



Privacy Notice: Fire Investigations

This privacy notice is designed to help you understand how and why your information is processed during a fire investigation.

Why do you need to process my information?

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on fire and rescue services to protect life and property from fire. Section 45 to 48 of the Act allows a Fire and Rescue Service to obtain information and investigate fires and provides certain powers to investigate what caused a fire or why it progressed as it did. Therefore, the processing of personal information is necessary to meet our obligations under the Act (exercising official authority vested in us as a controller).

The type of personal information that will be collected and held by us to fulfil this obligation will be dependent on the situation but for the majority of fire investigations it would be:

- Occupier Name(s), address, contact details and statement to confirm the facts of the case, as they are relevant to your knowledge and understanding of events surrounding ownership of the premises, occupancy of the premises, and circumstances of the fire, as far they are known to you.
- Witness Name(s), address, contact details and your statement of witness evidence, in relation to the origin of the fire (where it started), the cause of the fire, and why the fire spread as it did.

In some circumstances we may need to collect and use sensitive information, such as health details; this is necessary to meet our obligations.

Evidential photographs of the incident may be taken to provide contemporaneous evidence of the investigation. Copies of photographs are available to any person with legitimate right of access, such as the owner, occupier, appointed insurance investigator and other agencies using their own legal powers, such as the Police.

Reports and/or photographs will not be supplied without appropriate right of access or jurisdiction. Photographs may be reproduced to assist with training and supporting community safety programmes. Any photographs reproduced with public access will be anonymised so it will not be possible to identify an individual or private residence.

Failure to provide the information requested as part of the fire investigation may mean you are in breach of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. To find out more about our fire investigation powers [click here](#).

How will you use my information for a fire investigation?

The information we collect is used to assist in determining the origin and most likely cause of the fire. Your contact details are taken in case we need to get back in contact with you, and to document the source of the information provided as part of the investigation.

The most likely cause of the fire is entered into the Incident Recording System (IRS) against the incident details. Anonymised statistics on 'cause of fire' will be produced to inform our Integrated Risk Management Plan which is a requirement of the National Firefighter Framework and for reports to Government and auditors.

In circumstances where the cause of a fire is thought to be suspicious or otherwise deliberate, we have a responsibility to seek the involvement of the Police at the earliest practicable stage. Fire Investigation Officers will work to provide evidence from the scene and associated enquires to assist the police in prosecuting those responsible. The Fire Investigation Officer will examine and record evidence from the scene, collecting samples of materials which may have been used to start or accelerate the development of the fire, working with the Police and other partners to help identify and convict the culprits. Where appropriate, information gained or received by us in relation to a fire related crime or fatality will be passed onto the Police and any information the Police obtain that assists in identifying the cause of the fire will be passed to us, unless this prejudices their investigation.

Members of the Fire Investigation Team are often called upon to provide evidence as an 'expert witness' regarding the origin and cause of a fire to the Coroner and criminal or civil courts.

Is there anything else you do with general information gained as an outcome of a fire investigation?

The general findings from investigations, but not your personal information, are used to inform and develop safety strategies, targeting those identified as the most vulnerable groups in our society. Lessons learned from investigations of fires and, in particular, those with accidental causes, are passed on to other agencies including the Local Authority, Trading Standards, Health and Safety Executive and Her Majesty's Coroners.

Who will have access to the information?

After all incidents we attend certain information is entered into the Incident Recording System (IRS). One of the fields is the most likely cause of a fire; this is accessed by those within the Service who have a role requirement to access the system and also the Home Office. For further information, please see the 999 Calls and Emergency Incidents Privacy Notice.

On the occasions where the investigation has been undertaken by one of our Fire Investigation Officers, information is stored on our internal systems with access restricted to the fire investigation team and those that require access to provide administration support. This allows us to keep your information safe and control those that need access to the information.

As stated above, information will be shared to other statutory bodies for the purpose of prevention and detection of crime. In these circumstances, we will disclose information which is necessary for this purpose.

In accordance with The Coroners and Justice Act 2009, there are occasions whereby we are requested to provide evidence at Coroner's inquests, including disclosure of the fire investigation report. The Coroner must normally disclose copies of relevant documents to interested persons (such as the family), on request at any stage of the investigation process as soon as is practically possible.

Where a concern is identified by the Coroner, which could have been identified as a result of an issue raised or recommendation made, within a fire investigation report, the Coroner is under a duty to undertake a Report to Prevent Future Fire Deaths. For more information on this process click [here](#).

We do receive requests for copies of the fire investigation report but these are only disclosed to insurance companies and loss adjusters acting on behalf of the owner/occupier of an affected property or vehicle, or Forensic Scientists Fire Investigators such as Burgoynes.

Information can also be provided to someone acting on behalf of an individual who has been recorded on the incident record as being injured as a result of the incident. Necessary identification will be requested to ensure information is not disclosed inappropriately and, where appropriate, personal information will be redacted.

How long will you keep hold of my information?

We hold incident data for current year plus 12 years.

Is there anything else I need to know when it comes to my personal information?

To find out more about the rights you have when it comes to your personal information or who you can contact to discuss it further please see our full Privacy Policy, available under '[Your information](#)' on our website.