



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Community Risk Management Plan

Making Essex safer together

Response Standards



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Response Standards

As part of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030, we are reviewing how we measure our ability to respond to incidents.

All Fire and Rescue Services are required to set and publish response standards to provide the public with an understanding of how we are performing against our own targets, as well as national trends.

When you call 999, our Control Operators dispatch the quickest available fire engine to get to you. This means from the time we pick up the call, to the time it takes for our fire engine to arrive at the incident location is defined as our response time.

Our goal will always be to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property and the environment.

While there are no national response standards for fire and rescue services, it is important that we set targets that we can hold ourselves accountable to and keep our communities as safe as possible.

Response standards provide an indication of performance. The speed of response to an emergency is impacted by several factors, such as the location of the incident, location of the nearest and most appropriate fire engine at the time of the incident, traffic conditions and weather conditions.

IRMP 2020-2024

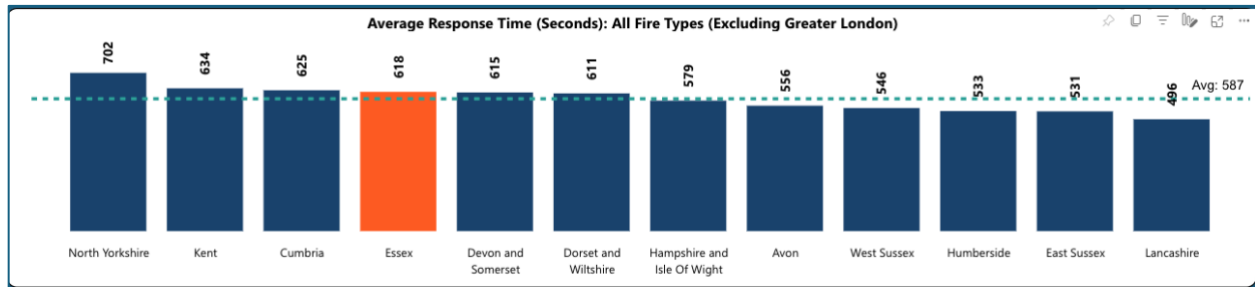
Our current response standard is to arrive at potential life-risk incidents on average within ten minutes, and all incidents within 15 minutes on 80% of occasions.

Financial Year	Attend 90% of all operational incidents within 15 minutes	Attend all potentially life-threatening calls in an average of 10 minutes or less
2023-2024	82.9%	11:10
2022-2023	82.9%	10:42
2021-2022	86.2%	10:16
2020-2021	87.6%	09:53
2019-2020	87.5%	10:04

	Accidental Dwelling Fire	Primary Fire	RTC	Flooding
2023 – 2024	09:25	10:41	12:15	13:46
2022 – 2023	09:10	10:29	12:20	12:24
2021 – 2022	08:51	09:45	11:28	13:25
2020 – 2021	08:36	09:44	11:10	14:13
2019 – 2020	08:35	09:42	11:36	11:42

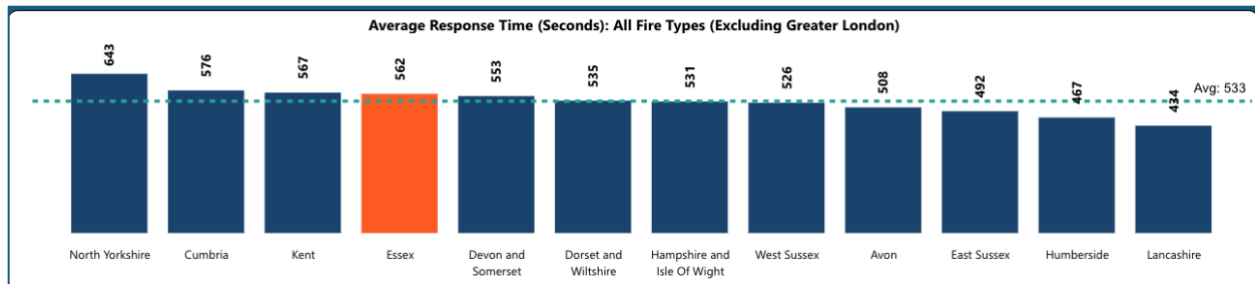
Average response times (seconds) – all fire types – 2023/2024

Family group – other Fire and Rescue Services with comparable employees, demographics, risks, urban/ rural etc.



Average response times (seconds) – all dwelling fires – 2023/2024

Family group – other Fire and Rescue Services with comparable employees, demographics, risks, urban/ rural etc.



CRMP 2025 – 2030

To provide a clear and transparent picture to our public we have decided to review our response standards in alignment with national data categories.

To support this, we have undertaken a review of the risks facing our public from different incident types, which has shown that the highest risk incident to our public is from dwelling fires.



A domestic dwelling is a person’s home and refers to a property that has no more than one family unit in it. This can be used for permanent or semi-permanent habitation and includes houses, bungalows, and some flats depending on the height of the building.

