



Freedom of Information request reference number: 9221.1

Date of response: 10 December 2024

Request:

I would be grateful if you could please confirm whether you are able to send me the minutes of all meetings that you or the LFB have had with government ministers where regulation around the safety of e-bikes was discussed before and after Sofia's death and what response you or the LFB received, specifically with the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

This is because I am looking to create a chronology in the first instance documenting how often the government was lobbied for change prior to and following Sofia's death, what their response was and how many opportunities were missed to prevent fatalities such as Sofia's and to introduce the Product Safety and Metrology Bill that was announced in the King's speech this year.

I would also be grateful for sight of the post-fire audit report conducted after Sofia's death by the LFB.

Response:

In response to your request for minutes of meetings with government ministers, I can confirm we do not hold any minutes of meetings with ministers where regulation around the safety of e-bikes was discussed.

Regarding the wider request about correspondence with government ministers (on e-bike safety), please find attached four pieces of correspondence between ministers and the London Fire Brigade (LFB).

Additionally, we have conducted a search for all correspondence between the LFB, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and government concerning the safety of e-bikes, e-scooters, and the forthcoming Product Regulation and Metrology Bill.

The LFB actively engages with OPSS and other key stakeholders across various forums, teams, and roles to raise awareness about fire risks associated with e-bikes, batteries, chargers, and conversion kits. Due to this extensive engagement, our search returned 32,621 documents. Unfortunately to review all these documents to see how relevant they are to your enquiry would exceed the cost limit set under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

To put this in perspective, even if each document took an average of 15 seconds to review, it would require approximately 135 hours (32,621 documents \times 0.25 minutes \div 60) to complete the task. The estimated cost of this work is £3,398, which significantly exceeds the FOIA's appropriate limit of £450. Therefore, under section 12 of the FOIA, we are issuing this as a formal refusal notice. As you may know, public authorities are not obliged to comply with requests when the cost exceeds the set limit.

Lastly, you requested the Senior Fire Safety Report (post-fire audit) that was conducted on 1 January 2023. A copy is attached for your reference.

Please note that personal data has been redacted from the provided documents in accordance with section 40 of the FOIA (Personal Information).

We have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For more information about this process please see the guidance we publish about making a request on our website

Kevin Hollinrake MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Department for Business and Trade Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place London, SW1A 2DY

19 May 2022

Dear Minister,

As organisations championing consumers, and electrical and fire safety, we are writing to express our concern about the effectiveness of product safety laws following recent investigations which highlight the risk to human life of devices sold on online marketplaces.

We strongly welcomed news of your recent roundtable convening major online marketplaces; reminding them of their obligations to keep unsafe products off their websites. The platforms in attendance at your roundtable including Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba, among others, have been exposed time and again through different investigations to have flooded UK households with illegal and dangerous products that would not be found on the high street.

A new Which? investigation published this week (attached) confirms that online marketplaces are still not taking satisfactory action. A faulty smoke alarm that failed all eight of Which?'s tests to detect smoke and sound the alarm, is still being sold through eBay despite the fact that Which? investigators first discovered this product in 2018. When eBay was originally alerted to the problem, it removed listings for all of these alarms. But this new investigation shows that this dangerous alarm is once again widely available not just on eBay but also on AliExpress and Wish, illustrating how the industry's current approach is risking people's lives. According to figures listed on eBay, the 20 sellers have sold 1,379 dangerous alarms. On AliExpress 23 listings were found from sellers claiming to have sold 407 alarms in total and, who if believed, tell us they have 53,368 more in stock.

You will also be aware of recent reports of exploding e-bikes and e-scooters. The London Fire Brigade has had to attend 60 e-bike and e-scooter fires since the start of last year and Electrical Safety First has again discovered unsafe chargers on online marketplaces as recently reported by The Sunday Times. The deaths as a result of these unsafe products, uncovered by The Sunday Times, is completely and utterly unacceptable.

