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# Fire Research Note No 1008

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF FIRE REPORTS FROM  
FIRE BRIGADES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1973

by

S E Chandler

April 1974

# FIRE RESEARCH STATION

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SUMMARY

A preliminary analysis shows that there were 322 037 fires attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom, the highest ever total recorded. There were 944 deaths reported in the year of which three were fire brigade personnel; it is likely that the final figure will exceed 1000. There were 6377 non-fatal casualties reported in the United Kingdom. The direct fire loss was £193.9M, the highest figure ever reported.

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INTRODUCTION

A preliminary analysis of fire reports shows that during 1973, local authority fire brigades attended 280 885 fires in England and Wales, 36931 in Scotland and 4221 in Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom total of 322 037 fires is the highest ever recorded. It is likely that the Northern Ireland figure is lower than the true figure because of civil unrest and the inability of brigades to attend some fires. The number of fires occurring in each brigade area is shown in Table 1.

With the exception of Table 8 (direct fire damage) this analysis is based on reports received up to 8 March 1974 and all information contained in it is subject to revision when outstanding reports have been received.

NATURE OF INJURIES TO CASUALTIES

One fireman in England and Wales was fatally injured at a school fire. Another fireman was killed on the way to a fire. In Northern Ireland, a fireman was shot whilst on duty. In England and Wales, 635 members of the fire services were injured at fires, the corresponding figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland were 72 and 14 respectively. Details of the nature of injuries to firemen and civilians are shown in Table 2. Injuries attributed to explosions (other than non-fatal casualties in mass bomb incidents) are included, but only those due to burning or asphyxiation are shown for fires resulting from crashes. Electrocutions are not included, but 'suicide by fire' injuries are shown.

AGE AND SEX OF CASUALTIES

Information on the sex and age of fatal and non-fatal casualties is given in Tables 3A and 3B. Fatal casualties were equally distributed between the sexes but nearly two-thirds of the non-fatal casualties were males.

## FATALITIES

Tables 4, 5 and 6 give information on fatal casualties related to month of occurrence, hazard of origin and source of ignition. There were 760 fatal casualties in England and Wales, 149 in Scotland and 35 in Northern Ireland. This gives a total of 944 deaths in the United Kingdom and it is likely that the final figure will approach the record high figure of 1078 recorded in 1972. Apart from the Summerland fire (50 deaths) in the Isle of Man, which is outside the scope of this report, the worst fire during the year was at a hotel in Oban, resulting in ten deaths. A total of 6377 non-fatal casualties were reported.

## RESCUES AND ESCAPES

Fire brigades assisted in the rescue of 1047 persons from hazardous situations in fires in buildings in England and Wales, 285 in Scotland and 15 in Northern Ireland. The corresponding figures for rescues from outdoor fires were 47, 4 and one respectively. At least a further 1998 persons were rescued by police and private citizens: 1715 in England and Wales, 210 in Scotland and 73 in Northern Ireland. Five hundred and eighty persons escaped by unorthodox routes from buildings in England and Wales, the corresponding figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland were 107 and 28 respectively. The figures for escapes by unorthodox or emergency means from outdoor fires were 103 in England and Wales, 15 in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland.

## COST OF DAMAGE

Table 8 gives details of direct monthly monetary losses due to material damage estimated by the British Insurance Association in Great Britain. The total for the United Kingdom was £193.9M.

Table 1

Fires attended by fire brigades  
in the United Kingdom 1973

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>England and Wales - County Fire Brigades</u>			
Anglesey	248	138(3)	110(3)
Bedfordshire	1379	678	701
Berks and Reading	2402	1142(4)	1260
Brecon Co. and Radnor	285	173	112
Buckinghamshire	2716	1426	1290
Caernarvonshire	769	311	458
Cambridgeshire and Ely, Isle of	1274	824	450
Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire	926	490	436
Cheshire	6168	2921	3247
Cornwall	1650	863	787(3)
Cumberland	1132	608	524
Denbigh and Montgomery	985	537	448
Derbyshire	2788	1353	1435
Devonshire (includes Exeter and Plymouth from 1.5.73)	2581	1480	1101
Dorsetshire	1983	707	1276
Durham Co.	4567	1915	2652
Essex	6840	2772	4068
Flintshire	967	502	465
Glamorganshire	4459	1640(3)	2819
Gloucestershire	2724	1508	1216
Hampshire	5181	2107	3074
Herefordshire	607	366	241
Hertfordshire	3453	1723(4)	1730(4)
Huntingdonshire and Peterborough	1008	526	482
Kent and Canterbury	7172	3030	4142
Lancashire	15745	8021	7724(5)
Leicestershire and Rutland	1716	991	725
Lincs (Holland)	342	217	125
Lincs (Kesteven)	559	343	216
Lincs (Lindsey)	1827	1145	682
London (Greater)	47992	20711	27281
Merionethshire	152	104	48
Monmouthshire	1677	579(4)	1098(4)
Norfolk	1801	1029	772
Northamptonshire	1653	962	691
Northumberland	2582	1144	1438
Nottinghamshire	2770	1267	1503
Oxfordshire	843	517(6)	326(6)
Pembrokeshire	501	249	252
Scilly, Isles of	28	10(7)	18(6)

