



**Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service**

# **Covid-19 Impact on FRS Response**

July 2020

## Summary

This report provides a short comparative analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) activity between the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Overall Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) tends to show an increase in incidents from early May, however; this is not indicated until later in the national picture. This may be as a result of the early increase in COVID-19 within Cumbria impacting on behaviours - Cumbria had more than 3 times the national number of cases at the end of May<sup>1</sup>.

Both at a national and local level the number of fires was higher than baseline from w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May. This increase occurred in Cumbria earlier than in England, with a higher number of primary fires from w/c 10<sup>th</sup> May, with CFRS attending 7 more primary fires a week than the five-year average baseline.

Again, the number of dwelling fires attended by CFRS in Cumbria was slightly higher than baseline from w/c 3<sup>rd</sup> May and significantly above what would be expected for w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May. Again this is in contrast to the national picture, and supports the prediction that dwelling fires may be higher during lockdown as a result of increased levels of home cooking.

A local comparison between May 2019 and May 2020 shows an increase in chimney fires in Cumbria, which was anticipated with increased numbers staying at home. In line with this, there was decrease in non-residential fires, possibly with reduced use of commercial buildings. There was less Road Traffic Collision (RTC) fires also, which again may reflect reduced travelling during lockdown

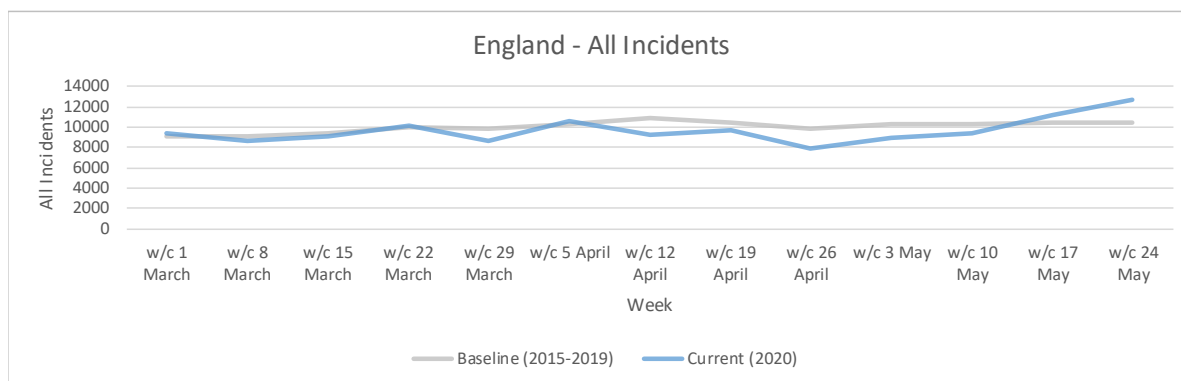
Local data also showed that there has been an increase in 'outdoor' and 'outdoor structure fires'. Many of these were caused by a mixture of deliberate and accidental grass/wild/BBQ fires, with an increase of people burning rubbish during the waste management department's closures during lockdown. An additional contributory factor was the weather, which led to a long dry spell.

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<sup>1</sup> At 29/05/2020 Cumbria had more than 3 times the national number of cases, with a daily rate of lab confirmed cases of 3.8 compared to 1.2 for England (Public Health England).

