



Report title

Review of Accidental Dwelling Fires, and Fatalities, for 2013/14

Meeting

Date

Strategy

16 September 2014

Report by

Document Number

Third Officer

FEP 2302

Public

Summary

This report provides an overview and analysis of accidental dwellings fires, including the fatalities and injuries that occurred, in 2013/14. It brings together statistical data with the outcomes of Fatal Fire Reviews and the Accidental Dwelling Fire Review process. It highlights focus areas for community safety work and initiatives whilst also acknowledging work already underway, and is intended to support continued work at all levels to reduce fire risk to Londoners. The analysis of the data and individual cases of both fatal and accidental fires highlights the requirement to work in partnership across the public, private and community/voluntary sectors to help reduce the risk of fire deaths, injuries and accidental fires.

Recommendations

That the Authority:

1. Continues action to encourage partner organisations to include fire risk awareness training in the care contracts with all carers, including family members; and
2. Works with partners and the fire industry to highlight the need to provide fire detection, fire detection and monitoring or, fire suppression equipment and monitoring where appropriate to a level that addresses the fire risk of the occupier.

Introduction/Background

1. This report reviews accidental dwelling fires in 2013/14, together with fatalities and injuries from those fires, and brings together statistical information as well as outcomes from the fatal fire reviews and from the review of accidental dwelling fires. Accidental dwelling fires remain the focus of much of the Brigade's community safety work as they are considered to be largely preventable.
2. The Deputy Commissioner introduced fatal fire reviews in 2010¹, and in 2012 a borough based version of the Brigade process was introduced for qualifying² accidental dwelling fires. These reviews support Authority headline targets to reduce fires and fire related casualties (both deaths and injuries). The outcomes from both review processes influence and support work at all levels by the Brigade to change behaviours, build effective relationships with partners and share the Brigade's fire safety messages more widely.
3. In 2013/14, 46 people died at fires, of which 43 deaths were attributable to fire. Thirty-seven people died in buildings and 30 of these were in accidental dwelling fires. Thirty-seven of the deaths in fires have been subject to a fatal fire review in 2013/14 (including all 30 from accidental dwelling fires), and 87 full reviews of accidental dwelling fires covering 116 non-fatal casualties were completed for the same period.
4. Each review discusses the fire, the characteristics of the people involved, their living conditions, detailed scrutiny of the circumstances leading up to the fire including any previous interventions that the Brigade had carried out, identified regulatory fire safety issues, the Brigade's subsequent fire investigation and follow-up community safety action to reduce fire risk. A significant amount of organisational learning has resulted from the reviews and they have influenced the priorities and direction of strategic and borough based preventative work. The Accidental Dwelling Fire Review process is led by the Borough Commander and follows the same format as the Fatal Fire Review, with the same objective of identifying opportunities for fire risk reduction. Accidental Dwelling Fire reviews have resulted in ten Adult Safeguarding referrals, and three referrals to the Brigade's Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Service (JFIS). The accidental dwelling fire review process also led to the initiation of borough based partnership work to lower risk to four people with hoarding tendencies.
5. Examining both sets of information has enabled officers to draw conclusions about the key contributory factors that feature in fires resulting in fatalities or injuries from fire in the home, and to gain an insight into the characteristics and circumstances that make the difference between people that survive fires, and those who do not. During 2013, officers also started to conduct a post fatal fire audit in order to quickly gather and record information relating to compliance with fire safety law. The Brigade's Fire Investigation Team produces a comprehensive report on every accidental fire death. This report is provided to the coroner, and supports the fatal fire review process. The Brigade's research has show that sadly, many of the people involved in fatal fires

¹ A fatal fire review panel is convened by the Deputy Commissioner for fires involving fatalities. The review panel consists of a range of officers including the Deputy Commissioner, the Third Officer, Fire Safety Regulation Area Manager and the relevant Borough Commander. The review considers all community safety information gathered regarding the person who died in the fire and the circumstances of the fire, in order to identify organisational learning points that can be implemented either internally or with external partners.

² To qualify for an accidental dwelling fire review a fire must result in both a member of the public being taken to hospital as a result of injuries sustained at the incident and, in officers' opinion, the fire having made the dwelling uninhabitable for a minimum of 24 hours.

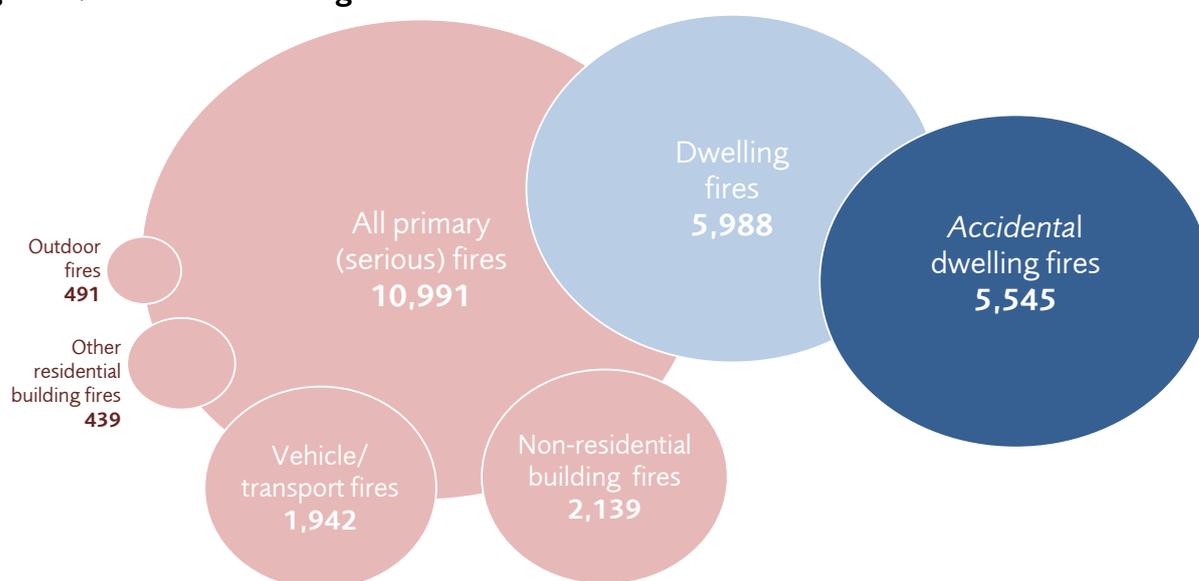
appear to be within the relatively easy grasp of better safety and protection, as most are in regular contact with a public agency at some level.