The publication of the Government's product safety review is an opportunity to make sure online marketplaces are protecting the public from life-threatening unsafe products. We urge you to do whatever is in your power to accelerate the publication of the OPSS's long delayed product safety review and to make sure it

unambiguously addresses online marketplaces responsibilities. Without this, we are concerned more people will needlessly die. As the cost of living crisis drives ever more consumers online in search of better deals, the public cannot afford further delay.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Economist



Charlie Pugsley Assistant Commissioner for Fire Safety London Fire Brigade

Electrical Safety First

Kevin Hollinrake MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Department for Business and Trade Old Admiralty Building Admiralty Place London SW1A 2DY

Website: www.gov.uk

Email: @trade.gov.uk

Our ref: MCB2023/03482

11 July 2023

Dear

Thank you for your joint letter dated 24 May, regarding the regulation of online marketplaces selling electrical products.

I would like to start by thanking you for your active engagement on this important issue, as well as your wider contributions to the Product Safety Review's Call for Evidence in 2021. I recognise that this is an issue which requires action, and this is a key reason why the Government is reviewing the current product safety framework.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that consumers are protected from unsafe products, whether sold online or on the high street. The national product safety regulator, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and Local Authority Trading Standards have powers under the current framework to take action against manufacturers, importers or distributors who sell unsafe consumer products through online marketplaces.

Given the importance of this issue, OPSS continues to take practical action now, leading a programme of regulatory action to tackle the risks from unsafe and non-compliant goods sold on online marketplaces. This includes intelligence and traditional surveillance to target the most serious cases, and disrupt the sale, of unsafe products sold by third-party sellers. OPSS has also expanded its test purchase programme targeting and assessing the compliance of products being sold online by third party sellers and working to remove the listings of any that do not comply. OPSS also continues to provide advice to consumers, including campaigns to raise awareness of the risks when buying products online, particularly through third party sellers based overseas. I would also like to assure you that officials in Departments across Government are working collaboratively to address the issue of fires associated with e-scooters and e-bikes. A programme of activities on this issue is being developed and delivered by key Departments including the Office for Product Safety and Standards in the Department for Business and Trade, the Home Office, and the Department for Transport along with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles.

However, the growth of eCommerce has revolutionised global supply chains, facilitating new business models and transforming how products are bought and sold. Internet sales have grown significantly over the past decade. ECommerce has brought an unprecedented challenge to the product safety legal framework, which was not designed with modern business models in mind. The Government's current review of the product safety framework is therefore considering the impact of e-commerce on product safety. Following the Call for

Evidence, we anticipate publishing proposals as part of the Product Safety Review soon, including proposals to further tackle the sale of unsafe products online.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write. I hope this reply has been useful. I look forward to engaging with you on this and other areas of product safety in future, and to your contribution to the forthcoming consultation.



KEVIN HOLLINRAKE MPMinister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business



London Fire Brigade Headquarters
3rd Floor, 169 Union Street London SE1 OLL
T 020 8555 1200 x 30000 F 020 7960 3600
E andy.roe@london-fire.gov.uk
www.london-fire.gov.uk

Andy Roe London Fire Commissioner

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

Date: 27 March 2023

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, Home Office 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

I am writing to provide you with an update on the emerging risk of lithium battery fires in London, which is currently the fastest growing fire risk in the capital.

Lithium battery technology has many advantages and is used across a range of products, however, it provides unique fire safety challenges that need to be considered as the technology becomes more commonplace, particularly in larger products. The energy expelled in fires involving lithium batteries can lead to particularly intense fires which not only present a risk to people in the vicinity but also to attending firefighters.

A growing risk that has been identified through London Fire Brigade's data is an increase in the number of fires caused by electric powered personal vehicles (EPPVs), particularly e-bikes and e-scooters. While these modes of transport can provide a cheaper, sustainable mode of transport for Londoners, fires involving EPPVs can be particularly dangerous given the size of the batteries involved and that they often take place in people's home.