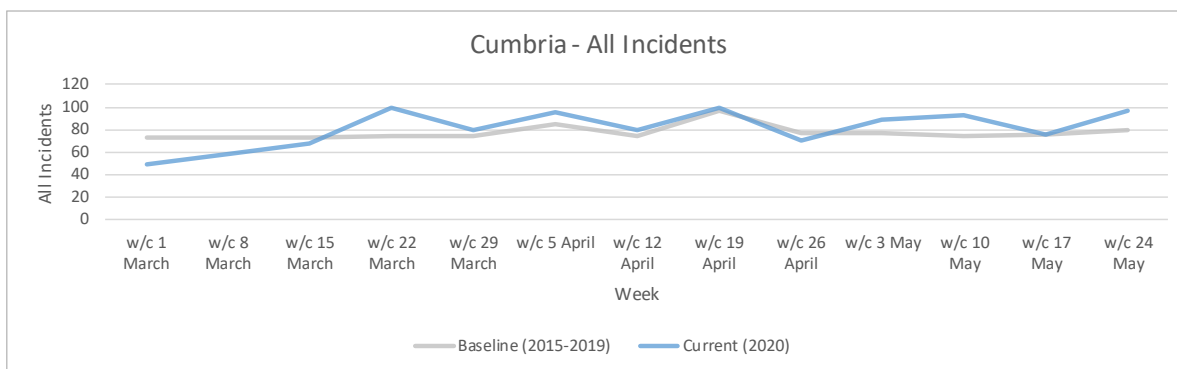
## All Incidents

The total number of incidents attended in the first six weeks since the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 were around or slightly below the five year average (baseline), then consistently below baseline from w/c 12<sup>th</sup> April but increasing above baseline in w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May. The total number of incidents attended in w/c 24<sup>th</sup> May was higher than expected for the time of year.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
Baseline (2015-2019)	9066	9120	9324	9983	9762	10283	10832	10447	9870	10234	10280	10477	10478
All Incidents Current (2020)	9448	8703	9030	10177	8592	10635	9292	9721	7937	8861	9412	11200	12677

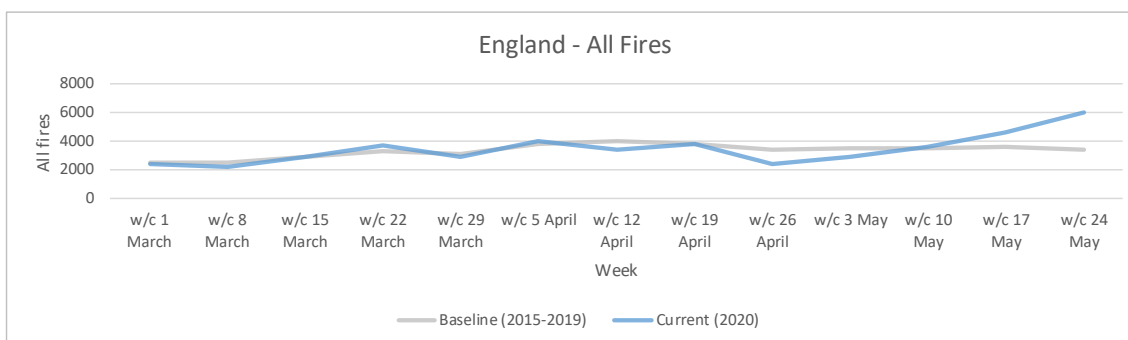
In line with England, the total number of incidents attended in Cumbria in the first three weeks since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 were around or slightly below the five year average (baseline), with the total number of incidents attended in w/c 1<sup>st</sup> March lower than expected for the time of year. However, in contrast to the national picture, the number of incidents increased above or around baseline from w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> March to 24<sup>th</sup> May, with the exception of w/c 26<sup>th</sup> April where it fell slightly below baseline.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>All Incidents</b>													
Baseline (2015-2019)	73	72	72	74	75	84	74	97	76	77	74	76	79
Current (2020)	49	58	68	99	80	95	79	100	70	89	93	76	97

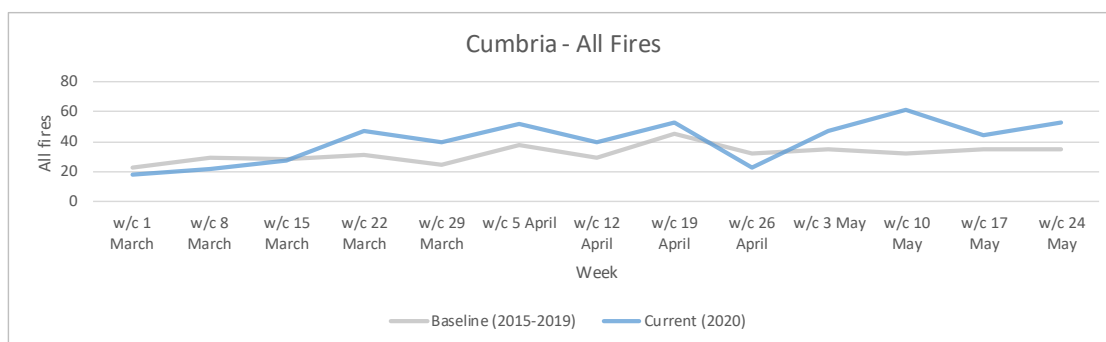
### All Fires

The total number of fires attended by FRSs in England in the 13 weeks since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 were broadly similar to the baseline five-year average, except from w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May onwards which were higher than usual.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>All Fires</b>													
Baseline (2015-2019)	2453	2479	2917	3320	3057	3737	3953	3795	3383	3504	3438	3597	3342
Current (2020)	2385	2145	2904	3631	2854	3995	3421	3823	2406	2926	3531	4566	5990

