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Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

Product Safety Review Team
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(Sent by email)

1 November 2023

I am writing as Chair of the London Assembly's Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee. Please accept this letter as our response to the consultation – Smarter Regulation: UK Product Safety Review.

This response addresses the Committee's concerns about unsafe online sales of lithium ion batteries and associated items such as chargers and electric conversion kits for pedal cycles. These concerns stem from a meeting we held on 28 June 2023 to investigate emerging fire risks. We heard from London Fire Brigade (LFB) that they are being called to a fire involving an electric bike approximately every two days.¹ LFB told the Committee that these fires are primarily due to faulty batteries or chargers, or from conversion kits for pedal cycles sold online.²

These fires have been increasing year on year as shown in the table below included with the response to question 14 of the consultation.

¹ [LFB Charge Safe](#)

² [FREP Committee 28 June meeting transcript](#)

In response to an MQT in 2022, Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, noted:

“Conversion kits, which allow people to convert a normal bike to an e-bike, are the cause of many of the fires attended by the Brigade, including e-bikes. They have usually been bought from online marketplaces and may not meet the correct safety standards.”³

There have been three deaths in London so far this year (2023) recorded by LFB as arising from an e-bike being left on charge.⁴⁵⁶ In response to the increasing number of e-bike and e-scooter fires, LFB launched its 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.⁷ 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 these fires often occur in homes where multiple adults are living together without children.⁸ As part of its #Charge Safe campaign LFB has engaged directly with delivery riders for leading fast food delivery companies in London as part of its campaign to alert them to the risks.⁹

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 following questions in your consultation are most relevant for the Committee and our response to these is set out below:

Consultation questions¹⁰

14. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce due care requirements in relation to unsafe product listings?

Yes

[Please provide your reasoning (including relevant evidence on impacts, costs and/or benefits for you or other stakeholder groups)]

London Fire Brigade (LFB) has stated that it is being called to a fire involving an electric bike approximately every two days.¹¹

Three deaths in London from an e-bike being left on charge in 2023 have been recorded by LFB.

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³ [The Fire Risk Posed by E-Scooters and E-Bikes | London City Hall](#)

⁴ [Sofia's Story | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [LFB Shadwell flat fire death](#), 5 March 2023

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

⁷ [LFB Charge Safe campaign](#)

⁸ [LFB two e-bike fire incidents in one day](#), 12 June 2023

⁹ [LFB gives delivery riders Charge Safe safety tips](#), April 2023

¹⁰ [UK Product safety review consultation](#)

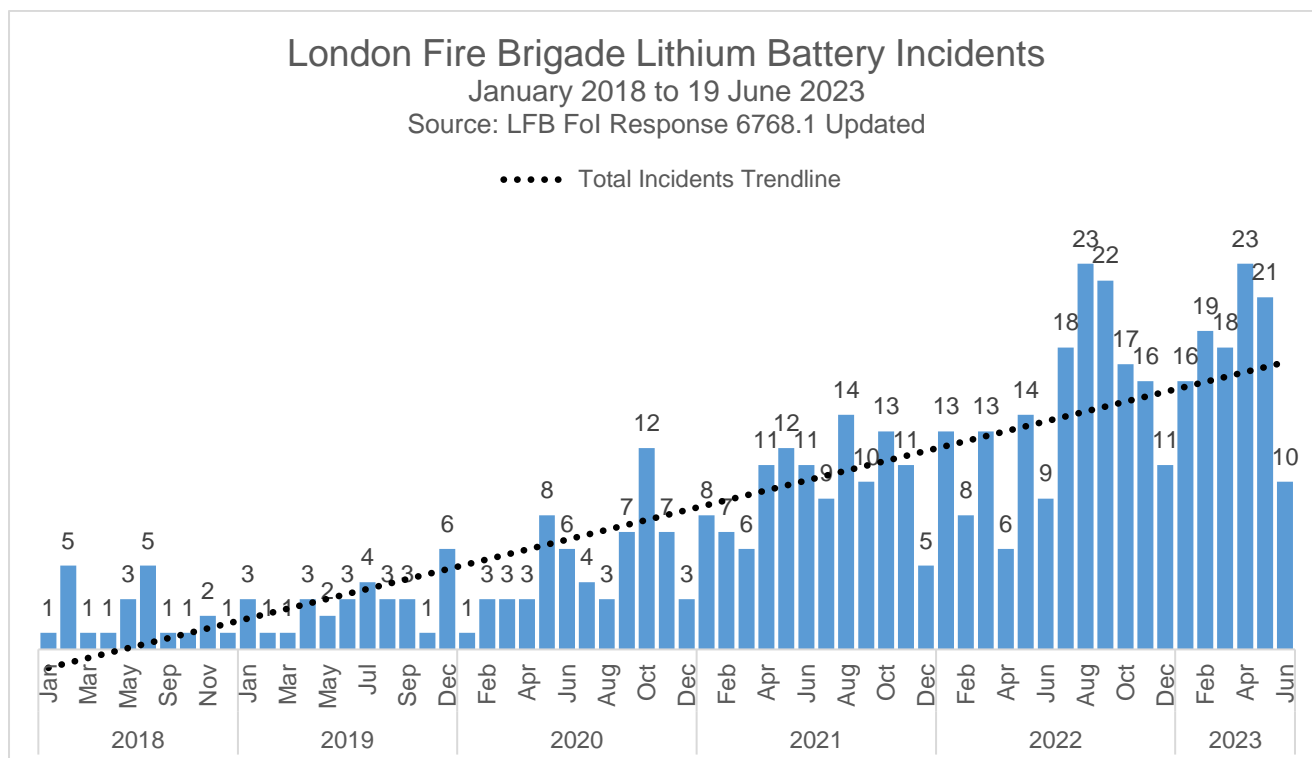
¹¹ [LFB Charge Safe](#)