So far this year, on average, London Fire Brigade has been called to an e-bike or e-scooter fire once every two days — a 60 per cent increase in the rate of these fires compared to the same period as last year. In 2022, we attended 87 e-bike and 29 e-scooter fires, a total of 116 fires. On New Year's Day we sadly also attended our first fatal fire where the cause was recorded as a regular bicycle which had been modified using a 'conversion kit'. We are also in communication with the fire and rescue service in New York which has experienced a significant rise in the number of incidents involving e-bikes and e-scooters, including fires which have led to fatalities.

In response to the growing number of incidents our firefighters are attending in London involving lithium batteries, particularly EPPVs, LFB will be launching a campaign tomorrow called #ChargeSafe focused on providing safety messaging to help improve awareness among those who own e-bikes and e-scooters to help them reduce their risk at home. Throughout the campaign safety messaging will be promoted via our website and social media channels, which we would welcome you to promote via your department's channels. We will also be undertaking targeted community engagement at the local level with groups we identify to be at increased risk.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with officials across government to share our experience of fires involving EPPVs and consider where there might be a need for stronger regulation to improve

safety. Officers continue to work closely with the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and we await the government's proposals for the product safety review setting out the long-term approach to product safety and how to ensure that the regulatory framework is fit for the future. I understand that the OPSS are currently conducting research into the safety of lithium batteries.

We would urge this to be taken forward as quickly as possible and would welcome the opportunity to support this where we can. We will also shortly be publishing new guidance providing information to those storing and/or charging EPPVs within office and residential buildings that are covered by the Regulatory Reform Order, which I will ensure is shared with Home Office officials when complete.

I noted the response from the Minister in the Department for Transport on 9 March to a question on regulation of electric vehicles where he raised government plans to introduce legislation for private and rental e-scooter use and to consult on regulations. It is crucial that fire and rescue service representatives are included in the discussions taking place in government to ensure that fire safety considerations are taken into account.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above issues with you and officials in your department further. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Andy RoeLondon Fire Commissioner

CC:

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
Baroness Fiona Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience
Andy Cooke, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services
The Rt Hon Jesse Norman, Minister of State in the Department for Transport
Kevin Hollinrake, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade



Rt Hon Chris Philp MP Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/home-office

Andy Roe London Fire Commissioner London Fire Brigade Headquarters 3rd Floor, 169 Union Street London SE1 0LL

05th May 2023

LITHIUM BATTERY FIRES

Thank you for your letter of 27 March highlighting your concerns about the recent increase in lithium-ion battery fires in London.

The Home Office is aware of the unique fire safety challenges presented by products that use lithium-ion batteries. My officials are engaging with colleagues across Government to understand better the impacts and the appropriate mitigations associated with products such as e-scooters and e-bikes.

To share knowledge, understanding and details of developing work, officials from several Government Departments have established a cross-UK lithiumion working group. Membership consists of the Devolved Administrations, the Office of Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) – part of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) – part of the Department for Transport and DBT, and the Home Office. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Lead Officer for emerging energy technology,

I am keen to ensure that colleagues across Government are placing sufficient importance on the work in this area. It is vitally important that those developing guidance for use, storage and safety of personal light electric vehicles base this on solid evidence and engage with representatives from the NFCC and fire and rescue services to factor in the experience and expertise of those in the sector. I shall write to both the Minister of State for Decarbonisation and Technology and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DBT to share your concerns and to seek assurances on these points.

I recognise the expertise and insight that fire and rescue services can offer on this issue. I am very keen to ensure your concerns are heard and that those responsible explore the issue further and take appropriate action. Therefore, I have asked my officials to invite colleagues from London Fire Brigade and the NFCC to meet with officials from the Home Office, OPSS and OZEV to discuss the current work and to explore what more might be done. Officials will be in touch to make arrangements, but I have shared the relevant contact details at Annex A for your information.

Turning to your #ChargeSafe campaign, I welcome the proactive work LFB is undertaking in response to this emerging risk. Educating the public on the safe use and maintenance of such products, and the behaviours to avoid, is important. The Home Office's Fire Kills campaign works in partnership with the NFCC and local FRSs to promote fire safety messages to the public. I understand that Home Office officials are scheduled to meet with the LFB campaign team to see how we can best support the promotion of messages and raising awareness of guidance where appropriate.



