

Dramatic increase in fire deaths as firefighter job cuts worsen

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The number of people who have died in fires has jumped by 15% over the past year to 303, the Home Office has revealed. It is the single biggest percentage increase in fire deaths for 20 years, and the second consecutive rise according to government statistics.

Between 2015-16, there were 39 more deaths than in the previous 12 months.

The statistics come after the Department of Communities and Local Government, who were responsible for the fire service until January this year, published data last year showing that response times to fires were at their slowest in two decades.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have said the fault lies solely with the government who have cut fire and rescue service budgets by more than 30% since 2010, resulting in 9,600 lifesaving firefighter jobs being axed.

Dave Green, national officer for the FBU and a former firefighter, said: "These figures are a damning indictment of how this government have managed the fire and rescue service. They have slashed budgets without regard for public safety.

"The long term trend of falling fire deaths is now going into reverse, with two consecutive rises in one year – the figures are released six monthly. This shows us very clearly that the fire and rescue service needs investment immediately if more lives are not to be lost."