- The conclusions in this report have been reached by a full exploration of the characteristics of the person, circumstances of the fire and the Brigade's response. This paper is based on reviews over one year and although an annual examination of fatal fires and accidental dwelling fires enables us to identify current issues, it is only when this information is compared to longer-term data that trends can be identified and tracked. Longer-term analysis forms the basis of each London Safety Plan.

Accidental dwelling fires

- There were just under 11,000 primary (serious) fires³ in London in 2013/14 and just over half (53 per cent) were in dwellings (5,988). The vast majority (5,545) of these dwelling fires were of accidental (rather than deliberate) motive⁴ (i.e. accidental dwelling fires).

Diagram 1: Accidental dwelling fires



- The number of accidental dwelling fires in 2013/14 was 5.7 per cent (334) lower than the previous year (2012/13) when there were 5,873.

Fire deaths

- In 2013/14, 46 people died at a fire, of which 43 deaths were attributable to the fire or the effects of the fire. The three other deaths were, after the Coroner's inquest, found to be due to causes other than fire (e.g. heart attack). Thirty seven people died in fires in dwellings of which 30 died in accidental dwelling fires. Two people who died in an accidental dwelling fire were most probably due to self-immolation but they are included in accidental dwelling fire numbers as the Coroner has yet to rule on the case. The Coroner requires substantial evidence to record a verdict of suicide, and although the evidence may strongly support attempted suicide in a self immolation, the Brigade will follow the Coroner's verdict in categorising fire deaths.

³ Fires are divided between primary (or more serious) fires, usually to an insured property (either a building or vehicle), and secondary (or smaller) fires which include outdoor fires (like rubbish and grass fires) and derelict property. Any fire which requires five or more appliances is a primary fire. These categories are used by the government's national Incident Recording System (IRS).

⁴ The number of accidental dwelling fire numbers includes a small number (41) of fires of unknown motive.

10. As the focus of this report is accidental dwelling fires, details of fire deaths which were not due to an accidental dwelling fire are set out in appendix A for information only. It is worthy of note that four fire fatalities included in appendix A did not die in dwellings but they were sleeping in outbuildings or buildings not designed for use as dwellings. The Brigade's *Reducing Fire Risks in Buildings used as Unsuitable Accommodation toolkit* released in June 2014 was produced to aid Borough Commanders and partners to address the risk associated with these living arrangements. Five people also died in deliberate fires due to self immolation.

Fire size

11. The size of a fire and the Brigade resources required do not correlate consistently with the likelihood of fire injuries or fatalities, nor the numbers involved, however there is a general trend for more people to be severely injured at smaller fires. The Brigade has developed a fire size methodology in order to provide some clarity about the different types of action taken by crews on arrival or where there are exceptional resources required (five+ pumps). Table 1 shows that 3,939 (71 per cent) of accidental dwelling fires attended by the Brigade in 2013/14 required minimal or no firefighting by the Brigade, and two fire fatalities and 97 severe injuries occurred at incidents where there was no firefighting by the Brigade.

Table 1: Fire Size – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

Fire size		Number of ADFs (% of all ADFs)	Number of Fire fatalities	Number of Severe fire injuries (% of all ADF injuries)
5+ pumps	Attended by 5 or more fire engines	113 (2%)	8	58 (13%)
Large	Required the use of a fire engine main jet supplied from a fire hydrant	321 (6%)	10	96 (21%)
Medium	Required the use of the hose reel attached to a fire engine	1,172 (21%)	10	139 (30%)
Small	Minimal firefighting required; extinguished by physical means (e.g. stamping, smothering) or a small portable extinguisher	2,234 (40%)	0	72 (15%)
None	No firefighting required on arrival	1,705 (31%)	2	97 (21%)
Total		5,545 (100%)	30	462 (100%)

Incident and risk environment

12. When analysing the details of the fire cause, the risks present in the premises where a fire occurred and the personal characteristics and behaviours of people involved, there are some clear target areas for risk reduction. These areas include delay in calling for Brigade assistance, how the occupants react to the fire immediately after discovery, smoking and the use of smoking materials, cooking, electrical safety, candle use, the safe use of heaters, and fire detection and suppression.