Rt Hon Chris Philp MP Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire



Senior Fire Safety Officers Report

Protective Marking Status:	OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE - PERSONAL DATA
For fatal fire reports and to protect personal or commercial data, '	Official' is likely to be required. See policy for guidance.

Part A - Data recording

SFSO details:		
Name:		
Call sign:		
Tel.no:		

Event details	s:		
Incident No:	000503-01012023	Date:	01/01/2023
Borough:	Southwark	Stn. Ground	E35 Old Kent Road
Farynor Numl	ber (If known): 91/184070	50	
Address of Pr	remises:		
263 Old Kent	Road		
London SE1 5	5LU		

Reason for notification (tick box):	
Incident	
Request by Ops crews (not at incident)	
Request by FSR staff	
Alleged Fire Risk (AFR)	
Were you the sole responder of the AFR	
Action taken:	
Attended	Yes
Monitored only (including any remote action, e.g.: letters, phone calls)	No
FIT Attended (If YES, liaise and jointly agree and complete Fire Investigation Scene Contemporaneous Notes (Page 5) & Incident of Interest Notification (Fire Safety Implications section))	Yes
IMP Entry (Firefighter Safety Issue) Failing lift or DRM	No
FSIGN 423_01 sent to station (AFR)	No

AFR additional of	letail:			
If AFR, was response within 3 Hrs				
Time AFR received	d		Enter hh:mm	
Time AFR respond	ded to		Enter hh:mm	
Time spent resolv	ing AF	R	Enter h	n:mm
Reason for atter	dance	e:		
4 PF		Rescues		
6 PF	\boxtimes	Unusual Fire Spread		
Care Setting				
Commercial		Mass Evac [
Residential Flats		Escape H	oods	
Fatality		SFSO Support		
Injuries		Self Mob	ilised	
No FIU Available secure scene		Secure Information Box		
Sprinklers (AFSS)		Fire Safety Checks		

Additional details: (Including stop message from Boss)

The fire was located and contained to a mid-terrace, five room licenced house of multi occupancy in a shop and dwelling of one and 3 floors of traditional brick/block construction under a pitched tiled roof measuring $5m \times 22m$.

A total of six calls were received to this incident by Brigade Control.

There were ten people in the dwellings above the shop at the time of the fire.

escaped via the first-floor window, at the rear of the property, over a flat roof and in through a neighbouring property

escaped the property via the front windows on the second floor before the arrival of the Brigade.

The fire was attended by six pumping and one aerial appliance. Crew faced a well-developed on arrival

with flames punching out of the second-floor front window. The fire was extinguished by breathing
apparatus crews using two 45mm main jets and a high-pressure hose reel.
The people who left the property by the front window and from the rear were removed to
hospital. were suffering with varying degrees of smoke inhalation and suffering back pain.
Recognition of life extinct was declared by an LAS paramedic on one adult female who was unable to escape the fire.
A joint scene examination will take place tomorrow 02 January 2023 involving the metropolitan police scene of crime officers, CID and LFB fire investigation team.
Stop message
A shop and dwellings of 3 floors 6m x 20m. Five roomed HMO on first and second floor, 50 percent of
first floor damaged by fire, 50 percent of second floor damaged by fire, 50 percent of staircase between
ground and second floor damaged by fire. people left before arrival of Brigade, and
escaped via first floor flat roof at rear of premises before arrival of Brigade. escaped from second floor window before arrival of Brigade, removed.
confirmed life extinct by LAS paramedic. Fire survival guidance to flat B 265 concluded. Two jets, hose
reel, 10 breathing apparatus, stage 1 entry control, turntable ladder, thermal imaging camera, all persons accounted for, same as all calls. Tactical mode Oscar.
porsons accounted for sum as an early ractical mode oscal.

Actions on scene by SFSO:

(Review ORD & Fire Action Plan for building, Activation of AOV's etc. What action did you take and review?)