Table 1 (cont'd)

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>County fire brigades (cont'd)</u>			
Shropshire	1401	820	581
Somerset	1876	1245	631
Staffordshire	3059	1335(6)	1724
Suffolk and Ipswich	2443	1282	1161
Surrey	5026	2127	2899(3)
Sussex East	1830	921(3)	909
Sussex West	1844	1120(3)	724(3)
Warwickshire	2607	1395	1212
Westmorland	253	187	66(3)
Wight, Isle of	444	242	202
Wiltshire	1314	751(5)	563
Worcester Co. and Worcs. C.B.	2158	1170	988
Yorks (East Riding)	688	308(8)	380
Yorks (North Riding)	1193	600(5)	593
Yorks (West Riding)	8876	3906	4970
<u>England and Wales - County Borough Fire Brigades</u>			
Barnsley	453	166	287
Barrow in Furness	534	200	334
Bath	313	235	78
Birkenhead	2033	554	1479
Birmingham	5939	2745	3194(6)
Blackburn	1121	401	720
Blackpool	880	500	380
Bolton	1328	505	823
Bootle	1772	546	1226
Bournemouth	807	338	469
Bradford	2291	857	1434
Brighton	820	430	390
Bristol	2276	1152	1124
Burnley	1134	415	719
Burton on Trent	168	80(4)	88
Bury	738	261	477
Cardiff	2111	784	1327
Carlisle	395	192	203
Chester	346	183	163
Coventry	1995	872	1123
Darlington	645	258	387
Derby	908	456	452
Dewsbury	469	165	304
Doncaster	501	202	299
Dudley	836	356	480

Table 1 (cont'd)

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>County Borough Fire Brigades (cont'd)</u>			
Eastbourne	276	156	120
Exeter (ceased from 1.5.73)	101	63	38
Great Yarmouth	233	136	97
Grimsby	754	291	463
Halifax	775	274	501
Hartlepool	912	355	557
Hastings	387	168	219
Huddersfield	816	382	434
Kingston upon Hull	2537	865	1672
Leeds	3764	1423	2341
Leicester	1663	622	1041
Lincoln	376	148	228
Liverpool	8955	2300(6)	6655(6)
Luton	887	424	463
Manchester	7846	2357	5489
Merthyr Tydfil	327	156	171
Newcastle on Tyne and Gateshead	2990	1179	1811
Newport (Mon.)	839	339	500
Northampton	745	425	320
Norwich	512	309	203(3)
Nottingham	1918	842	1076
Oldham	940	427	513
Oxford	459	308	151
Plymouth (ceased from 1.5.73)	454	240	214
Portsmouth	1598	642	956
Preston	872	377	495
Rochdale	1141	479	662
Rotherham	554	273	281(3)
St Helens	1168	409	759
Salford	2728	624	2104
Sheffield	2690	1234	1456
Solihull	321	177	144
Southampton	1455	587	868
Southend	594	317	277
Southport	417	263	154
South Shields	996	310	686
Stockport	1161	424	737
Stoke on Trent	1190	528	662
Sunderland	1887	551	1336
Swansea	1182	414	768



Table 1 (cont'd)

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>County Borough Fire Brigades (cont'd)</u>			
Tees-side	3281	1427	1854
Tynemouth	620	196	424
Wakefield	342	150	192
Wallasey	1041	309	732
Walsall	1260	460	800
Warley	910	406	504
Warrington	534	192	342
West Bromwich	955	397	558
Wigan	587	239	348
Wolverhampton	1220	522	698
York	438	223	215
Total number of fires attended in England and Wales	280885	123610	157275