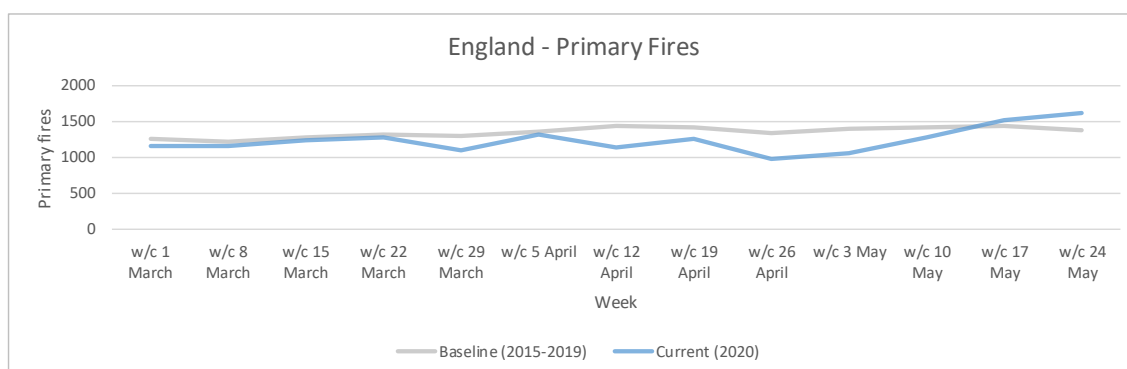
The total number of fires attended by CFRS was around or slightly lower than the baseline average for the first 3 weeks from 1<sup>st</sup> March, but was higher than the baseline for the remaining weeks, with 3 weeks that were higher than would be expected (22<sup>nd</sup> March, 29<sup>th</sup> March and 10<sup>th</sup> May). These increases were linked to a rise in the number of grass and outdoor fires, seen during the warm dry spells. There was one additional week where numbers were lower than baseline (26<sup>th</sup> April), however; within what would be expected.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>All Fires</b> Baseline (2015-2019)	22	29	29	31	24	38	29	45	32	35	32	35	35
Current (2020)	18	22	27	47	40	52	40	53	23	47	61	44	53

### Primary Fires

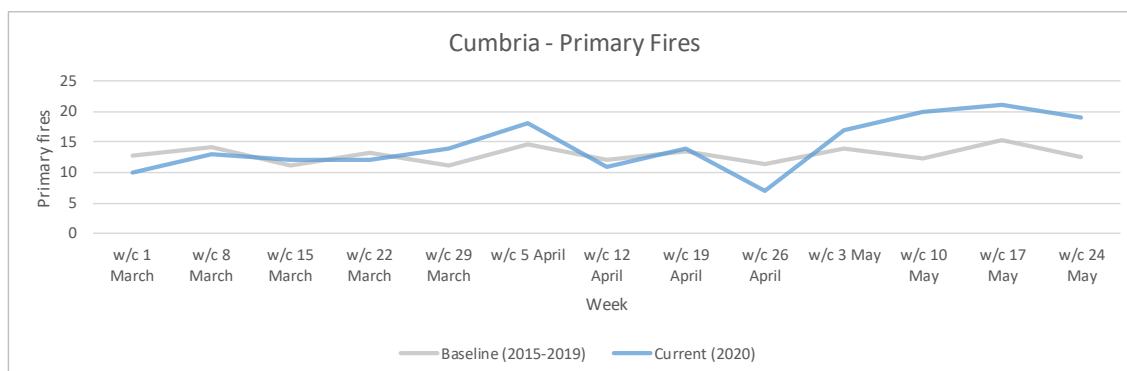
The number of primary fires followed the same pattern as baseline from w/c 1<sup>st</sup> March to w/c 5<sup>th</sup> April but, in contrast to all fires (above), remained consistently below baseline by around 50–200 fires per week during this period. There was a marked decrease in primary fires compared to the baseline average from w/c 12<sup>th</sup> April to w/c 10<sup>th</sup> May, when FRSs attended between 150 and 380 fewer primary fires than the five-year average, outside the expected range of variation in all except w/c 19<sup>th</sup> April. However, in w/c 24<sup>th</sup> May, primary fires were higher than expected for that time of year for the first time since the start of lockdown.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>Primary fires</b> Baseline (2015-2019)	1261	1212	1273	1308	1296	1362	1446	1413	1344	1393	1417	1428	1374
Current (2020)	1163	1160	1231	1283	1108	1311	1140	1256	971	1055	1270	1510	1625