Delay in calling for Brigade assistance

13. For this report all available information for accidental dwelling fires, including those resulting in a fatality, has been reviewed in order to estimate whether the person involved was likely to survive at the point when the Brigade was called. It is a reasonable assessment that 17 of the 30 fire fatalities (57 per cent) were unlikely to have had a viable chance of surviving because of a delay in calling the Brigade.
14. For the fire fatalities delays were the result of either one, or a combination of more than one of the following; rapid fire development, stopping to fight the fire, a fire developing but there being no monitored fire alarm, and where telecare was present but there was a signal transmission problem⁵ or a delay in passing the call to the Brigade.
15. Circumstances included the person being overcome by the smoke and fire and the fire only being discovered by neighbours or passers by once it had taken hold, there were visible smoke and flames, and it had broken out of the property where it started. In one case the fire fatality was discovered the next day when someone came to visit, and discovered there had been a fire which had burnt itself out.
16. The Brigade's recently published report *Fire Facts, Incident Response Times; 2005-2013* also drew attention to the data which showed delay in the Brigade being called. Only a small proportion of fires in the home are discovered immediately with there being no delay in calling the Brigade (13 per cent). In over 40 per cent of occasions, the delay between discovering the fire and calling 999 is more than 10 minutes (42 per cent). The *Fire Facts* report showed that between 2009 and 2013 nearly two thirds of the fatalities in dwelling fires happened when there was a delay in calling the Brigade of 10 or more minutes (62 per cent). And, nearly half of all serious fire casualties, where the casualty was taken to hospital and the injuries appeared serious, happened when the delay was 10 minutes or more. In 2013/14, nearly 77 per cent of fatalities (23) in accidental dwelling fires happened where there was a delay of 10 minutes or more in calling the Brigade.
17. The *Fire Facts* report was launched with a media release 'New fire report shows majority of fire deaths occur after a delay in calling 999' and social media linking to Fire Facts illustrations (infographics) which were placed on the Brigade's website. A key Brigade message must continue to be that calling the Brigade as soon as a fire is discovered must be one of the first actions of those involved in fires and those responsible for their safety, or alternatively where there are vulnerable people there must be a resilient method of automatically summoning assistance and/or extinguishing the fire.

Causes of accidental dwelling fires and fatalities

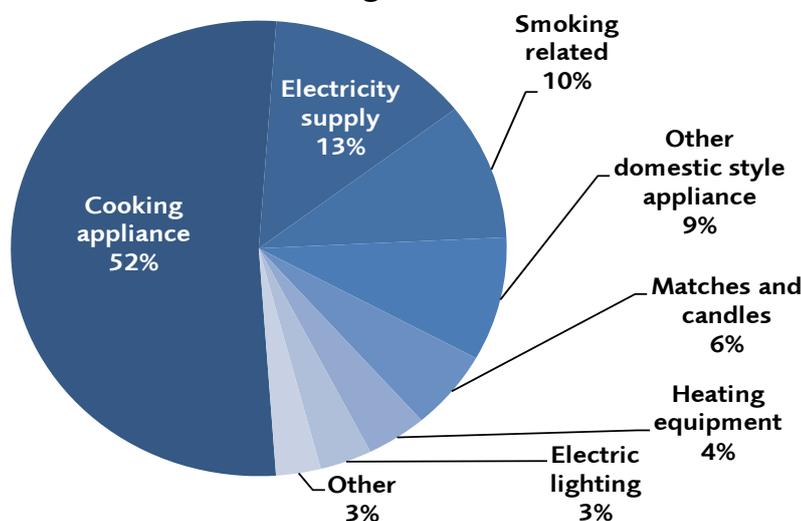
18. A breakdown of the causes of accidental dwellings fires is shown in diagram 2 below. Smoking materials is the cause of 10 per cent of fires, whereas it is the predominant cause of fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs).
19. Cooking is the biggest cause of accidental dwelling fires at 52 per cent but cooking was not the cause of any fire fatalities in 2013/14. The Brigade has continued to focus media campaigns on the risks associated with cooking, especially when under the influence of alcohol, and is working with the British Standards Institute, DCLG and the fire industry to support the development of a

⁵ Telecare equipment relies on being able to transmit signals to summon assistance. Currently the telephone line used for this purpose may be shared by several users or other equipment. This means that emergency fire signals may be blocked by an alarm carrying a lesser priority, another user, or equipment such as a burglar alarm. The Brigade's *Reducing Fire Risk to Vulnerable People Through Telecare* project includes work to improve standards and rectify this issue.

British Standard for automatic cooker shut-off and fire suppression equipment, alongside the development of effective products that will fulfil this role.

20. Electrical supply, domestic appliances and electric lighting caused 25 per cent of accidental dwelling fires and also resulted in two fire fatalities. Domestic appliance fires due to faults (rather than 'user error') continued to rise in 2013/14 with refrigeration being a particular concern due to the unprotected highly flammable insulation, and that these appliances are switched on 24/7. We continue to work with regulators and the industry to improve safety standards. This work and the evidence we supplied has resulted in improvements in national standards covering domestic electrical distribution equipment (fuse boards) and methods of supporting surface run cables to reduce the risk to firefighters from cable entanglement.
21. Work is also ongoing with national electrical suppliers, distributors and operators to reduce risk from the supply side, up to and including the electricity meter. In December 2013, the Brigade hosted a conference in conjunction with Electrical Safety First, which for the first time brought all major stakeholders from a fragmented industry together to highlight the risk and causes of fires (which have resulted in multiple fatalities nationally).
22. The Brigade is also working with partner agencies, industry and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of product recalls, which are often at best, only 10-20 per cent effective. The Brigade's web pages now contain information and links to product recall pages. Brigade systems of collating data from level 2 investigations (where the Fire Investigation Team have attended), informing manufacturers and trading standards, are considered as positive examples of best practice.

Diagram 2: Causes of accidental dwelling fires



23. A breakdown of the causes of fatal fires is contained in diagram 3 below. The 'other' category includes two cases involving electrical equipment and one case involving someone lighting small fires indoors.

Diagram 3: Causes of accidental dwelling fire deaths



Note: The cause of three fatalities has not yet been confirmed

Smoking and smoking materials

24. Fifteen people died in accidental dwelling fires (53 per cent) in 2013/14 where the cause of the fire has been identified as 'smoking materials'.

