

Depot Fire

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

Ref: NRL22-06

Date of issue: 13/12/2022

Location: Bridge Street Depot, Northampton



Overview

On the evening of Tuesday 28th June 2022 a fire broke out at the Northampton Maintenance Delivery Unit Stores building. It quickly grew and destroyed the building. The building was not occupied and there were no injuries. The fire destroyed the building which has now been demolished.

It was initially reported that the cause of the fire was from the charging of Lithium Ion Batteries (LIBs) on unsuitable shelves. Following initial evidence gathered by the investigation team, the Ledlenser iFR8 lamp was temporarily quarantined.

Underlying causes

Network Rail commissioned an independent test of an iFR8 lamp, which to date has not been concluded. However local testing by Ledlenser and a review of the current processes in place at Ledlenser indicate that this product is safe to continue using. The iFR8 lamp holds all current UKCA and other statutory certification. All plug and play devices, many of which contain LIB's, should be used, charged and stored in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

The building maintenance Electrical installation condition report (EICR) could not be found and testing had not been completed for a number of years prior to the fire occurring.

During the investigation the exact source of the fire could not be identified with certainty. However, it was likely that the cause was from either the charging station sockets, the building wiring or the charging cable.

The investigation found numerous gaps in statutory testing, not isolated to Northampton Depot. This could not be ruled out as a contributory factor to the fire starting.

Following the conclusions drawn from the investigation, the temporary restriction of the iFR8 lamp should be lifted with a cautionary note that all plug and play devices should only be used, stored and charged in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. That charging facilities are fit for purpose. And that fire risk assessments are suitable and sufficient and the finding of which acted upon.

Key message

- Do you know which of your devices contain Lithium-ion batteries? Are all of your plug-in devices suitably checked and inspected?
- Is your building up to date with EICR and statutory testing requirements?
- Do you have a person responsible for fire safety (PRFS) appointed and a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment in place?
- Do you have suitable charging areas?