¹² [Sofia's Story | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ [LFB Shadwell flat fire death](#), 5 March 2023

¹⁴ Daily Mirror, [Dad dies in devastating fire caused by e-bike left on charge](#), 6 August 2023

LFB advise these fires are primarily due to faulty batteries or chargers, or from conversion kits for pedal cycles sold online.¹⁵ The Committee therefore strongly supports due care requirements being applied to unsafe product listings.



Source: [LFB FOI 6768](#)

15. Do you agree with the proposal to increase consumer-facing information on online product listings for higher risk products?

Yes

Please provide your reasoning (including relevant evidence on impacts, costs and/or benefits for you or other stakeholder groups).

LFB has stated 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.¹⁶ They are often unaware of the risks and are motivated primarily by seeking the cheapest option rather than the safest one. In multiple occupation residential buildings, common in urban environments, this can put others at risk. The Committee believes consumers should receive as much information as possible on online product listings for higher risk products.

16. What additional information would be useful to support consumers to purchase safe products?
[Please provide your reasoning (including relevant evidence on impacts, costs and/or benefits for you or other stakeholder groups).]

Lithium ion batteries and associated products/accessories need to be clearly flagged to the public as a potential fire risk if they have not been subject to UK product safety requirements, are damaged or

¹⁵ [FREP Committee 28 June meeting transcript](#)

¹⁶ [LFB two e-bike fire incidents in one day](#), 12 June 2023

used incorrectly. This is particularly important for online sales. The Committee noted an investigation by Electrical Safety First into e-bike chargers for sale on online marketplaces which found major risks with some of these products, highlighting that “The charging devices, advertised as accessories for e-bikes to power up lithium-ion batteries, all failed to meet the necessary standard for UK plugs, with many appearing to have no fuse, shedding serious doubt as to the overall safety of the product, including the quality and safety of internal components.”¹⁷

In addition the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has warned that:

“The advice to consumers is if purchasing an e-bike or e-scooter, e-bike conversion kit, or replacement charger and batteries, only use a reputable retailer. There are many products available online which are substandard, do not meet safety requirements and can be extremely dangerous.”¹⁸

LFB’s #Charge Safe campaign is aimed at raising the profile of the fire risks associated with unsafe lithium ion batteries/chargers/conversion kits, a national campaign might be helpful in increasing knowledge and awareness of the risks in the general public.

Yours,



Anne Clarke AM

Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

cc Andy Roe, London Fire Commissioner

Baroness Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience

¹⁷ [Electrical Safety First Dangerous ebike chargers for sale online](#), September 2022

¹⁸ [NFCC alert public to e-bike and e-scooter fire safety advice](#), July 2023