Liaison with incident commander, LAS, metropolitain police responsible person and fire investigator

Advice given to IC:

(What areas did you give advice on? Was advice taken by OiC? Has firefighting action impacted on FS solutions)

No fire safety advice was required at this incident

Time spent:		
Time SFSO notified (hh:mm)	17:01hrs	
Monitoring time (mins)	5mins	
On site (mins)	175mins	
Travelling (mins)	40mins	
Office time (mins)	90mins	

Incident Management System	
SFSO Report uploaded to document library	Yes
Fire Safety - Organisational Observation	Yes

Part B - Premises Contact

Contact details:	
Owner - landlord - and Responsible Person	
Property managed by 263 ORK Ltd	

Part C - Premises Description

Premises Description:				
Type of premises	Shop and dwellings	Floor of Fire Origin	Believed to be ground floor in hallway but waiting full fire investigation to be concluded	
Use of Premises	Shop and licenced HMO	Building in use at time of fire (Y/N/Unknown)	Yes	
Building Dimensions	5m x 22m	Number of floors	Above	Below
		(note above/below ground (i.e. Above G + 4 = 5)	3	0
Number of Escape Routes		Above	Below	
		(note if above/below ground)	1	0
Fire Safety Systems (AFD/EL/MCP/AOV/firefighting lifts)	Smoke detection in parts of the prmise	Number of Basements	None	
Cladded Façade (Y/N)	No	Waking Watch (Y/N)	No	
Evacuation Strategy	Simultaneous	Private or Local Authority	Private	
Complied with strategy	Yes	Owned		
Fire Loading on Balcony (Y/N)	No	Engineered Solutions (Y/N) Sprinklers etc.	No	
Fire spread beyond room of origin (Y/N)	Yes	Common parts affected (Y/N)	Yes	
Is this premises listed?	No	If listed, select GRADE Choose an iter		an item.

Comments:

- Does the fire strategy support the building?
- If evacuation strategy not complied with, please explain why e.g. Simultaneous evacuation, some people failed to evacuate.

It is belived that the occupants were unable to evacuate the premises by the normal means as the fire stopped them from doing so

The responsible person explained the building had been in their possession for about 18 months. The dwellings were a licenced HMO and the shop was let out.

The HMO is licenced by Southwark county council (reference No SWK-11419730) (resi@southwark.gov.uk and were referenced on the licence). Th licence is valid from 24/10/2023 and expires on 23/10/2027.

The terms of the licence state that the premises is licenced for a maximum of 4 persons living as 4 households regardless of age (maximum of persons for the house 4 and maximum number of households 4)

The licence states there are 4 bedrooms

Bedroom 1 – first floor middle left – 1 person

Bedroom 2 – second floor rear left – 1 person

Bedroom 3 – second floor front left – 1 person

Bedroom 4first floor front - 1 person

S200_FS20_01 Page 3 of 10 Rev 13, 16/11/2022)

athroom first floor rear	
and there is a kitchen (rear first floor)	

Part D

Fire Safety Deficiencies:				
Highlighted area	Deficiencies	Description of fire safety deficiencies		
Fire Doors Self-closing, well fitting, strips & seals	Yes	It is not believed that the doors to the rooms are fire doors with self-closers		
Compartmentation Walls and ceilings adequate	Yes	The separation did not appear adequate		
Detection and Warning	No	The landlord incisted there was smoke detection throughout the property but this will need o be confirmed		
Fire Suppression	No			
AOV (Smoke Control)	No			
Emergency Escape Lighting	No			
Evacuation Escape Routes Number, exit doors, lead to place of safety	Yes	It is believed the fire stopped the occupants from exiting the building by normal means		
Escape routes Clear, no combustibles and ignition sources	Yes	It is believed that there were e-bikes obstructing the exit		
DRM/WRM	No			
Fire Fighting equipment	No			
Fire Risk Assessment	Yes/No	Not seen although the RP insists the premises has one		
Fire Exit signage	No			
Article 31/Prohibition	No			
General/Management Issues	Yes/No	Unable to access the building due to it being declared a crime scene by the metropolitain police		
Maintenance, training and test records	Yes/No	Not seen although the RP insists the premises has these		
Balconies	No			
Fire Lifts	No			

