

Freedom of Information request: Reference number FOI2026/00681

Date of request: 10th June

Request:

I am a postgraduate student majoring on Urban Spatial Science in University College London. And I'm planning to analysis the variability of Fire Responds Time as my theysis. I am writing to seek your professional clarification on a few specific issues I encountered within the London Fire Brigade Incident Records <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-fire-brigade-incident-records-em8xy/>> and London Fire Brigade Mobilisation Records <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-fire-brigade-mobilisation-records-24r65/>> datasets which were published in LONDON DATASTORE.

1. Systematic Loss of Second-Precision Since 2021

* Within the London Fire Brigade Mobilisation Records open database, I noticed a significant change in data precision.

* In the files LFB Mobilisation data from 2021 - 2024 and LFB Mobilisation data 2025 onwards.xlsx, the chronological columns (DateAndTimeMobilised, DateAndTimeMobile, DateAndTimeArrived, DateAndTimeLeft, and DateAndTimeReturned) have lost their second-level precision.

* The seconds component for all these timestamps is showing as 00 and automatically rounding up to the nearest minute. Compared to the 2009–2020 datasets, this represents a noticeable loss of granularity.

* I suspect this truncation might be an unintended artifact introduced when internal files were compiled or converted into CSV format, as spreadsheet-to-CSV pipelines often drop second-level formats by default.

* Could your team please provide the original high-precision .xlsx data for 2021–2024 and 2025 onwards? If this change was intentional due to updated privacy or information governance policies, is there an option for me to formally apply for the precision data under an NDA for academic purposes?

2. Interpretations of Historical vs. Contemporary Timestamps

* My study relies on the public response time data from both London Fire Brigade Incident Records <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-fire-brigade-incident-records-em8xy/>> and London Fire Brigade Mobilisation Records <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-fire-brigade-mobilisation-records-24r65/>>.

* I would like to confirm if the TimeOfCall column in the Incident Records and the DateAndTimeMobilised column in the Mobilisation Records represent different operational stages.

* In records spanning 2009–2015, I observed a distinct time gap between TimeOfCall and DateAndTimeMobilised for the same IncidentNumber. I interpreted this gap as the interval between the control room receiving the call and dispatching the station. By combining this gap with TurnoutTimeSeconds and TravelTimeSeconds from the Mobilisation records, so I could calculate a comprehensive response time including call-handling duration.

* However, starting from 2016, TimeOfCall and DateAndTimeMobilised become virtually identical, with only a 0 or 1-second difference in a small number of cases.

* Did an operational system upgrade after 2016 enable instant dispatching to achieve this near-zero delay? Or was the exact timestamp gap masked for privacy reasons? If it is due to privacy, is it possible to apply to see the original exact gaps for post-2016 data?

3. Data Discrepancies and Mismatch Rows

* While performing data linkage via IncidentNumber, I found a minor row mismatch between the two databases.

* There are 777 instances in the Incident Records where pumping appliances were deployed, but their IncidentNumber cannot be found or matched in the Mobilisation records.

* Conversely, there are 7,980 vehicle deployment logs in the Mobilisation records whose Incident-Number cannot be matched to any master row in the Incident Records.

* Although this discrepancy is very small relative to millions of historical records, I would appreciate it if you could briefly explain the operational or database logging reasons behind these unmatched entries.

4. Discrepancies Between Administrative and Physical First Arrival Times

* When executing the dataset match, I cross-referenced the FirstPumpArriving_AttendanceTime column (Incident Records) with the minimum value of AttendanceTimeSeconds across all deployed pumps for the exact same IncidentNumber (Mobilisation records).

* I discovered 8,820 instances where these two values do not match.

* Does this discrepancy occur because FirstPumpArriving_AttendanceTime represents the time for the appliance that was designated/dispatched first, but due to real-time road conditions or different travel distances, a secondary or subsequent appliance actually arrived at the scene physically earliest? Thank you very much for your time, support, and continuous dedication to maintaining this vital public data resource. I look forward to your professional insights.

Response:

Thank you for your correspondence, which we received on 10 June 2026, regarding the London Fire Brigade (LFB) Incident Records and Mobilisation Records datasets published on the London Datastore.

Our Data and Improvement Team have advised me of the following. The London Fire Brigade appreciates the detailed and considered nature of your enquiries and recognises the academic value of the questions raised regarding timestamp precision, field interpretation, cross-dataset linkage, and attendance time discrepancies.

The Mobilisation Records dataset has now been updated to ensure that second-level timestamp precision is retained.

1. Systematic Loss of Second-Level Precision Since 2021

Thank you for bringing this issue to our attention. As you suggested, the loss of second-level precision appears to have occurred intermittently during the export of data to CSV format.

The LFB have re-uploaded the affected files, and the timestamps now appear to contain the correct level of precision. However, please let us know if you continue to experience any issues viewing the seconds component.

During the refresh of the 2021–2024 dataset, approximately 100 additional mobilisation records were also identified and included. The LFB only publish records once the incident details have been fully completed by the attending crew. It is likely that these incidents had not been finalised when the original data extract was produced.

2. Interpretation of Historical and Contemporary Timestamps

The LFB no longer update them, a number of [Fire Facts](#) publications remain available on the London Datastore and provide useful background on LFB data. In particular, Chapter 3 contains further information on call handling times and changes to mobilising systems over time.

The Time of Call field records the point at which an incident is logged in our incident recording system, typically once the location and broad incident type have been established.

At the end of 2015, LFB introduced a new mobilising system that automated elements of the call handling and mobilisation process. As a result, fire stations can now be alerted almost immediately after an incident is logged.

3. Data Discrepancies and Unmatched Records

Some incident records will not have corresponding mobilisation records. This can occur where a fire appliance was mobilised but stood down before arriving at the scene, perhaps because additional information received by the operator indicated that attendance was no longer required.

Alternatively, an incident may have been created and potentially attended but may not have originated from an emergency call. For example, a lift release involving an able-bodied person who was not in distress may not meet the criteria for inclusion. The published mobilisation dataset only includes emergency incidents where a fire appliance arrived at the scene.

Conversely, some mobilisation records may not have corresponding incident records within the published dataset. These generally relate to incidents that occurred outside the London Fire Brigade area, where LFB attended in support of a neighbouring fire and rescue service. In such cases, the incident itself would have been recorded by the host service rather than by LFB.

4. Differences Between Administrative and Physical First Arrival Times

Yes, our review suggests that in the majority of these cases a second appliance physically arrived at the incident before the appliance that was initially designated as the first responding unit.

This can occur when appliances are mobilised at very similar times but are affected differently by factors such as traffic conditions, roadworks, or route availability, enabling the second appliance to reach the scene first.

The LFB also identified a small number of cases particularly where the recorded attendance time appears unusually short (for example, less than 30 seconds) that may reflect operational updates made by crews. In some instances, a crew may have indicated that they were leaving an incident

and then subsequently been recalled, which can result in anomalies within the recorded arrival and attendance times.

We have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For more information about this process please see the guidance we publish about making a request on our website: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/request-information-from-us/>