25. Despite the introduction in November 2011 of fire safer cigarettes, sometimes called Reduced Ignition Propensity or RIP cigarettes, smoking remains the most common cause of fires involving fatalities. The Strategy Committee received an update about the impact of fire safer cigarettes at its March 2014 meeting (report FEP2219), based on data from 2012/13, and concluded that on the impact of fire safer cigarettes *"the statistical evidence in London is still not conclusive and this is due to the fact that there are relatively few fires in London to separate any effect from background 'statistical' noise"*. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) released data for fires and fire casualties for 2013/14 in July 2014. In a press release⁶, the DCLG commented *"The safety standard for cigarettes introduced in November 2011 would appear to be having an impact on reducing accidental fire death caused by smoking products. The numbers of fatalities due to cigarettes are now around 15 per cent lower than before the introduction of the safety standard. Non-fatal injuries have also fallen by a similar amount."*

26. The position in London on the impact of fire safer cigarettes remains less clear. Table 2 below has the data for the four years from 2010/11 (the full year before fire safer cigarettes were introduced in November 2011). Smoking related fires fell by 15 per cent between 2010/11 and 2013/14, although all accidental dwellings fires fell by 7 per cent. Yet the proportion of smoking related ADFs remains around 9/10 per cent across the four year period. The number of fatalities due to smoking related fires was the same in 2013/14 as it was in 2010/11 (the numbers dipped in 2011/12 - although the cigarettes only started to be introduced from November 2011). The proportion of ADF deaths which were smoking related actually increased in 2013/14 compared to the previous two years. Serious injuries fell by 31 per cent over the four year period.

⁶ DCLG press release "Official statistics reveal fire deaths fallen by 40 per cent in last decade", 3 July 2014

Table 2: Smoking related accidental dwelling fires, deaths and serious injuries

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Accidental Dwelling Fires	5,976	5,980	5,881	5,545
<i>Smoking related</i>	606	589	536	515
Fatalities at ADFs	40	33	32	30
<i>Smoking related</i>	15	6	14	15
Serious Injuries at ADFs	598	561	577	462
<i>Smoking related</i>	99	86	72	68
<i>Proportion of ADFs, deaths and serious injuries which were smoking related</i>				
Accidental Dwelling Fires	10%	10%	9%	9%
Fatalities	38%	18%	44%	50%
Serious injuries	17%	15%	12%	15%

27. Whilst acknowledging that fires can still be caused by fire-safer cigarettes, despite difficulties in analysing the materials that caused a fire (they are often consumed by the fire) non-fire safer cigarettes were identified as the cause of four fires which resulted in five fatalities. Some people were virtually bed or sofa bound and partner agencies had the opportunity to see evidence of previous careless disposal of cigarettes that could have resulted in fires - yet the risk was not addressed. Also, general smoking behaviours can increase risk, such as disposal of cigarettes without stubbing them out or disposing of cigarette butts into waste bins or other unsuitable receptacles. Officers are working with Public Health England, local council trading standards departments and other partners to raise awareness of fire safer cigarettes and how the large trade and availability of illicit tobacco products, such as non fire safer cigarettes, undermines improvements to safety standards. On 28 July 2014, the Brigade hosted a 'Tobacco Conference' in partnership with Public Health England to raise awareness of these issues with local partners.

Candles

28. Candles were the cause of fires involving five fatalities and continue to feature as a significant cause of all accidental dwelling fires. Candles were primarily used for lighting but were also left lit in order to light cigarettes. Candle safety is featured across the Brigade's community safety materials and officers continue to utilise all forms of media to get safety messages to the public.

Portable heaters

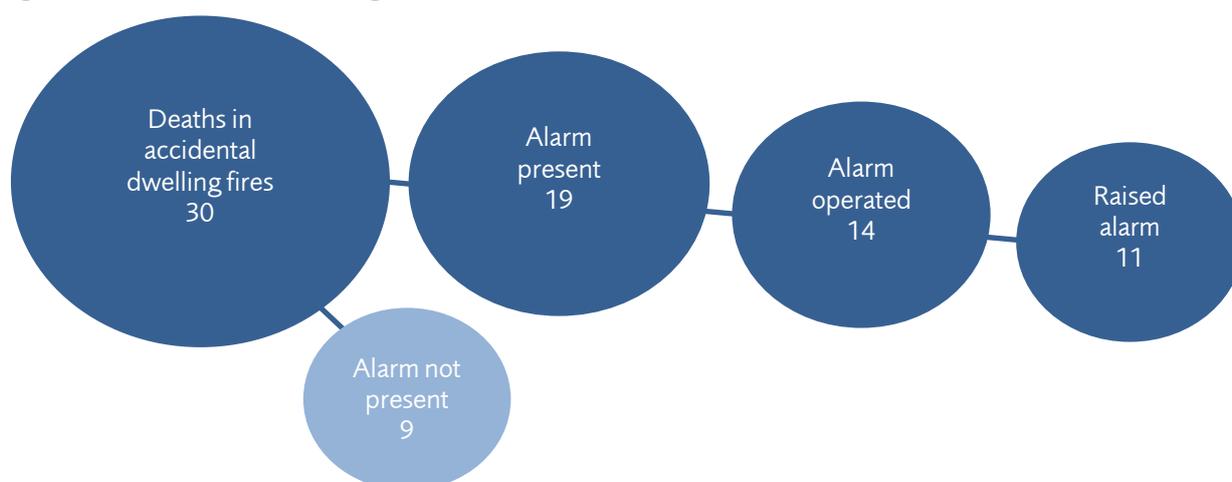
29. Three fatalities were a direct result of using portable heaters unsafely. The safe use of portable heaters and electrical items are included in the Brigade's Home Fire Safety Visits and community safety literature but officers need to ensure that partners and the public see the risk that these present to the vulnerable.