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>Scotland</u>			
Glasgow	8146	3196	4950
Lanark	4624	2156	2468
Central	3424	1448	1976
Western	2936	1411	1525
South Western	2309	1406	903
South Eastern	6269	2833	3436
Fife	2610	1024	1586
Perth and Kinross	695	447	248
Angus	2732	1079	1653
North Eastern	2236	1300	936
Northern	950	550	400
Total number of fires attended in Scotland	36931	16850	20081

Table 1 (cont'd)

Fire brigades	Total fires	Total fires reported on Form K433 (1)	Total fires reported on Form K433H (2)
<u>Northern Ireland</u> (9)			
Northern Ireland F.A.	2890	2790(3)	100(10)
Belfast	1331	867(8)	464(11)
Total number of fires attended in Northern Ireland	4221	3657	564

- (1) Fires reported on K433 include all fires except those confined to derelict buildings, buildings under demolition, grassland, heathland, railway embankments, stubble, single trees, refuse, fences, lamp standards, road furniture, road surfaces, verges and telegraph poles. The figures are adjusted for blank call numbers, duplicate call numbers and fires transferred by mutual agreement to category K433H (see note (2) ).
- (2) Fires reported on K433H are small fires not reported on K433. Again adjustments are made for blanks and fires transferred to/from category K433.
- (3) Date of last report received 30.11.73
- (4) Date of last report received 30.9.73
- (5) Date of last report received 31.8.73
- (6) Date of last report received 31.10.73
- (7) Date of last report received 31.7.73
- (8) Date of last report received 30.6.73
- (9) It is possible that some fires attributable to civil disturbances were not attended and not reported to these brigades.
- (10) Date of last report received 28.2.73
- (11) Date of last report received 30.4.73

Table 2

## Nature of injuries of casualties in fires

Casualties	England and Wales			Scotland			Northern Ireland		
	Fire brigade	Other casualties	Total	Fire brigade	Other casualties	Total	Fire brigade	Other casualties	Total
<b>FATAL CASUALTIES<sup>1</sup></b>									
Burns and scalds	0	316	316	0	45	45	0	12	12
Overcome by gas or smoke	1	341	342	0	91	91	0	1	1
Other and undefined injuries	1	101	102	0	13	13	1	21	22
Total	2	758	760	0	149	149	1	34	35
<b>NON FATAL CASUALTIES</b>									
Burns and scalds	114	2841	2955	19	272	291	2	63	65
Bruises, cuts, abrasions	170	260	430	25	28	53	6	8	14
Dislocations, sprains, fractures	41	55	96	5	10	15	2	4	6
Overcome by gas or smoke	153	796	949	12	165	177	4	14	18
More than one of the above injuries	31	149	180	0	19	19	0	4	4
Shock <sup>2</sup>	3	620	623	1	65	66	0	25	25
Other and undefined injuries	123	209	332	10	43	53	0	6	6
Total	635	4930	5565	72	602	674	14	124	138
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>5688</b>	<b>6325</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>173</b>

1. Casualties who are certified as having died from 'Burns and asphyxiation' are included under 'Overcome by gas or smoke'

2. Casualties who suffer shock in addition to another injury are classified according to the other injury.

Table 3A

## Sex and age of fatal casualties

Age (years)	England and Wales				Scotland				Northern Ireland			
	Male	Female	Not stated	Total	Male	Female	Not stated	Total	Male	Female	Not stated	Total
Under 1	10	7	0	17	3	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
1 - 4	34	37	0	71	15	9	0	24	1	1	0	2
5 - 14	23	16	0	39	6	1	0	7	1	0	0	1
15 - 24	36	13	0	49	5	3	0	8	5	1	0	6
25 - 34	49	17	0	66	4	5	0	9	6	0	0	6
35 - 44	42	21	0	63	2	5	0	7	1	1	0	2
45 - 54	39	26	0	65	13	11	0	24	0	1	0	1
55 - 64	30	36	0	66	12	17	0	29	1	2	0	3
65 - 74	53	63	0	116	10	3	0	13	4	5	0	9
75 and over	51	130	1	182	8	14	0	22	4	1	0	5
Not stated, unknown	13	6	7	26	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>

