

Freedom of Information request reference number: 8975.1

Date of response: 23/08/2024

Request:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would be grateful if you could provide the following:

There are conflicting views of what, how and why the regular fires are happening at Arnolds Fields, Launderers Lane, Rainham, Essex.

Some people on behalf of Havering Council are stating and/or implying that it is arson. However, when talking to the professionals (the firefighters at the scene) they state that the fires are self combusting under the ground and not on the surface. They have said its a consequence of the previous imported waste material used as landfill at the site; household waste, etc. Also they say what is exacerbating matters are the fact there are no methane gas release provisions and the waste material was not adequately monitored and/or controlled during the landfill process. Can you please confirm what are the LFB professional views on such fires?

Can you confirm and/or recommend independent fire investigation officers to assist with our further enquiries on this subject?

Response:

Further to your request, please see data below regarding Arnolds Fields, Launderers Lane, Rainham, Essex.

Primary and secondary fires recorded in the 10-year period from 01/08/2014 to 01/08/2024.

| Cause | Accidental | Deliberate | Undetermined |
|--------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Tier 1 | 66 | 11 | 41 |
| Tier 2 | | | 1 |
| Total | 66 | 11 | 42 |

Total fires recorded over this time period is 119. Of these, only one tier 2 investigation was completed. An area of waste and scrubland covering approximately two acres was damaged in this fire.

The area (39 Acres) is owned by DMC Contracts Ltd. They bought the site approximately three years ago, with the intention of developing the area to involve a business premises for plant hire. Throughout the last few years, they have been pushing the proposals with the council, but it was only following the two large fires that occurred last year that the council have commenced meetings. The owners have now employed an environmental consultant to assist in the negotiations.

The fires both last year and today have involved household rubbish that was fly tipped in the area prior to the owners purchasing the site.

This fire was extinguished by setting up a fire sector, which incorporated a monitor and a main jet, supplied by a number of pumps in a water relay. The fire is likely to be protracted, due to its position and the amount of land involved. One propane cylinder failed on the arrival of the Brigade. No injuries were reported.

LFB cannot speculate on the issues and concerns you have raised or recommend individuals as Fire Investigation Officers.

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: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/request-information-from-us/>