Fire Detection and Suppression

Fire detection

30. Smoke alarms cannot prevent all fire deaths – especially for people with mobility difficulties or people who may not be able to respond to them. They can also be vulnerable to poor installation or deliberate damage. However, smoke detection does play a key part in providing early warning of a fire and combating the risks of, and from, fire. In some cases fire detection alone cannot reduce the fire risk to acceptable levels and in these cases a combination of linked smoke detection, telecare and automatic fire suppression may be needed. In 2013/14, 40 per cent of accidental dwelling fires attended by the Brigade did not have a working smoke alarm. Whilst this is a relatively high proportion, the proportion of dwellings fires attended without a working smoke alarm has been falling over time. Five years ago, the proportion was around 55 per cent.
31. Where there are vulnerable people it is important that as a first step in reducing fire risk, linked smoke detection is fitted in all rooms where a fire could start, and that the resident can hear the alarm throughout the property, yet this was seldom the case. This is particularly pertinent where someone meets any of three following criteria:
- They have behaviours that increase the risk of a fire starting
 - They are unlikely to react quickly to a smoke alarm
 - They cannot move quickly to escape.
32. Out of 30 fire fatalities resulting from accidental dwelling fires, 19 had smoke detection (63 per cent), yet detection only raised the alarm in 11 cases (Diagram 4). Smoke detectors were only fitted in the room where the fire started on four occasions, and in two cases the batteries were missing.
33. Where hardwired smoke detectors were fitted in housing they were often only fitted in halls and rarely cover all rooms within a property. It is generally left to the occupier to assess their fire risk and augment their detection to allow for personal characteristics such as hearing loss or poor mobility, or risky behaviours such as smoking in bed. In practice this rarely happens. The Brigade continues to promote the message that working fire detection must cover all areas of risk, and is working with partners to ensure that they recognise this need.

Diagram 4: Accidental dwelling fire fatalities and smoke alarms



Note: In two fatalities it was not known whether an alarm was present.

34. The Brigade promotes the fitting and regular testing of smoke detectors in all homes. Where required, the Brigade fits smoke detectors with ten year batteries during Home Fire Safety Visits

and emphasises the need to fit smoke detection commensurate with the risk. Further training for staff in Home Fire Safety Visits in 2014/15 will cover key areas including recognising fire risk and understanding when higher levels of fire detection or fire suppression are required, and referral to the occupier or partner agencies for appropriate permanent solutions.

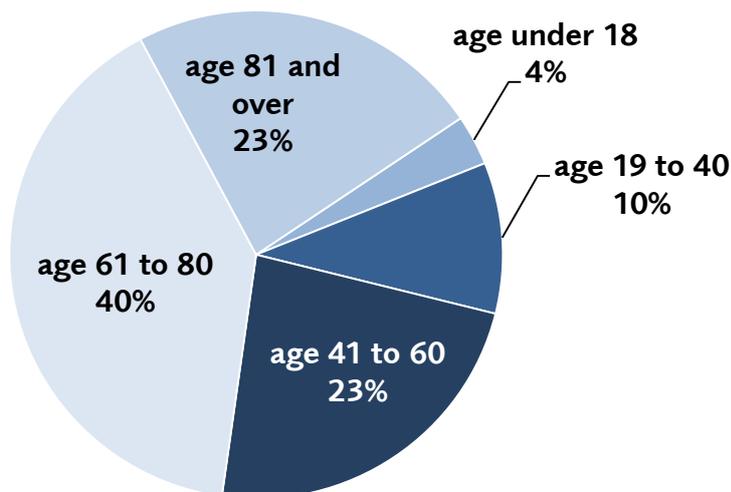
Telecare

35. Telecare equipment with linked fire detection has the potential to reduce the number of people killed by fire by detecting fire early and immediately summoning assistance. However to do so it must be linked to the correct standard of fire detection equipment and have a resilient method of summoning assistance. Telecare fire detection should be designed, installed, maintained and monitored in accordance with the appropriate British Standards.
36. Telecare equipment was installed in seven cases (23 per cent of fatal fires in buildings) but it only raised the alarm in two. Where people had telecare equipment their address would have been registered with the provider and thus it would have been easy to confirm the address - if the telecare monitoring equipment had raised the alarm.
37. Although a monitored telecare system with linked smoke detection in all areas of risk can initiate a call to Brigade quickly some people still require assistance to escape. Where someone meets the Authority's 'priority person' criteria, has limited mobility, aged over 60 and continues to smoke, automatic monitored fire suppression systems must be recommended.
38. As discussed earlier telecare has potential to lower risk but to-date the majority of the fatal fire cases that have included telecare have identified:
 - Failures to fit and link smoke detection as standard when installing telecare equipment
 - Failures to fit detection in the areas of highest risk in the cases where some smoke detection was fitted
 - Call handing issues or problems affecting sending alarm signals from the property to the call monitoring centres that led to delays in calling the Brigade
 - Poor or incorrect advice offered to residents involved in a fire
39. The Brigade is sharing the detail and scale of the issue with partners and the telecare industry, through the Brigade's *Reducing fire risk to vulnerable people through telecare* project. This project aims to address these issues in a systematic way through support, training and engagement with those commissioning telecare equipment, call centres, Local Authorities, carers and users. This has resulted in hundreds of individual telecare operators being trained. The Brigade have also contributed to the revision of call centre and fire detection British Standards and provided best practice guidance.
40. The Project is targeting improvement in the following areas:
 - Ensuring that the interface between Brigade Control Operators and Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations informs the most appropriate attendance response and optimises the speed and accuracy of critical information transfer from the resident to responding fire crews.
 - Improving the Brigade's ability to identify vulnerable individuals at risk from fire and once identified ensuring that control measures such as detection, fire suppression systems, fire retardant bedding etc. are put in place, are appropriate to the risk and are designed in accordance with best practice guidance and recognised standards.

