

Event details

Date of incident: 26/07/2026

Time of incident: 17:53

Location of incident: Charing Cross

Route: Kent

Discipline: Track

Event description:

Staff were carrying out the burning of redundant rail on the Down Charing Cross Slow Line. Water suppression and fire extinguishers were available as controls for the activity. During the activity (the burning of redundant rail), staff observed sleepers smoldering. This was believed to be due mainly to the condition of the sleepers, which were dry following the recent hot weather, and greasy/oily due to frequent grease pots and joints. A box containing lithium batteries subsequently caught alight. It is thought that this was caused either by sparks generated directly from the burning activity, or by a sleeper that had begun to smolder.

Immediate attempts were made to extinguish the fire using a powder fire extinguisher, and London Fire Brigade was called to site, who ensured the fire was fully extinguished.

Update on the IP: No injuries sustained

Initial causes identified:

- Sparks from burning activity resulted in flammable lithium batteries and explosive gases to catch fire

Key issues for the investigation to consider:

- Were the hot works adequately controlled?
- Were the lithium batteries correctly stored?
- Are emergency plans robust?
- Was the hazardous waste correctly disposed of?

Don't Wait – Act Now!

Whilst the investigation is ongoing, we do not need to wait to act.

Some simple reminders:

- Are hot works adequately controlled?
- Are lithium batteries correctly stored and the risk associated with using them understood?
- Are emergency plans including the summoning of emergency services robust?

Immediate actions taken:

- Site based extinguishers utilised
- London Fire Brigade summoned
- Area made safe
- Safety stand down of site

Could this happen in another

location: Yes

DCP: tbc

Level of investigation: L1