Table 3B

## Sex and age of non-fatal casualties

Age (years)	England and Wales				Scotland				Northern Ireland			
	Male	Female	Not stated	Total	Male	Female	Not stated	Total	Male	Female	Not stated	Total
Under 1	37	18	0	55	4	2	0	6	2	1	0	3
1 - 4	160	130	0	290	24	17	0	41	6	0	0	6
5 - 14	296	147	0	443	26	22	0	48	3	3	0	6
15 - 24	603	289	0	892	60	25	0	85	19	5	0	24
25 - 34	804	313	0	1117	84	34	0	118	22	6	0	28
35 - 44	474	219	0	693	66	24	0	90	11	5	0	16
45 - 54	416	192	0	608	49	34	0	83	8	6	0	14
55 - 64	225	182	0	407	41	37	0	78	3	8	0	11
65 - 74	151	208	0	359	22	24	0	46	4	4	0	8
75 and over	107	195	2	304	17	28	0	45	1	3	0	4
Not stated, unknown	296	88	13	397	19	15	0	34	10	4	4	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3569</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5565</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>138</b>

Table 4

Fatal casualties according to month of occurrence

Month of occurrence	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
January	93	19	0	112
February	77	17	4	98
March	82	10	4	96
April	77	12	3	92
May	50	11	7	68
June	65	7	9	81
July	35	20	2	57
August	29	9	1	39
September	44	8	1	53
October	50	14	2	66
November	77	11	2	90
December	81	11	0	92
TOTAL	760	149	35	944

Table 5

Fatal casualties according to hazard in which fire started

Hazard in which fire started	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
<u>In buildings</u>				
Industrial premises	18	4	0	22
Distributive trades	5	2	1	8
Financial, professional, scientific and miscellaneous services	10	0	1	11
Medical services	12	0	0	12
Hotels	6	13	0	19
Clubs, public houses and restaurants*	6	2	0	8
Public administration and defence	6	1	0	7
Houses	416	40	12	468
Flats	150	70	0	220
Dwellings within other occupancies	6	2	0	8
Other private occupancies (eg sheds)	10	2	0	12
Other buildings	4	1	2	7
Total	649	137	16	802
<u>Not in buildings</u>				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	15	1	2	18
Road vehicles	41	7	16	64
Other means of transport	27	3	0	30
Outdoor storage	7	1	0	8
Outdoor plant, machinery and equipment	4	0	0	4
Caravans	16	0	1	17
Other	1	0	0	1
Total	111	12	19	142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>944</b>

\*For comparability with Tables 7A, 7B, 7C, boarding houses are included in this category.

Table 6

## Fatal casualties according to source of ignition

Source of ignition	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
Children with fire	41	11	0	52
Crash or collision	32	6	0	38
Malicious or intentional ignition, doubtful	34	13	12	59
Matches, naked lights not elsewhere specified	30	15	0	45
Smokers materials	137	33	1	171
Candle	14	0	0	14
Electric - space heating	68	12	1	81
- wire and cable	19	4	0	23
- blanket	14	9	0	23
- other	34	3	0	37
Gas - cooking appliances	10	3	0	13
- space heating	10	0	0	10
- other	0	0	0	0
Solid fuel - fire in grate	48	4	4	56
- other	2	0	0	2
Oil - space heating	32	0	0	32
- other	9	0	0	9
Other known causes	16	6	0	22
Unknown*	210	30	17	257
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>944</b>

\*Includes fires reported as 'unknown, pending inquest'



Table 7

## Persons rescued or escaped by emergency means

Hazard	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
<b>FIRES IN BUILDINGS*</b>				
Rescue with fire brigade assistance	1047	285	15	1347
Rescue without fire brigade assistance	1715	210	73	1998
Escape by emergency means	580	107	28	715
Total	3342	602	116	4060
<b>FIRES NOT IN BUILDINGS</b>				
Rescue with fire brigade assistance from:				
Road vehicles	24	0	1	25
Caravan	0	1	0	1
Ship	12	3	0	15
Other outdoor hazards	11	0	0	11
Rescue without fire brigade assistance from:				
Road vehicles	77	25	6	108
Caravans	12	2	4	18
Ships	21	1	3	25
Other outdoor hazards	11	3	0	14
Escape by emergency means from:				
Aircraft	5	2	0	7
Road vehicles	48	10	0	58
Caravans	14	0	1	15
Ships	15	0	0	15
Other outdoor hazards	21	3	0	24
Total	271	50	15	336
<b>Total persons rescued or escaped</b>	<b>3613</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>4396</b>

\*For fuller details of hazards and methods used, see Tables 7A, 7B, 7C

Table 7A

Persons rescued or escaped by emergency means from buildings  
(England and Wales)