Person profile and care

41. It is not only the vulnerable that experience accidental fires in the home and the Brigade works with partners to raise awareness of the risk of fire amongst the whole population of London. When the priority person characteristics of age, smoking and living alone for people that survive a fire are compared to those for people that do not survive a fire there is a clear contrast. The majority of the fire fatalities had a combination of characteristics that would delay their reaction or escape. Logically those who can respond to a fire and escape quickly are more likely to survive whilst those with some kind of impairment do not. The percentage of people recorded as casualties that survived an accidental dwelling fire and had a vulnerability (as identified during accidental dwelling fire reviews) was 35 per cent - 41 out of 116 casualties. The percentage of people with a vulnerability that became a fire fatality (as identified during fatal fire reviews) was 70 per cent - 21 of 30. This reinforces the priority person approach to risk but also supports the case for the Brigade's work targeting people who are less likely to die in a fire but are still at risk of having a fire.
42. The Brigade has developed a number of campaigns to support its aims and objectives and by using social media we have been able to better target and increase the Brigade's audiences on a number of key areas including:
- Reducing kitchen fires caused by people drinking alcohol and cooking.
 - Know the Plan: increasing awareness of what to do if there is a fire where you live
43. People who become fatalities were often unable to fully control their immediate environment due to age or disability or due to intoxication. Fire fatalities can be the result of a person's behaviour, however physical and mental characteristics can also play a part, impacting on the ability to react to a fire, and/or to escape from it. Data shows that the majority of people who die from accidental dwelling fires regularly share a number of similar characteristics such as age (19 People - 63 per cent were over 60 – see diagram 5), lack of mobility (15 people - 50 per cent), often living alone (20 people - 67 per cent), and vulnerability due to illness (8 people - 27 per cent) have a significant influence on risk. Alcohol or drug use (prescription or otherwise) featured in three fire fatalities (10 per cent). In the case of two of the fire fatalities, alcohol consumption was potentially a contributory factor leading to death and in another fatality controlled drugs were apparent, although the part played in the fatality can only be confirmed by the Coroner.
44. It is the combination of a range of factors that will determine whether or not a person becomes a casualty of fire. Those who become house or bed bound due to illness or reduced mobility and who have high risk habits such as smoking in bed or not disposing of cigarettes properly, are particularly at risk from fire.
45. Care needs may increase with age, and the risk of having a fire and being unable to escape often follow the same trajectory. Those responsible for care of the vulnerable must undertake regular reviews of their clients needs to ensure that appropriate risk reduction measures such changes to cooking methods, the fitting of fire retardant bedding, or increased fire detection, or even suppression is installed.

Diagram 5: Age of fatalities in accidental dwelling fires

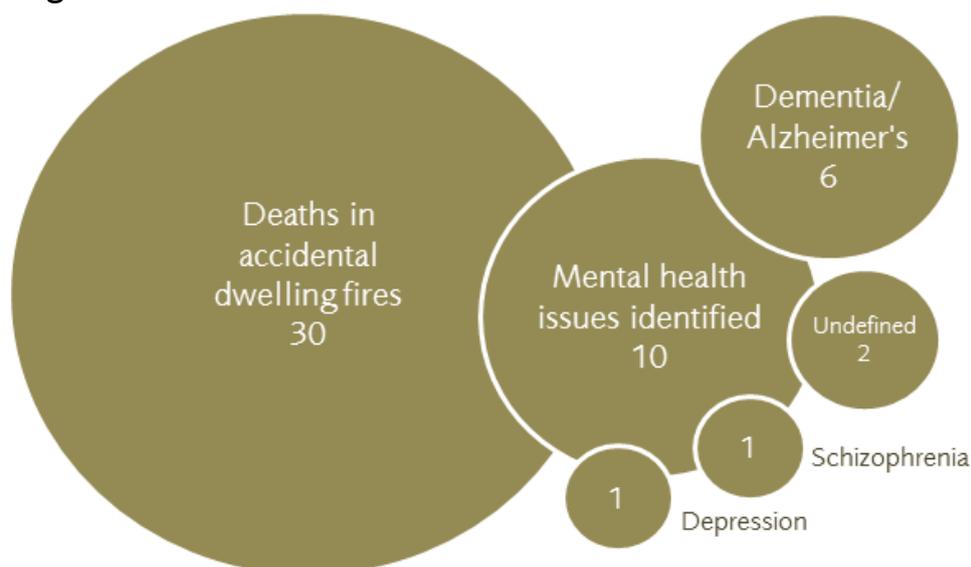


46. The Brigade held a social care conference on 21 May 2014, which was attended by care providers and commissioning agencies. The aim of the conference was to highlight the number of people who died in accidental fires during 2013 who were receiving care services, and to call for closer working between the care and fire profession. The event also provided an opportunity to promote the installation of sprinklers in residential care homes, and freely available home fire safety visits.

Mental Health

47. In 2013/14, 10 fire fatalities had recorded mental health issues. The details for two fire fatalities were recorded as 'undefined' as officers were unable to gain exact details. Brigade Officers provide advice on fire risk reduction during Home Fire Safety Visits, at premises housing people with identified fire risk characteristics - such as hostels that take convicted arsonists, and to fire setters through the Brigade's Junior Fire Setters Intervention Scheme. Officers will continue to provide advice to partner organisations supporting vulnerable people on the scale of the fire risk, how to reduce the opportunity for fire setting, and actions that can be taken to minimise the risk to others. Frontline Brigade staff will receive training in understanding the increased risk associated with various forms of vulnerability during 2014/15. This will be covered by the Brigade's Mental Health Awareness project but the Brigade's Home Fire Safety Visit training solution will also highlight the risks associated with some behaviour and vulnerabilities. Engagement with the Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge Group and its Dementia Friendly Technology sub group is promoting fire safety awareness and consideration across partners. Diagram 6 below provides a breakdown of mental health issues identified through fatal fire reviews.

