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18 November **BBC NEWS**

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At least 27 people have died after a fire at King's Cross station in central London.

The blaze reportedly began at about 1930 GMT in a machine room under a wooden escalator.

The escalator connected the Piccadilly line - one of five underground train routes which run through King's Cross - with the mainline station.

The fire started as the evening rush hour was trailing off but hundreds of commuters were still in the station which is London's busiest.

Many passengers were trapped underground as the escalator went up in flames.

More than 150 firefighters wearing breathing apparatus tackled the blaze and searched for survivors.

But they were not able to bring the main fire under control until approximately 2150 GMT.

It is feared the death toll could reach 40 after a search of the station has been completed.

**'Major disaster'**

A fire brigade spokesman, Brian Clark, said the scene in

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It is feared the death toll could rise

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[Firefighters search for trapped passengers](#)

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08 Oct 1952	Many die as three trains crash at Harrow
23 Jan 1955	Express train crashes killing 14
04 Dec 1957	92 feared dead in Lewisham rail crash
30 Jan 1958	Dagenham rail crash kills 10
1960s	
05 Nov	Forty die in Hither

**In Context**

The final death toll was 31 - the highest in an Underground accident since a train crash at Moorgate in 1975 killed 43 people.

One of the victims was fireman Colin Townsley.

The last victim to be named was Alexander Fallon, who had been living rough in

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the concourse at the top of the burnt escalator was one of total devastation.

Mr Clark said tiles had come off walls and concrete was damaged because of the intense heat.

"The situation there must have been very frightening and that is an understatement," he added.

About 20 people, including four members of the emergency services, have been taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation and burns.

The chairman of London Regional Transport (LRT), Sir Keith Bright, has described the blaze as a "major disaster".

Sir Keith said LRT was already implementing a policy to replace old wooden escalators with non-flammable metal ones.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said she was "horrified" to hear of the "dreadful" fire and sent her deepest sympathies to the families of those who have been killed and injured.

The Railway Inspectorate has started an investigation into the blaze and will advise Transport Secretary Paul Channon about ordering an inquiry.

London. His body was not officially identified until January 2004.

Investigators said the most probable cause of the fire was a discarded match.

Smoking on Underground trains had been banned in July 1984. After a fire at Oxford Circus station the ban was extended to all subsurface stations but smokers often lit cigarettes on the escalators on their way out.

After the King's Cross fire, wooden escalators were phased out.

In 1991 a report found only eight of the 26 safety recommendations made after the inquiry had been implemented fully.

To the outrage of victims' relatives, nobody was ever prosecuted - the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Railway Inspectorate decided there was no justification for charges.

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