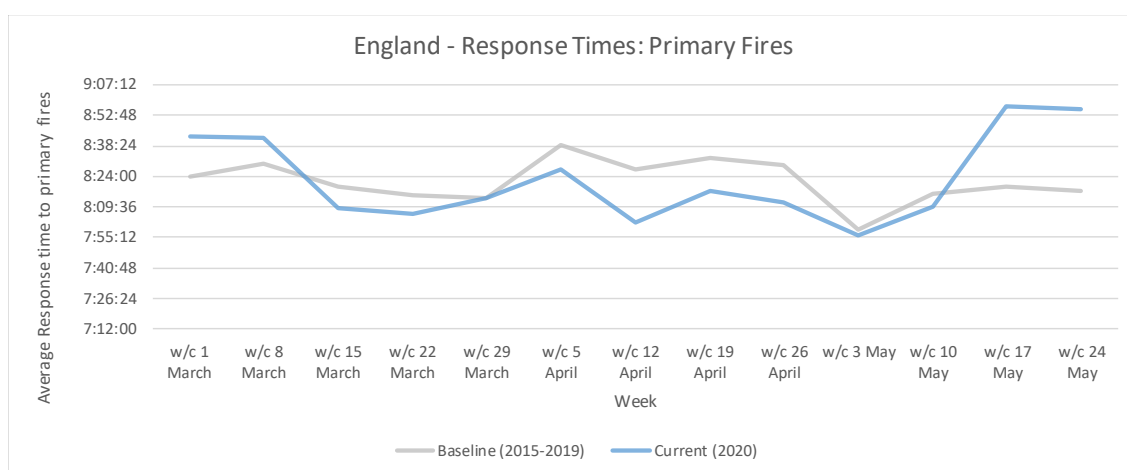
Within Cumbria, the number of primary fires followed the same pattern as baseline from w/c 1<sup>st</sup> March to w/c 5<sup>th</sup> April but there was a slight decrease in primary fires

compared to the baseline average for w/c 26<sup>th</sup> April, and in contrast to the national picture there was a higher number of primary fires from w/c 10<sup>th</sup> May, when FRSs attended 7 more primary fires a week than the five-year average. However, in w/c 24<sup>th</sup> May, the national picture reflected Cumbria with primary fires higher than expected for that time of year.



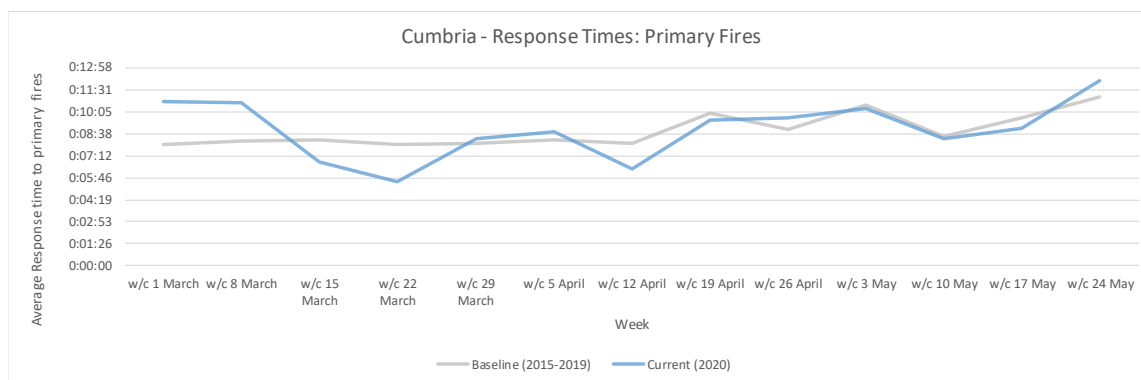
	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>Primary fires</b> Baseline (2015-2019)	13	14	11	13	11	15	12	13	11	14	12	15	13
<b>Current (2020)</b>	10	13	12	12	14	18	11	14	7	17	20	21	19