Diagram 6: Mental health issues



Hoarding behaviour

48. Over the last year the Brigade has undertaken partnership and internal work to highlight the fire risk associated with hoarding behaviour. This focus is supported by the finding that hoarding was a contributory factor in four fatal fires during 2013/14 and it was the combination of easily ignitable items too close to candles, heaters or cigarettes that led to these fires. Work to educate partners to the fire risk associated with hoarding continues and recent progress includes joint work with the Building Research Establishment to assess the effectiveness of sprinklers in fires involving hoarded materials.

Ethnicity

49. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of fire fatalities across the community. The Brigade collects ethnicity data about those people who die in fires; but does not have this level of data for everyone who has a fire. Table 3 below shows that White British, Irish or Other White people continue to be over-represented (69 per cent) in ADF fatalities when compared to the London population as recorded in the Census 2011 (60 per cent of the population). London's Asian population is consistently under-represented with 13 per cent of ADF deaths in 2013/14 when compared to the London population (20 per cent).

Table 3: Ethnicity of ADF deaths compared to London population (Census 2011)

	Deaths in accidental dwelling fires		Census 2011 - London
	No	Per cent	Per cent
Total ADF deaths	*30		
White British, Irish and other White	20	69%	60%
Black or Black British, Caribbean and African	4	13%	13%
Asian or Asian British - Indian and other Asian	4	13%	20%
Mixed – White and Asian	1	3%	4%
Other ethnic groups	0	0%	3%

* There is no ethnicity data for one ADF fatality.

Partner information and property types

Tenure

50. During 2013/14, the majority of ADF deaths were split evenly between privately owned housing (13 deaths or 43 per cent) and social housing - including local authority (13 deaths or 43 per cent - including three deaths in sheltered housing). The remainder of the deaths were in privately rented housing (four deaths or 14 per cent - including one death in an HMO).
51. A regular feature of accidental dwelling fire fatalities is that the victim was known to a housing provider and/or partner agency (17) and many (11) displayed easily identifiable signs that there have been near misses with fire, such as burn marks to clothing or furnishings. It is clear that despite work to educate partners in identifying fire risk, more is needed and partnership training will continue as a theme for officers. In five cases there were previous fires, and in seven cases there had been a Home Fire Safety Visit in the years prior to the fire, although some were dated as far back as 2006, or were to previous residents. This emphasises the need to continue to help officers identify high fire risk cases that need intervention from partner agencies, and work with partners so that they can recognise and reduce fire risk.

Fire safety

52. In premises where vulnerable people are the norm e.g. common areas of sheltered housing, officers are working with the responsible person to ensure that fire risk assessments include the vulnerability of the residents when producing their the evacuation strategy. Officers are also looking at the impact of the individual on the risk to other relevant persons in the premises. This work includes identifying those who cannot self evacuate. Since April 2013 the Brigade has carried out 974 audits on sheltered housing of which 168 were found to be non compliant resulting in enforcement action ranging from issuing a Notice of Deficiency to gathering evidence for potential prosecution.
53. Since 2013 fire safety regulatory compliance in sheltered housing has been a strategic target and officers have been assessing telecare systems, and where necessary recommending an upgrade to include detection and warning. Issues identified during compliance audits include:
- The fire resistance of flat front doors
 - The design, installation and maintenance of smoke control/ventilation systems
 - The use and storage of mobility scooters and ensuring that they do not increase the risk in communal areas
 - Furniture and storage in communal areas and the need to work with housing providers to ensure that escape routes are clear
 - Fire alarm suitability in sheltered accommodation - including telecare. Ensuring that alarm systems support the evacuation strategy and early call to fire service.
 - Ensuring that telecare systems can reliably transmit identifiable fire alarm signals
 - Availability of onsite wardens
 - Whether the premises design and use supports the evacuation strategy
54. As an attempt to reduce risk the Brigade works in partnership with a range of organisations. In April 2014 those who enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 were allowed to enter into Primary Authority Partnerships with businesses who have premises across the country. This was to ensure consistency of enforcement and to raise standards at strategic level. The Brigade have formed partnerships with five major providers of sheltered housing and are talking to many more in the sector.

Sprinklers

55. Sprinklers have the potential to prevent the deaths of many of the people that share characteristics and behaviours identified during fatal fire reviews. Since July 2013 the Authority has recommended that sprinklers are installed in a range of building types:

- all new residential developments over 18 metres in height;
- existing residential blocks over 18 metres in height, subject to a risk based approach that should include consideration of the vulnerability of occupancy;
- all new schools;
- all new residential care homes and sheltered accommodation;
- existing residential care homes and sheltered accommodation subject to a risk based approach that should include consideration of the vulnerability of occupancy;
- all new fire stations;
- all homes occupied by the most vulnerable in London's communities.
- all residential 'other' (hotels, hostels and student accommodation) over 18 metres in height. (primarily housing) during construction.

56. The value of the Authority's long-term aim continues to be supported by the 2013/14 accidental dwelling fire review and fatal fire review data, particularly for older or vulnerable people. Officers must also continue to push for the immediate installation of automatic fire suppressions systems such as sprinklers or misting systems for people who are particularly vulnerable to fire or have a higher risk of fires occurring.

Partnership working

57. Both the fatal fire and accidental dwelling fire reviews produce outcomes that influence the priorities and focus of Brigade partnership work. It has now become regular practice for Borough Commanders to brief local community safety partnerships and/or Adult Safeguarding Boards on accidental dwelling fires and the factors leading to a fire, and fire fatality, together with opportunities to lower risk. The reviews have acted as a catalyst and support to partnership work but it is evident from the high number of cases where a partner organisation was in contact with someone exhibiting high risk characteristics that the Brigade need to do more to educate others on how to identify fire risk, and the potential to lower that risk.

