# Fire stations in England deteriorate amid £1bn funding cuts and rising emergencies



Fire stations across England are reportedly “falling apart”, a situation fire chiefs attribute directly to a staggering £1 billion reduction in funding over the last decade. This reduction comes at a time when demand for fire and rescue services is at an all-time high, with callouts increasing by approximately 20%. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has expressed grave concerns that fire services risk becoming the “forgotten emergency service”, jeopardising public and firefighter safety as they respond to more emergencies with fewer personnel.

The funding crisis has deep roots stretching back to cuts initiated in 2010, with recent reports from the House of Commons Library showing reductions in fire services funding between 26% and 39%. These cuts have forced many fire authorities to resort to raising council tax and exploring alternative funding structures, but such measures have not compensated for the lost resources. Chief Fire Officer James Courtney from South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue noted that they are facing an anticipated £5 million funding reduction over the next four years, compounding the losses of over £8 million since 2010. Courtney emphasised that such cuts could severely hinder the service's ability to respond effectively to national emergencies, including flooding and terrorism.

The NFCC has noted that the number of firefighters in England has fallen by a quarter in the past seven years—representing around 11,000 full-time staff. According to government statistics, there were 35,279 firefighters across 46 English fire authorities as of 2021, down from over 44,000 a decade earlier. Amidst this decline, the number of incidents attended by firefighters increased by 18%, underscoring an alarming trend of diminishing resources alongside escalating demands.

Further complicating matters, while the overall number of fires has decreased by 11%, non-fire-related incidents have surged by 65%. This rise is partly attributed to challenges presented by climate change, with the NFCC warning that fire services are unprepared for the growing incidence of weather-related emergencies. For instance, 2022 saw a record number of wildfires, and reports indicate that 2025 is on track to surpass that figure, with 225 wildfires already reported this year compared to 106 during the same timeframe in 2022.

Phil Garrigan, Chair of the NFCC, articulated the urgency of the situation, stating that the increase in incidents reflects not just a busier service but also a shift in responsibilities. He pointed out that all other public services are seeing staffing levels rebound despite austerity, while fire services continue to be stretched thin. He emphasised the need for renewed investment to ensure ongoing public safety, particularly as fire and rescue services are crucial in responding to threats ranging from wildfires to terrorist incidents. Without proper funding, Garrigan warned, communities could be left vulnerable during critical emergencies.

Despite the NFCC's calls for increased financial support, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that the government is cognisant of the challenges faced by fire services and has provided nearly £3 billion in funding to support their operations in the last financial year. However, many remain sceptical, citing the recent 1.4% increase in fire services funding—insufficient in the face of rising inflation—as indicative of an ongoing neglect of this essential service.

As fire chiefs await the results of the government’s upcoming spending review, there is a palpable sense of urgency and fear that the crucial services they provide will be further compromised if the funding situation does not improve.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[4]](https://nfcc.org.uk/investment-essential-for-protecting-public-safety-say-fire-chiefs/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[2]](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7482/), [[3]](https://www.syfire.gov.uk/fire-service-responds-to-expected-5-million-funding-cut/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/13/firefighter-numbers-in-england-down-20-since-2010-analysis-shows), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/29/englands-fire-services-suffer-25-cut-to-safety-officers-numbers)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[7]](https://www.fsmatters.com/fbu-focuses-attention-on-frs-funding-cuts)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[4]](https://nfcc.org.uk/investment-essential-for-protecting-public-safety-say-fire-chiefs/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/13/firefighter-numbers-in-england-down-20-since-2010-analysis-shows)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/29/englands-fire-services-suffer-25-cut-to-safety-officers-numbers)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/04/fire-stations-in-england-falling-apart-amid-1bn-funding-cut-chiefs-say> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7482/> - This House of Commons Library briefing outlines the funding mechanisms for England's 46 fire and rescue authorities, detailing income from central government and local revenue. It highlights significant reductions in funding since 2010-11, with the National Audit Office reporting cuts between 26% and 39%. To mitigate these reductions, authorities have increased council tax and explored alternative business structures, but these measures have not fully offset the funding shortfall. The briefing also notes that many services have been cautious about depleting financial reserves due to concerns over the permanence of current financial constraints.
3. <https://www.syfire.gov.uk/fire-service-responds-to-expected-5-million-funding-cut/> - South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue anticipates a £5 million reduction in its annual budget over the next four years. Despite having already lost over £8 million since 2010, the service has managed to minimise the impact on core emergency response by reducing support staff and non-pay budgets. Chief Fire Officer James Courtney expressed concerns that further cuts could threaten the service's ability to respond to national emergencies, such as flooding and terrorism, highlighting the need for adequate funding to maintain public safety.
4. <https://nfcc.org.uk/investment-essential-for-protecting-public-safety-say-fire-chiefs/> - The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has expressed disappointment with the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement, stating that the 1.4% increase for fire and rescue services in England is below inflation, resulting in a real-terms cut. The NFCC highlights pressures on budgets due to the need to implement Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 recommendations and respond to new and emerging risks, including climate change-related extreme weather events. The absence of capital funding for fire and rescue services for another year restricts the ability to invest in essential infrastructure and facilities.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/13/firefighter-numbers-in-england-down-20-since-2010-analysis-shows> - An analysis by The Guardian reveals that the total number of firefighters across 46 English fire authorities has decreased by 20.4% since 2010, from 44,307 to 35,279 in 2021. This reduction coincides with an 18% increase in the number of incidents attended by firefighters over the same period. The article also notes that the number of staffed fire stations in England fell from 1,432 in 2009/2010 to 1,393 in 2019/2020, indicating a trend of reduced resources amidst rising demand.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/29/englands-fire-services-suffer-25-cut-to-safety-officers-numbers> - Between 2011 and 2016, government funding for fire services in England was reduced by 26% to 39%, leading to a 17% average real-terms reduction in spending power. This financial strain resulted in a significant decrease in the number of fire safety officers, with some services losing more than a third of their staff. Experts warn that these cuts undermine fire safety and could have serious consequences, as evidenced by the Grenfell Tower fire.
7. <https://www.fsmatters.com/fbu-focuses-attention-on-frs-funding-cuts> - The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) reports that central government funding for Fire and Rescue Services in England has been cut by £139.7 million since 2016-2017. This 13.8% reduction over five years has left services exposed to emerging threats like flooding, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The FBU calls for urgent funding in the Spring Budget to address these challenges and prevent further deterioration of public safety.