approximately every 2 days.<sup>2</sup> On New Year's Day the first death from such a fire occurred in London when Sofia Duarte became trapped in the house she shared with others when the battery from an e-bike caught fire and blocked the only fire exit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [FREP Committee 28 June meeting transcript](#)

<sup>2</sup> [LFB Charge Safe](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Sofia's Story | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#)

LFB investigators found a bicycle that had been converted into an e-bike, and identified that its lithium battery pack had failed, causing the fire. In a news report on Sofia's death the BBC quoted the Brigade as saying that "such conversion kits enable people to add an electric motor to their bikes, but not all of them are sold with a battery. Cheaper batteries sold online do not necessarily adhere to UK safety regulations and are more likely to fail and present an increased fire risk."<sup>4</sup>

The Brigade has also stated "the most risky time for e-bike and e-scooter fires to take place are when charging lithium batteries. This is the time that batteries are most likely to fail."<sup>5</sup>

A total of three deaths arising from an e-bike being left on charge have now been recorded in London this year: Sofia Duarte's death on New Year's Day, the second death in March in Shadwell in a flat fire<sup>6</sup> and the third death in a house fire in Kentish Town in August 2023.<sup>7</sup>

Sofia Duarte's mother has supported LFB's Charge Safe campaign, which was established to encourage people to be safe when charging lithium-ion batteries and to avoid buying cheap unregulated, and unsafe, batteries, conversion kits or replacement batteries.<sup>8</sup> According to data collected by the Brigade, most people injured in fires related to e-bikes and e-scooters in London are in their twenties, and that these fires are often in homes where multiple adults are living together without children.<sup>9</sup> As part of its Charge Safe campaign LFB has also engaged directly with delivery riders for leading fast food delivery companies in London as part of its campaign to alert them to the risks.<sup>10</sup> These riders often use conversion kits on pedal bikes to speed up their delivery times to meet targets, as well as being in the high risk demographic identified by LFB.

The Committee spoke to a leading London e-bike retailer at its June meeting as well as a provider of e-scooters for the London trial and on-street hire e-bikes. Both representatives emphasised the safety of their products and their compliance with British standards and safety requirements.<sup>11</sup>

The key area of concern seems to be unregulated products, usually cheap in comparison with those that do meet UK standards, which can be bought online. This includes purchase through the bigger online retailers such as Amazon. A report, published in September 2022 by electrical safety charity, Electrical Safety First, found nearly 60 listings on prominent marketplaces including Amazon, eBay, Wish.com and AliExpress which fell below the required safety standards for sale to UK consumers.<sup>12</sup> Martyn Allen, Technical Director of Electrical Safety First, stated:

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<sup>4</sup> [BBC News 28 March 2023](#)

<sup>5</sup> [LFB two e-bike fire incidents in one day](#), 12 June 2023

<sup>6</sup> [LFB Shadwell flat fire death](#), 5 March 2023

<sup>7</sup> Daily Mirror, [Dad dies in devastating fire caused by e-bike left on charge](#), 6 August 2023

<sup>8</sup> [LFB Charge Safe – Sofia's story](#)

<sup>9</sup> [LFB two e-bike fire incidents in one day](#), 12 June 2023

<sup>10</sup> [LFB gives delivery riders Charge Safe safety tips](#), April 2023

<sup>11</sup> [FREP Committee 28 June meeting transcript](#), Lucy Grenville, Safety and Law Enforcement Liaison, Tier Mobility, p8, Dan Parsons, Director, Fully Charged eBikes, p 10, p13

<sup>12</sup> Electrical Safety First, [Dangerous E-bike charging devices for sale online](#), 2 September 2022

“These chargers we have identified for sale all pose an increased risk of fire and electric shock and should never have been available for sale to UK shoppers in the first instance.” He went on to say “The lack of vital regulation needed to ensure online marketplaces are responsible for the safety of goods sold via their platforms is contributing significantly to dangerous products entering people’s homes. The Government must bring forward urgent laws to finally end this scandal.”<sup>131415</sup>

The Committee is very concerned about the increasing number of lithium-ion battery-related fires in London. This is even more of a worry when unsafe charging takes place in places of multiple occupancy or multi-storey residential buildings when others can be at risk.

The Committee is aware that through the assistance of Chris Philp, the Minister for State for Crime, Policing and Fire, the London Fire Brigade met with the Office for Product Safety and Standards to discuss their concerns about the fire risks from unregulated products.<sup>16</sup> We also note the consultation [Smarter Regulation: UK Product Safety Review](#), jointly launched by your Department with the Office for Product Safety and Standards on 2 August and will respond to this. However, we would like to hear from you about what action or plans your Department has to address the current issues identified in this letter in the meantime. We would also welcome some indication of the expected timeline for achieving better regulation of online sales of these unsafe products.

We would be grateful if you could please respond to the Committee by 13 October 2023. Your response should be copied to Philippa Goffe, the Committee’s Senior Policy Adviser ([philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk](mailto:philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk)).

Yours,



Anne Clarke AM

**Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee**

cc Rt Hon Chris Philp, Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, Home Office

Baroness Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience

Andy Roe, London Fire Commissioner

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<sup>13</sup> Electrical Safety First, [Dangerous E-bike charging devices for sale online](#), 2 September 2022

<sup>14</sup> Cycling Industry News, [Be vigilant when buying ebike chargers](#), 2 September 2022

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, [Hammersmith and Fulham Council call for regulation](#), 28 September 2022

<sup>16</sup> [Mayor’s Question 2023/1484](#), 18 May 2023