Average response times to primary fires were consistently lower (i.e. faster) than the baseline five-year average from w/c 15<sup>th</sup> March onwards, and by more than is expected compared with baseline data in the weeks commencing 15<sup>th</sup> March, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 26<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> May (consistent with predictions of decreased traffic levels during lockdown), but rising rapidly to higher than average from w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May onwards as traffic levels increased and warm weather led to more fires.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
<b>Response Times - Primary Fires</b> Baseline (2015-2019)	8:24:00	8:30:00	8:19:00	8:15:00	8:14:00	8:39:00	8:27:00	8:33:00	8:29:00	7:59:00	8:16:00	8:19:00	8:17:00
<b>Current (2020)</b>	8:43:00	8:42:00	8:09:00	8:06:00	8:14:00	8:27:00	8:02:00	8:17:00	8:12:00	7:56:00	8:10:00	8:57:00	8:56:00

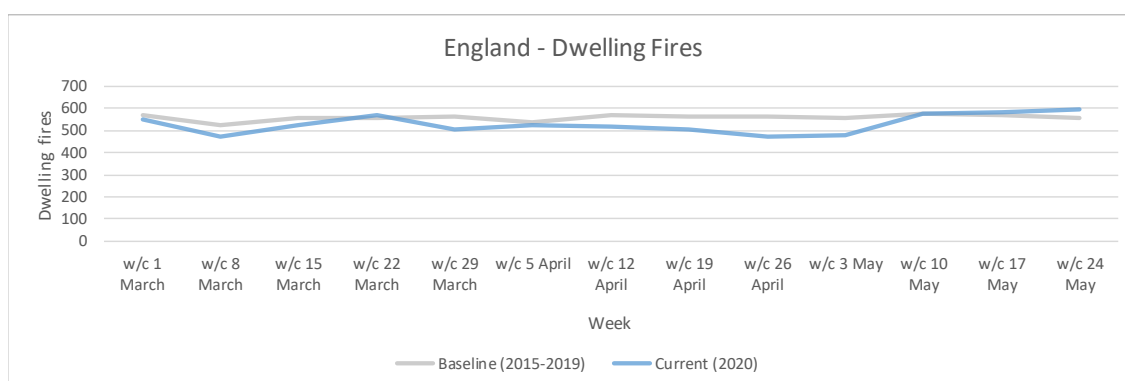
Average response times were broadly similar to the baseline five-year average, with three exceptions - one week where response times were longer than would be expected (w/c 8<sup>th</sup> March) and two weeks where response times were faster than would be expected (w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> March and w/c 12<sup>th</sup> April). Our increased fire engine availability and quieter roads meant our nearest fire engines got to fires quicker.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
Baseline (2015-2019)	0:07:56	0:08:08	0:08:15	0:07:56	0:08:03	0:08:16	0:08:03	0:09:59	0:08:54	0:10:32	0:08:29	0:09:42	0:11:05
Current (2020)	0:10:44	0:10:40	0:06:48	0:05:31	0:08:19	0:08:45	0:06:20	0:09:32	0:09:43	0:10:19	0:08:21	0:08:58	0:12:08

## Dwelling Fires

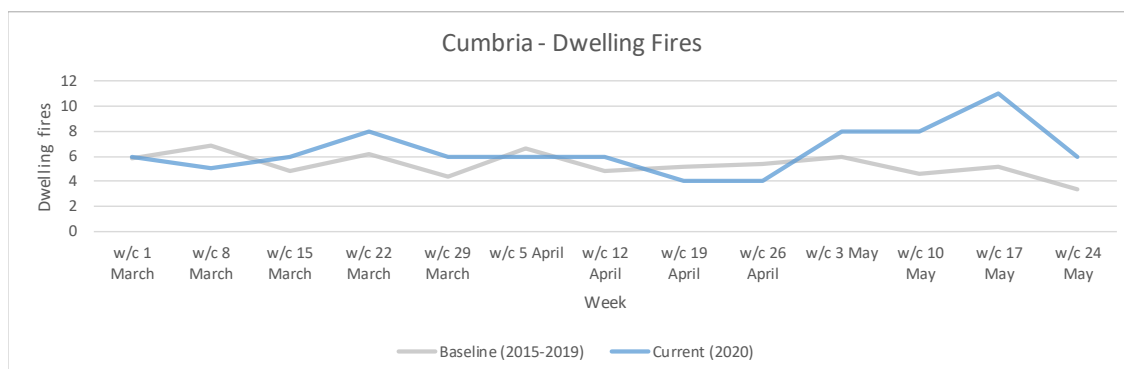
The number of dwelling fires attended by FRSs in England between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 23<sup>rd</sup> May were broadly similar or lower than the baseline five-year average, but returning to normal from w/c 10<sup>th</sup> May. This contradicts the prediction that dwelling fires may be higher during lockdown as a result of increased levels of home cooking.