Domestic dwelling fires can lead to fire fatalities, however through our targeted prevention activity, we have reduced the probability of being injured in a dwelling fire by 28%.

Essex Dwelling fire fatalities (2019-2023)

- 11 of the 16 fatalities lived on their own
- 57% of the fatalities were known to be experiencing challenges with their mental health and wellbeing
- 71% of the fatalities were known to be experiencing challenges with their physical health and wellbeing
- 71% of the fatalities were known to be experiencing challenges with their home environment.

We plan to implement new response standards. The standards proposed are an average for the whole Service (including rural areas), for dwelling fires (fires in the home) and all other incidents.

To make our responds standards clear, easily understood and measurable against national statistics, our proposal is to change our response standards to:

- We will attend all Dwelling Fires across Essex within an average of 10 minutes.
- We will attend all other incidents across Essex within an average of 15 minutes.

The new response standards are not changes to the way we provide our emergency response function but aim to improve the transparency and performance of our emergency response.

This method aligns to national recording and reporting of statistics gathered by the Home Office and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services, to allow better benchmarking with other similar services.

The Service is committed to always sending enough resources to deliver a safe system of work for crews and ensure the best outcome for those involved.

The new response measures simplify standards to make reporting clearer, align ECFRS to other fire and rescue services and match how the Government reports performance.

The response standards will be governed through monthly boards and the OPFCC Performance and Resources Board. The Performance and Data Team will report against response times to all incident types in the monthly performance report.

Home office reporting

The Home Office provides an annual report and benchmarking against response times, taken from local fire and rescue services Incident Reporting System (IRS) data collection. Included in the calculation are three components¹:

Call handling

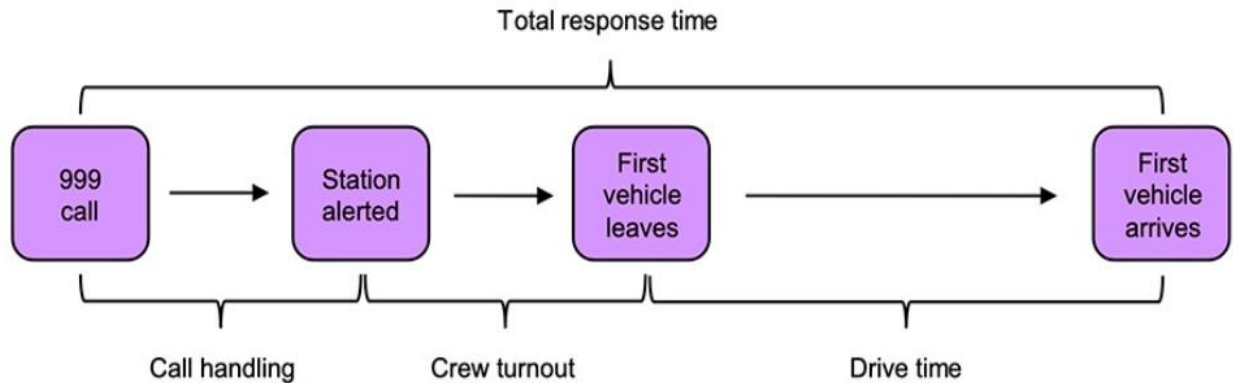
This is the time taken to answer a call in the Fire Control room, allocate appropriate resources and send an alert to the relevant fire station.

Crew turnout

This is the time taken for the crew to respond to the fire station alert system and the first vehicle to depart.

Drive time

This is the time taken between the first vehicle departing a fire station and the first vehicle arriving at the incident.



The Home Office uses IRS data categories to provide statistical analysis against fire and rescue service performance. As 'potentially life-threatening calls' is not a category defined in IRS, providing clear alignment of our incident attendance in relation to the national picture can be subjective.

¹ [Detailed analysis of fires attended and response times by fire and rescue services, England, April 2023 to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

Neighbouring FRS response standards

Our neighbouring fire and rescue services are Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Kent. For comparison, their response standards are:

Suffolk	<p>First fire engine to attend all dwelling fires within 11 minutes, 80% of the time</p> <p>Second fire engine to attend all dwelling fires within 16 minutes, 80% of the time</p> <p>First fire engine to attend all road traffic collisions within 13 minutes, 80% of the time</p>
Hertfordshire	<p>To attend all dwelling fires in under 10 minutes from the time the resources were assigned 90% of the time</p>
Cambridgeshire	<p>We will respond to the most serious incidents within an average of nine minutes in urban areas and 12 minutes in rural areas. [Most serious incidents are defined as fires, rescues from water and road traffic collisions.]</p> <p>We will respond to all incidents in our authority area within 18 minutes for the first fire engine in attendance, 95% of the time.</p>
Kent	<p>To reach life-threatening calls in 10 minutes on 71% of occasions</p> <p>To reach life-threatening calls in 12 minutes on 82% of occasions</p> <p>To reach non life-threatening calls in 15 minutes on 92% of occasions</p>