Appliance or methods used	Hazard involved							TOTAL
	Industry	Distributive trades	Hotels	Clubs, etc	Houses	Other dwellings	Other hazards	
Rescue (fire brigade assisted)								
Snorkel, hydraulic platform	0	9	0	0	0	4	0	13
Automatic escape lines	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5
Escape (hand operated)	2	7	11	17	9	41	2	89
Ladder - extension	2	14	28	29	133	113	20	339
- first floor	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
- hook	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	6
- turntable	0	0	7	3	0	12	0	22
- other or undefined	0	3	1	3	11	9	0	27
Oxyacetylene cutting gear	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Breathing apparatus	3	11	22	35	178	131	16	396
Other apparatus	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Without apparatus	8	2	3	16	53	50	14	146
Total	15	46	74	105	386	364	57	1047
Rescue (not fire brigade assisted)								
Carried out or led to safety	1	3	5	18	727	192	34	980
Jumping into sheet	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3
Ladder	1	2	5	26	220	15	8	277
Lowered from window, roof, etc	0	0	0	0	54	3	0	57
Other or undefined methods	1	5	13	19	251	77	32	398
Total	3	11	23	63	1254	287	74	1715
Escape by emergency means								
Climbing over roof, etc	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	8
Fixed fire escape	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Jumping from upstairs windows, roof, etc	4	3	8	18	187	43	3	266
Sliding down drainpipe, sheets, rope, etc	0	0	1	8	21	7	0	37
Through ground floor windows	0	0	2	6	18	16	0	42
Other or undefined methods	6	4	12	15	130	33	25	225
Total	10	10	25	47	361	99	28	580
Total persons rescued or escaped	28	67	122	215	2001	750	159	3342

Table 7B

Persons rescued or escaped by emergency means from buildings (Scotland)

Appliance or methods used	Hazard involved							TOTAL
	Industrial premises	Distributive trades	Hotels	Clubs, etc	Houses	Other dwellings	Other hazards	
Rescue (fire brigade assisted)								-
Snorkel, hydraulic platform	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Automatic escape lines	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	14
Escape (hand operated)	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	6
Ladder - extension	0	1	18	0	1	40	0	60
- turntable	0	0	0	0	0	39	0	39
- other or undefined	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Breathing apparatus	0	21	7	0	12	86	5	131
Other apparatus	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Without apparatus	0	3	2	1	4	21	0	31
Total	0	27	30	1	18	204	5	285
Rescue (not fire brigade assisted)								
Carried out or led to safety	0	3	0	0	53	81	1	138
Jumping into sheet	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	4
Ladder	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	9
Lowered from window, roof, etc	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	6
Other or undefined methods	3	0	11	0	11	28	0	53
Total	3	3	12	0	78	113	1	210
Escape by emergency means								
Climbing over roof	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Jumping from upstairs window, roof, etc	0	0	3	0	13	25	0	41
Sliding down drainpipe, sheets, rope, etc	0	0	15	0	2	2	0	19
Through ground floor window	0	1	0	0	4	4	0	9
Other or undefined methods	0	2	12	4	6	6	1	31
Total	0	3	30	4	25	44	1	107
Total persons rescued or escaped	3	33	72	5	121	361	7	602

Table 7C

Persons rescued or escaped by emergency means from buildings (Northern Ireland)

Appliance or methods used	Hazard involved							TOTAL
	Industrial premises	Distributive trades	Hotels	Clubs, etc	Houses	Other dwellings	Other hazards	
Rescue (fire brigade assisted)								
Escape (hand operated)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Ladder - extension	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	7
Breathing apparatus	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Without apparatus	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	4
Total	0	1	6	0	7	0	1	15
Rescue (not fire brigade assisted)								
Carried out, led to safety	0	0	0	0	47	0	4	51
Ladder	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
Lowered from windows, roof, etc	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Other or undefined methods	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
Total	0	0	0	0	69	0	4	73
Escape by emergency means								
Jumping from upstairs window, roof, etc	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13
Ladder	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Through ground floor windows	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other or undefined methods	0	0	0	6	7	0	0	13
Total	0	0	0	6	22	0	0	28
Total persons rescued or escaped	0	1	6	6	98	0	5	116

Table 8

Monthly estimated direct fire damage, 1973  
 (BIA estimates)  
 (Great Britain)

Month	Loss (£M)
January	12.8
February	12.6
March	16.5
April	16.8
May	14.3
June	14.2
July	18.4
August	15.5
September	12.5
October	17.3
November	16.4
December	12.0
TOTAL	179.3*

\*The total figure for United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) £193.9M

