



Home Office

# Consultation on Home Office's Fire Response Times statistics

## Government response

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# Introduction and contact details

This document is the post-consultation report for the consultation paper: Fire response times.

It will cover:

- the background to the consultation
- a summary of the consultation responses
- the next steps following this consultation

Further copies of this report and the consultation paper can be obtained by contacting statisticians at the address below:

## **Fire statistics**

**Home Office Analysis and Insight**

**2 Marsham Street**

**London SW1P 4DF**

**Email:** [firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk)

This report is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/response-times-to-fires-attended-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2017-to-march-2018>

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from [firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk)

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Home Office at the above address.

# Background

The consultation paper 'Fire response times' was published on 17 January 2019.

As discussed in chapter 2 of '[Response times to fires attended by fire and rescue services: England, April 2017 to March 2018](#)', when the first fire incidents response times statistical release was published in 2012 it was decided to exclude incidents where there was 'heat and/or smoke damage only'. This was mainly to keep the release consistent with previous ad hoc requests (such as Parliamentary Questions) where this approach had been used. It should also be noted that this (2012) release only had 3 years' worth of data based on the online Incident Recording System.

The consultation invited comments on whether to include incidents marked as 'heat and/or smoke damage only' in future publications. It also asked if respondents had any feedback on the response times to fires publication generally.

The consultation period closed on 17 April 2019 and this report summarises the responses.

A list of respondents is at [Annex A](#).

# Summary of responses

1. A total of 10 responses to the consultation paper were received. Of these, four were from Fire and rescue services and three were personal views of Fire Officers.
2. All 10 responses indicated that incidents marked as 'heat and/or smoke damage only' should be included.
3. A wide range of comments on additional areas were received (detailed below). It is not possible to respond to each of these here.

# Responses to specific questions

## 1. Do you think fires involving 'heat and/or smoke damage only' should be included in the calculation of response times to fires?

All 10 responses indicated that they should be included.

### 1a. Why do you think they should be included?

Examples of responses included:

- Incidents would attract the same operational response and the responding crew in most cases would not treat these any differently to other dwelling fires.
  - We respond to the mobilised incident category raised on mobilisation and not the consequent outcome (as you cannot screen calls before arrival at scene).
  - The FRS would have received these calls as reports of a fire, smell of burning, smoke issuing, or similar and would have responded accordingly. The speed of response is just as relevant for these calls, as it is for those where flames are produced. That flames did not develop may be by chance, or precisely because there was a speedy response.
  - If the FRS took longer to arrive on scene these incidents may have developed and spread to a more serious incident.
  - It is currently only on arrival that the circumstances will be confirmed and so the actions prior to arrival are no different from those incidents where flame is present on arrival.
  - The Metropolitan FRSs (local) response time definition includes attendance at all primary fires (including heat and smoke damage only).
  - The FBU believes that the response to every fire matters. Therefore, all fires should be included in statistical releases.
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## 2. Do you have any other comments on the fire response times statistical release and tables?

Examples of responses included:

- add excel tables on response times to false alarms, fatal dwelling fires, dwelling fires where rescues have been carried out and non-fire incidents;
  - add excel tables on time taken from arrival to the time taken to carry out interventions (such as applying water or committing a BA crew into a dwelling);
  - presenting data for met/non-met/rural etc is flawed as it hides the discrepancies in resources and geography which may exist within those groups;
  - measure attendance times for second fire engine as funding cuts have most affected these and so this would offer a more valuable analysis of the sector's performance;
  - consider separating out incidents which require specialist equipment;
  - keep fire false alarms in with fire incidents as FRS wouldn't know it was a false alarm until arrival and so data is excluded unnecessarily;
  - present data on the arrival of 'sufficient firefighters with enough equipment to successfully carry out rescues and make a meaningful attack on a fire'. This may vary between services;
  - show comparisons to other FRSs in the report not just in the underlying data;
  - recognise that call handling protocols differ and may affect the time before an appliance is despatched;
  - analysis of outcomes (chapter 6) should begin with an assessment of the impact of attendance times on survivability before considering the wider non-life impact;
  - present data on time taken for the last appliance for the predetermined attendance (PDA) to arrive;
  - include all incidents attended – including for example responses that take over an hour and other cases;
  - carry out an analysis of the likely consequences of further slowing of response times;
  - coordinate a regular, transparent process in which response statistics are published and reviewed on a routine cycle.
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## Conclusion and next steps

In response to this consultation, the Home Office Fire Statistics team has initiated work to include fires involving 'heat and/or smoke damage only' in the calculation of response times to fires for the next publication in Winter 2019. We will include a consistent back series to 2009/10, as is currently the case, and a section showing the effect of the changes.

We will also look at the feasibility and resource involved for some of the suggestions arising from Question 2 as part of our routine review of publications.



# Consultation principles

The principles that government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

## Annex A – List of respondents

Dorset and Wiltshire FRS

Fire Brigade Union

Fire sector federation

Greater Manchester FRS

Representative from NFCC – official views

Representative from NFCC – personal views

Representative from NFCC / Seconded from Cleveland FRS – personal views

Retired fire officer

South Yorkshire FRS

West Midlands FRS



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