

The Great Fire of London

SOURCE 1

After the Great Fire of London in 1666, Charles II formulated some of the first fire prevention and Building Control legislation when it was ordered that there should be regulated distances between buildings.



The Great Fire of London started at 2am on the Sunday of 2 September 1666. It burned for four days, during which time five-sixths of the country's greatest port and city were destroyed.

The available fire protection was the buckets, hooks and squirts, under the nominal charge of parish officers, the lead and wooden water pipes in the streets, a few primitive fire engines and the new building regulations (which were partly unenforced). The person in charge was the Lord Mayor, his Council and Officers.

Six hours after the outbreak of the fire, 300 houses were alight and the fire was burning slowly into the city centre. By noon, orders were given for houses around the perimeter to be pulled down to make a fire break.

The damage was extensive, five-sixths of the City destroyed, 13,200 houses burnt, together with 84 churches, 44 livery company halls and most of the public buildings. Over a hundred thousand people were made homeless, thousands of citizens were ruined, and a great proportion of the country's wealth was lost. Strangely enough there were only six fatal casualties.



An Act of the City Council passed in 1667 for fire prevention and attack of fires, stated that the City be divided into four quarters and each quarter was to be provided with 800 leather buckets, 50 ladders (10 of which were to be 42 feet long), 24 pickaxes, 40 shod shovels and as many hand squirts of brass as would furnish two for every parish in the quarter. These to be provided at public expense.

SOURCE 2

Samuel Pepys

September 2, 1666

Nearly every housewife has made the same mistake, usually with no great consequence. But on September 2, 1666 the result was apocalyptic. Thomas Farrinor, baker to King Charles II of England, neglected, in effect, to turn off his oven. He thought the fire was out, he later claimed, but apparently the smouldering embers ignited some nearby firewood and by one o'clock in the morning, three hours after Farrinor went to bed, his house in Pudding Lane was in flames. Farrinor, along with his wife and daughter, and one servant, luckily escaped from the burning building through an upstairs window, but the baker's maid paid dearly for his carelessness, becoming the Great Fire's first victim.

The fire then leapt across Fish Street Hill and engulfed the Star Inn. The London of 1666 was a city of half-timbered, pitch-covered medieval buildings that ignited at the touch of a spark--and a strong wind on that September morning ensured that sparks flew everywhere. From the Inn, the fire spread into Thames Street, where riverfront warehouses were bursting with oil, tallow, and other combustible goods.

SOURCE 3

Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the waterside to another.

SOURCE 4 John Evelyn Eye witness 1666

The whole south part of the city burning from Cheapside to the Thames, and was now taking hold of St. Paul's church, to which the scaffolds contributed exceedingly.

TASK1 : Draw the table below into your books and put down the reasons for the fire, how the people tried to stop it and the results of the event under the correct column headings labelled **CAUSES, PREVENTION, EFFECTS.**
Write down as many examples as possible.

CAUSES/ REASONS	PREVENTION / STOP	EFFECTS / RESULTS

TASK 2 : Events in history have many reasons for happening. Some are **SHORT TERM** (those close or most recent) **AND OTHERS ARE LONG TERM** (those furthest away from the event). In the table below list those causes which are long/short term reasons for the fire.

LONG TERM CAUSES	SHORT TERM CAUSES

TASK 3: NOW DO THE SAME FOR THE LONG/SHORT TERM EFFECTS

LONG TERM EFFECTS	SHORT TERM EFFECTS