# Heathrow Airport faces massive flight cancellations following fire at electricity substation



During a critical period for the travel industry, Heathrow Airport experienced significant disruptions due to a fire at a nearby electricity substation on Friday, which led to the cancellation of over 1,000 flights and left approximately 300,000 passengers stranded worldwide. Reports indicated that the airport's chief executive, Thomas Woldbye, had gone to bed around 12.30am, leaving the chief operating officer, Javier Echave, to manage the emergency response as the crisis unfolded.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander, in a discussion on LBC radio, expressed her concerns regarding Woldbye's decision to sleep during the incident. She stated, “I’ve had to deal with some pretty stressful situations in my time. I probably would struggle to sleep, to be honest.” Alexander noted that Woldbye’s rationale for his absence was that he trusted Echave to handle the situation and to prepare for the critical decisions needed for the airport's reopening the following day.

The fire at the substation in Hayes, west London, was described as "unprecedented," leading to a total power failure that halted operations at one of the world's busiest airports. As operations began to resume on Saturday, some delays continued into Sunday. Alexander added, “If he [Woldbye] had trust in the chief operating officer to take that decision...then I’m not going to second guess why he came to the conclusion that that was the right thing for him to do.”

In light of the incident, discussions escalated between Heathrow and National Grid. John Pettigrew, chief executive of National Grid, suggested that Heathrow could have remained operational through the outage, as power was available from alternative substations. However, Heathrow officials contended that the failure of a key transformer necessitated a complete shutdown of critical systems, which complicated the resumption of services.

Amidst these operational challenges, personal stories began to emerge, including that of a bride, identified as Tia, who faced anxiety over potentially missing her destination wedding due to the airport's closure. Describing her state on TikTok, she remarked, “I feel like I'm having an out of body experience. My hands won't stop shaking.” Tia had spent months planning her wedding and had to consider alternative travel plans through Manchester Airport as chaos ensued. Fortunately, she later updated her followers, confirming that she eventually made it to her destination, allowing her wedding to proceed.

Following the crisis, Woldbye issued an apology for the disruptions, explaining that the airport’s emergency protocols were activated in response to the transformer failure. He stated, “We were handling the consequences of that failure,” and expressed pride in how the airport managed the difficult circumstances. An investigation into the outage has been commissioned by Energy Secretary Ed Miliband, alongside plans for an internal review of the airport’s crisis management strategies led by former transport secretary Ruth Kelly.

With operations returning to normal by Sunday, Heathrow advised passengers to confirm their flight status with airlines before travelling to the airport, as delays lingered in the aftermath of the significant operational disruptions.

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

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayes_substation_fire> - This URL supports the claim that a fire at an electrical substation near Heathrow Airport caused significant disruptions, including the cancellation of flights and a temporary closure of the airport. It details the impact on Heathrow and surrounding areas.
* <https://abcnews.go.com/International/londons-heathrow-airport-fully-operational-after-fire-causes/story?id=120052223> - This article confirms that Heathrow Airport resumed operations after a power outage caused by a nearby substation fire. It also mentions the investigation ordered by Energy Secretary Ed Miliband and the airport's efforts to improve resilience.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source article itself, which discusses the disruptions at Heathrow Airport, the response of its management, and personal stories of affected passengers.
* <https://news4jax.com/news/local/2025/03/23/power-outage-at-londons-heathrow-airport-unexpectedly-extends-trip-for-jacksonville-based-faith-group/> - This article shares the personal story of a group from Jacksonville impacted by the Heathrow Airport closure due to the substation fire. It highlights the broader impact on travelers worldwide.
* <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/492eca/siteassets/publications/benchbooks/evidence/evidbb.pdf> - This document, while unrelated to the Heathrow Airport fire, is included for legal context. However, it does not directly support any claims in the article regarding the fire.
* <https://immigrantjustice.org/sites/default/files/content-type/resource/documents/2018-10/NIJC%20Asylum%20Manual_final%2007%202018.pdf> - This document is not relevant to the topic of Heathrow Airport or the substation fire. It pertains to asylum procedures and does not corroborate any aspects of the article about the flight disruptions.