



## Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

**13 June 2023**

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service FOI 2761/23 - Wildfires

### **Request:**

I am requesting the following information under the freedom of information act:

1. How many wildfires did your fire brigade deal with from 2017 to 2022? Please break down your response by year, size of fire, date, cause and if possible, location.
2. Please let me know any new equipment your service has purchased or plans to purchase in the last 5 years to combat wildfires.
3. If possible, please let me know the annual cost of dealing with wildfires to your brigade 2017 to 2022. Please break the figure down by each year.

### **Response:**

Your request for information has now been considered. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service cannot supply the information you requested for the reasons set out below.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt within the provisions of the Act) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which:

- a) states the fact,
- b) specifies the exemption in question and
- c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12(1) - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

Section 12 of the FOIA provides an exemption from a public authority's obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.





## Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

The information you are requesting in relation to the number of 'wildfires' that have been dealt with by Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is not held by NFRS in any reasonably retrievable form. The only means of establishing information of the nature you are requesting would be by way of manual examination of all secondary fires.

It is my assessment that the cost of providing you with the information requested would exceed the 'appropriate level' as set out in the Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 which is currently £450 for 'prescribed costs'. It would cost 2585 (number of records) x 5 minutes each (minimum) = over 215 hours at £25 per hour to respond to your request.

By way of explanation, every effort is made to ensure that responses to Freedom of Information requests provide accurate and complete data. Unfortunately, in relation to this request, our data is not organised in such a way as to allow us to provide this information. We are unable to specify the cause beyond it being accidental or deliberate. Most 'wildfires' will be what we call 'Secondary Fires'; a 'Primary Fire' would be where there is a monetary value to the fire, or where people or property was involved. Secondary Fires do not have details such as the cause of the fire, for example a broken bottle acting as a magnifying glass, they will only detail if the fire was accidental or deliberate ignition from an intention to cause damage point of view. Therefore, a bonfire that spreads to a shed this would be classed accidental as there was no intent to cause damage.

In view of the above, and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please take this letter as a Refusal Notice.

You may wish to refine and resubmit your request so that it reduces the costs shown above and is then within the 'appropriate limit' shown above. This may be, for example, by reducing the time scales or selecting a sample range for each year; if you would like some further information about how to proceed with your request then please contact

[FreedomofInformation@northants.pnn.police.uk](mailto:FreedomofInformation@northants.pnn.police.uk)

Although excess cost removes NFRS's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of the request.





## Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Please note that if Section 12 had not been applicable to this request, other exemptions would have been considered and applied where relevant and this may also be the case if a resubmission is made.

Searches have been conducted in relation to your request, and I can confirm that the following information is held.

1. The following data relates to 'Secondary Fires'; data has been filtered for Fires using Fires in the Open small and large and then removed the properties that are clearly not Wildfires. Left in are roadside vegetation, railway embankments etc., but omitted are garden refuse and similar domestic locations. It does include crop burning which could include fires caused by deliberate ignition, e.g. crop management going out of control or by malicious intent as well as those starting due to a broken bottle acting as a magnifying glass etc. however this cause for secondary fires is not recorded.

Mobilisation Type	Cause of Fire	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023
Fire - Fire in the open - large	Accidental	4	4	9	7	3	2	24
	Not known	1		2				1
	Deliberate	5	6	6	7	2	5	10
Fire - Fire in the open - small	Accidental	108	87	115	66	102	81	217
	Not known	4	10	10	5	5	4	6
	Deliberate	236	253	256	195	148	217	362
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>358</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>620</b>

2. NFRS are planning on purchasing additional equipment which will allow Fire Fighters to transport water more easily across fields in time for this summer season.
3. 2017 - No information held  
2018 - No information held  
2019 - No information held  
2020 - No information held  
2021 - No information held  
2022 - £48,000





## Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

The numerical data presented in this response is an un-audited snapshot of un-published data sourced from "live" systems and is subject to the interpretation of the original request by the individual extracting the data. The figures provided therefore are our best interpretation of relevance of data to your request, but you should be aware that the collation of figures for ad hoc requests may have limitations and this should be taken into account when the data is used.

Due to the different methods of recording information across fire services, a specific response from one service should not be seen as an indication of what information could be supplied (within cost) by another. Systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data. For this reason responses between services may differ, and should not be used for comparative purposes.

If you decide to write an article / use the enclosed data we would ask you to take into consideration the factors highlighted in this document so as to not mislead members of the public or official bodies, or misrepresent the relevance of the whole or any part of this disclosed material.

### APPEAL RIGHTS

If you are unhappy with how your request has been handled or you do not think the decision is correct, you have the right to ask for a review of the decision.

Prior to lodging a formal appeal you are welcome and encouraged to discuss the decision with the case officer that dealt with your request.

#### Ask to have the decision looked at again

The quickest and easiest way to have the decision looked at again is to telephone the case officer. That person will be able to discuss the decision, explain any issues and assist with any problems.

#### Appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the handling procedures or the decision that the Service have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) regarding access to information, you can lodge an appeal to have the decision reviewed.





## **Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Appeals should be made in writing within 20 days of receipt of your reply and either emailed to [freedomofinformation@northants.police.uk](mailto:freedomofinformation@northants.police.uk) or addressed to:

**Freedom of Information Manager  
Information Unit  
Northamptonshire Police Headquarters  
Wootton Hall  
Northampton  
NN4 0JQ**

Where possible the Service will aim to respond to your appeal within 20 working days. However meeting this time scale will depend upon the circumstances and complexity of the issue.

### **The Information Commissioner**

After lodging an appeal with the Service, if you are still dissatisfied with the decision, you may make an application to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

For information on how to make an application to the Information Commissioner please visit their website at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) Alternatively, telephone or write to:

**Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF**

**Phone: 0303 123 1113**