	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
Baseline (2015-2019)	571	523	559	556	561	538	569	562	561	556	574	567	554
Current (2020)	550	475	524	570	505	526	518	507	474	482	575	585	594

The number of dwelling fires attended by CFRS in Cumbria between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April were broadly similar to the baseline five-year average, but in contrast to the

national picture, were slightly higher from w/c 3<sup>rd</sup> May, and significantly above what would be expected for w/c 17<sup>th</sup> May. This supports the prediction that there would be increased dwelling fires as a result of increased levels of home cooking. More than half of the dwelling fires were kitchen fires, however nearly half of these specific incidents resulted in no damage to the property.



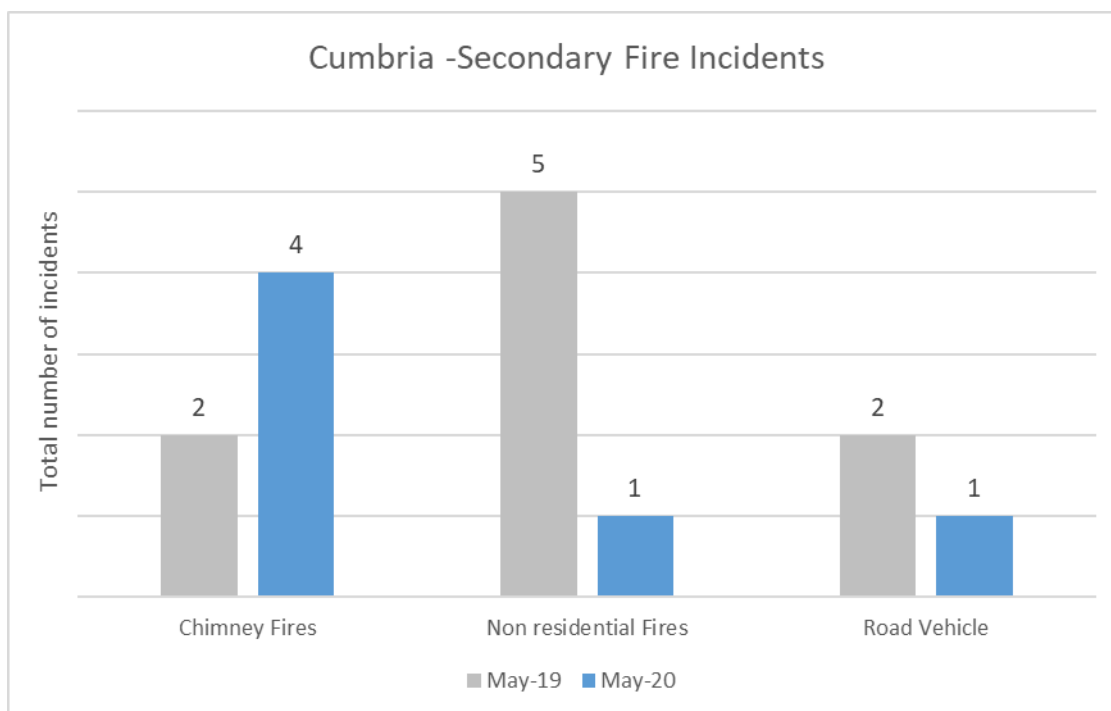
	w/c 1 March	w/c 8 March	w/c 15 March	w/c 22 March	w/c 29 March	w/c 5 April	w/c 12 April	w/c 19 April	w/c 26 April	w/c 3 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May
Baseline (2015-2019)	6	7	5	6	4	7	5	5	5	6	5	5	3
Current (2020)	6	5	6	8	6	6	6	4	4	8	8	11	6

## Secondary Fires

England data for secondary fires was not available, however data for Cumbria shows possible differences in the numbers of secondary fires compared to last year. However, numbers are small and so analysis may be unreliable.

A comparison between May 19 and May 20 shows an increase in chimney fires in May, which was anticipated with increased numbers at home. In line with this, there was decrease in non-residential fires, possibly with reduced use of commercial buildings. There was less RTC's also, which again may reflect reduced travelling during lockdown.





There has been an increase in outdoor and outdoor structure fires. Many of these were caused by a mixture of deliberate and accidental grass/wild/BBQ fires, with an increase of people burning rubbish during the waste management department's closures during lockdown. Many of the outdoor structure fires where as a result of uncontrolled fire spread from controlled burning. An additional contributory factor was the weather with a long dry spell.