58. Officers continue to work towards ensuring that the fire element of the Common Induction Standards, and Management Induction Standards produced by Skills for Care is included in training for carers, and that sufficient training is programmed to allow for the staff turnover in the care industry. Several local councils have initiated partnership training arrangements where Borough Commanders have raised awareness of fire risk and vulnerability, and some Borough Commanders have worked with partners to produce information packs which include key fire safety information. The Brigade still needs to focus messages around appropriate levels of smoke detection covering all high risk areas, how fire risk should be included in all risk assessments, regular risk reviews and contact visits for the vulnerable.

59. Although many Borough Commanders have successfully managed to engage partners at borough level in fire risk awareness sessions, the response is varied across London and officers must continue to examine the opportunity for pan-London partnerships that can identify, triage and refer high risk but hard to reach people to the Brigade for Home Fire Safety Visits, or indeed carryout Home Fire safety Visits on the Brigade's behalf.

60. Ten people who were fire fatalities had family members, friends or neighbours providing them with care prior to their fire. Some were paid through their personal health budget and this

underlines the need to include anyone who acts as a carer in fire awareness training. Officers must share knowledge of the characteristics that makes someone more likely to die or be injured in a fire. They must continue working with partners so that partner's are able to simply identify and refer vulnerable people for Home Fire Safety Visits with the minimum disruption to partner's core activities.

Conclusion

61. There is still work to be done in order to continue to encourage a cultural change in the Brigade's partners so that they recognise fire risks, consider their management a priority, and act to reduce risk promptly. Only once this cultural change has occurred can the Brigade fully tackle the predictable elevated fire risk that is associated with identified characteristics.
62. Officers will continue to ensure that members are briefed on fire fatalities, and where fatalities occur as a result of fire, a fatal fire notification is sent to the borough Chief Executive, ward councillors where the fire was located and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This is done in order to raise awareness but also to highlight where the Brigade and its local partner's interventions can contribute in the reduction of fire and casualties. They are designed to prompt discussion on issues that Members may want to ensure are followed up locally and reinforce partnership working to reduce the number of fire deaths.
63. Although previous reports have identified and driven the Brigade's existing initiatives this annual analysis and the information it contains is provided to support and inform Brigade officers and partners on current issues, and aid us to reach LSP5 targets and reduce fire risk to Londoners.

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments

64. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

65. The Director of Finance and Contractual Services has reviewed this report and has no comments.

Sustainable Development implications

66. The work outlined in this report supports improvement in Community Safety strategies.

Community Safety is one of the strands of the Authority's Sustainable Development Framework.

Staff Side Consultations Undertaken

67. There are no staff side implications arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

68. The reports recommendations will provide the opportunity to enhance the valuable information shared with partners on trends and patterns of fire and enable a collective approach to reducing risk particularly amongst those in the community who are vulnerable.

List of Appendices to this report:

Appendix A: Fire deaths in 2013/14 that were not as a result of accidental fires in the home

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of background documents	
Proper officer	Third Officer, Head of , Operations, Prevention, Response
Contact officer	Mark Hazelton
Telephone	020 8555 1200 Ext. 31017
Email	mark.hazelton@london-fire.gov.uk

Fire deaths in 2013/14 that were not as a result of accidental fires in the home

Fires in other locations (not dwellings)

Date/time of call	Property Type	Borough	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Motive	Main Cause	Ignition Source	Parent Ignited Item	Ignited Item
29/10/2013 12:16:21	Road Vehicle Lorry/HGV	Enfield	60	Male	White - British	Accidental	Vehicle crash or collision	Exhausts	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products
07/04/2013 18:22:46	Non Residential Private Garden Shed	Brent	52	Female	Black or Black British - Caribbean	Accidental	Combustible articles too close to heat source (or fire)	Candles/ Tea lights - Social use	Clothing/ Textiles	Bedding
10/06/2013 14:54:50	Non Residential Community centre/Hall	Croydon	35	Male	Other White	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Lighted paper or card, or other naked flame	Clothing/ Textiles	Other textiles
03/08/2013 00:25:59	Non Residential Other private non-residential building	Hillingdon	N/K	Male	Other White	Accidental	Careless handling - due to careless disposal	Smoking materials	Paper/ Cardboard	Household paper/Cardboard
31/03/2014 16:06:52	Road Vehicle Car	Barnet	47	Male	White - British	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Cigarette lighter	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products
24/01/2014 23:59:35	Non Residential Sports pavilion/shower block/changing facility	Waltham Forest	39	Male	Not known	Accidental	Pending Fire Investigation Team findings	Not known	Furniture/ furnishings	Bed/mattresses

Date/time of call	Property Type	Borough	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Motive	Main Cause	Ignition Source	Parent Ignited Item	Ignited Item
18/12/2013 10:39:25	Road Vehicle Car	Hillingdon	53	Male	White - British	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Other	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products

Deliberate fires in dwellings

Date/time of call	Property Type	Borough	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Motive	Main Cause	Ignition Source	Parent Ignited Item	Ignited Item
16/08/2013 10:33:51	Dwelling House - single occupancy	Hammersmith and Fulham	56	Male	White - British	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Other	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products
19/07/2013 12:34:41	Dwelling House - single occupancy	Southwark	23	Female	White - British	Deliberate	Homicide/attempt ed: setting fire to other person/s	Other	Clothing/ Textiles	Clothing
29/05/2013 01:32:47	Dwelling Converted Flats - 3 or more storeys	Lewisham	83	Female	Other White	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Lighted paper or card, or other naked flame	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products
01/05/2013 03:37:56	Dwelling Flats/Maisonettes - 4 to 9 storeys	Newham	33	Female	White - British	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Lighted paper or card, or other naked flame	Paper/ Cardboard	Household paper/Cardb oard
13/06/2013 14:09:00	Dwelling House - single occupancy	Havering	40	Female	White - British	Deliberate	Heat source and combustibles brought together deliberately	Cigarette lighter	Explosives, gas, chemicals	Petrol/Oil products