



## **ASLEF Response to the Draft Fifth London Safety Plan 2013-2016**

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train drivers' union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF is glad to have this opportunity to respond to the London Fire Brigade's Draft Fifth London Safety Plan 2013-2016 and express our strong concerns over the proposals of the London Fire Commissioner and Mayor of London's plans to close 12 fire stations, scrap 18 fire engines and lose 520 jobs.
3. ASLEF is concerned that in order to achieve a headline grabbing 7p cut in the average band D resident's council tax, the Mayor is allowing unsafe cuts to fire brigade provision which could cost lives. The cut will cost £46m compared to a freeze in the GLA tax. The proposed cuts to services are designed to save £45.4m. It is therefore clear that the Mayor is gambling with Londoner's lives in order to push through an unnecessary council tax cut.
4. It is argued that response times will not be dramatically effected by the closure of 12 fire station and the net loss of 18 fire engines across London, with first appliance times going up by an average of 15 seconds and second appliance going up by 16 seconds. ASLEF is concerned by the

lack of evidence to show this. It seems rather implausible that such dramatic cuts could have such a small effect.

5. Additionally, as has been pointed out by Paul Embery, regional secretary for the FBU's London Region, it is not just the speed of the response that is vital in dealing with developing and large-scale incidents. It is also the weight of the response. Scrapping 18 engines across London and making 7 stations reduce to a single engine could have a dramatic impact on this. The capital would see a depleted service with reduced ability to respond effectively when they are most needed.
6. Such cuts would be of great concern to those who work or travel on the railway and London Underground. Many of the stations that are due to close cover important transport hubs. Southwark was used during the Kings Cross fire and saved lives during the 7 July bombings. It also covers 4 rail stations including the expanding London Bridge Quarter. Clapham fire station covers eight underground and mainline stations including Clapham Junction which is the busiest station in the UK.
7. Additionally, with Farringdon due to become the busiest station in the UK following the completion of Crossrail, it seems ludicrous to be considering the closure of Clerkenwell Fire Station. This station already has a history of protecting and dealing with transport emergencies such as the Moorgate Train Crash, the Kings Cross Fire and the 7 July bombings. With an increased transport infrastructure, the station could be dealing with more incidents. It is therefore perverse to consider closing it.
8. It is concerning that the issue of transport in London and the fire brigades coverage of transport infrastructure is not mentioned within this consultation. ASLEF believes that any cuts to the number of stations, fire-fighters and fire engines should only follow a full risk assessment in partnership with transport providers and stakeholders.

9. In order to obtain their Railway Safety Certificate, train operators must have safety plans which take into account local emergency services and how close support is. This work is done alongside the fire brigade. Changes such as station closures or the reduction in the number of engines available will mean that train operators in the capital will have to re-examine all of these plans.
  
10. ASLEF finds it disingenuous when the Mayor speaks of attendance times not being affected. These figures are target attendance times, not actual attendance times. 4.8 million Londoners will see worse times compared to now, and those who live or work close to fire stations facing closure will see times increase between 4 and 10 minutes. Considering a domestic fire can quadruple in intensity in 2 minutes, this is incredibly worrying.
  
11. The consultation makes a great deal of that fact that these cuts can be justified by the fact that there are fewer fires. This is true and it is down to the successful fire prevention activities of our fire-fighters. But the budget for this work is due to be cut as well. This also misses the point that even if there are fewer fires, closing stations and getting rid of fire engines will still mean a longer response time and will put lives at risk.
  
12. ASLEF is extremely concerned that for the sake of 7p a week per family in London, lives are being put at risk. ASLEF feels that this is playing politics with people's lives and most Londoners would happily pay out an extra £3.64 per household per year in order to keep the same standards of protection offered by the London Fire Brigade.
  
13. Little work has been done on the consequences of these changes to the transport system. In fact, transport is hardly mentioned at all. ASLEF believes that these cuts have not been carefully considered and must not be allowed to take place. We are extremely concerned about the coverage

of the fire brigade if there was to be another disaster such as Ladbroke Grove or the Kings Cross Fire. This issue is far too important to be pushed through for political reasons and life is at stake.

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