Construction (Roofs/Cladding)	No	
Care & assisted living (PEEPS/Telecare)	No	
Secure Information Box (plans/peeps/keys)	No	
Other	No	
Injury	4	
Fatality	1	
Total (Injury &/Or Fatality)	5	

Part E

Evidence gathered: Discussion with RP. Unable to access the building due to it being declared a crime scene by metropolitaim police		

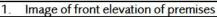
Part F

Follow-up actions:		
Intervention Required	☐ Prevention (HFSV/CFS/Visual Audit)	
Audit by local fire safety Team (Rationale for audit and timescale)	☑ Protection (FS Regulation) A post fire audit by the local fire safety team is recommended following the joint scene examination by the met police and LFB fire investigators to determine fire safety provisions and compliance with the terms of the HMO licence. It is also recommend that the local fire safety team conduct fire safety audits in the neighbouring properties as there appeared to be some fire safety concernsin these properties	
Recommended Timescale for action by local team (On receipt of report)	48Hrs	
Joint partnership liaison e.g. LA/HSE	Joint partnership liaison with the local althority should be conducted due to the status of the HMO licence at the premises	
Station notification/ORD consideration	No	
HFSV by local station	A quick strike and station visits to similar shops and dwellings in the local neighbourhood is recommended	
Safeguarding	No	

PDA Section	No
Fire Safety Policy & Strategy Manager (Care Settings)	No
Other	No
Article 31 Issued ☐ YES ☒ NO	☐ Article 8 - Duty to take general fire precautions. ☐ Article 12 - Elimination or reduction of risks from
Prohibition	dangerous substances. ☐ Article 13 - Fire detection and warning.
Restriction	 □ Article 14 - Emergency routes and exits. □ Article 15 - Procedures for serious and imminent danger and danger areas.
Prohibition/Restriction(s) imposed Describe the restrictions imposed on the building.	None
If answered <u>NO</u> to Article 31, provide details why criteria not met.	The shop being shut, the extent of fire damage and the scene being declared a crime scene did not allow for an inspection of the premise

SFSO Photographs from scene:







2. Image of entrance to the fklats from the pavement



Image of the entrance hall and sairs to the first floor



Image of the neighbouring property that require a fire safety inspection

5. Click or tap here to enter brief description.6. Click or tap here to enter brief description.

This form should be completed following every mobilisation or notification of an AFR as a Senior Fire Safety Officer (SFSO). Record all actions, save document as **SFSO Report – Incident Number only**. Attach the completed form by email in **PDF Format**, **with SFSO Report – Incident Number in subject box** to:

- '@SFSO' mailbox (Includes: 'FSR-AdminSupport'/'FSR Policy Team'/'Press'/'@FCS FI FS Legal')
- FSR Team mailbox (e.g. '>FSD-BRENT&EAL-HHH')
- FSR Team Leader
- Area Fire Safety Manager
- Local Station Manager (e.g. sclambeth then click check names)
- Local Borough Commander (e.g. bclambeth then click check names)
- 'Petroleum Paps Mailbox': <u>petroleum.paps@london-fire.gov.uk</u> (if applicable)
- 'Heritage Mailbox': <u>Heritage@london-fire.gov.uk</u> (if applicable)
- 'Balconyrisk Mailbox': <u>balconyrisk@london-fire.gov.uk</u> (if applicable)
- 'AFSS Mailbox': <u>sprinklers@london-fire.gov.uk</u> (if applicable)
- 'Hospitals Mailbox': healthcare@london-fire.gov.uk (if applicable)
- 'Transport Mailbox': <u>transport@london-fire.gov.uk</u> (if applicable)

Contact numbers:

- Duty Fire Safety Inspecting Officer Admin support call filter
- Duty Fire Engineer: Fire Engineering Group Mailbox
- Petroleum Admin. Team on Ext: 30859 Outside of office hours, via RMC