

Fire guts London's Camden Lock Market

Chris Marsden
11 July 2017

Fire ripped through Camden Lock Market in the early hours of Monday morning. The blaze at the landmark venue, in a fashionable area visited by 28 million people a year, was tackled by 10 fire engines, including an aerial appliance, and 70 firefighters.

The emergency services were first called around midnight Sunday to what is the fourth most visited tourist attraction in London. Crews from across central and north London fought to contain the blaze.

The fire took hold in a property near the Camden Stables and moved "very fast." Crews were determined to prevent the fire reaching nearby restaurants.

The fire raged for three hours and destroyed around 30 percent of the first, second, and third floors. By 3:20am the brigade said the blaze was under control. A third of the roof was damaged.

Witnesses were reported to be in tears, no doubt in large part due to the recent inferno that destroyed Grenfell Tower. The market closed around 7pm, so no casualties have been reported. A London ambulance service spokeswoman said no one had been treated at the scene.

A number of businesses were destroyed including shoe designers, jewellers, photographers and a guitar shop.

This is the third major fire in markets in the Camden area.

In February 2008 the Camden Canal Market was destroyed by an inferno that wrecked several local landmarks and put the waterside market out of action for 15 months. The Great Fire of Camden, as it was dubbed, caused more than 100 people to be evacuated from their homes.

In 2014 a fire swept through the Stables Market, forcing the evacuation of more than 600 shoppers and diners.

Little has been officially revealed about the cause of the latest fire. But according to the *Evening Standard*, it

is believed to have started in some arts and crafts stalls behind a branch of Honest Burger.

The newspaper cites Joanne Wyong, who runs a jewellery stall, stating, "I am totally devastated. The firefighters have been asking about all the power extensions. There are no sockets on the walls so everybody uses extensions that plug into a bar in the roof. That's where the firefighters are looking and asking about."

It should be noted that already in 2008, changes in fire safety regulations were being cited as a major factor in making the markets unsafe. The February 14, 2008 edition of the local *Camden New Journal* headlined a report, "It's a miracle nobody died: but could it happen again?"

The newspaper noted, "fire safety in the busy markets could ultimately be in the hands of individual traders ... since a change in the law at the end of 2005 responsibility for safety has shifted away from the Fire Brigade. It is now up to each trader to meet fire codes and pay for any measures to make their stall or shop safe."

The journal cited a Fire Brigade spokesman stating, "It is self-regulatory and requires the person in control of premises to undertake fire risk assessments, and where appropriate, act upon the significant findings."

Camden Market Holdings (CMH), which owned the canal-side land, said it was not their responsibility to make sure every stall met fire regulations.

Piers Codling, then the company's surveyor, said, "We are responsible for the overall grounds but individual traders are responsible for their own stalls. ... It would be unthinkable that the Fire Brigade would allow something like Camden Market to operate if it wasn't safe."

Grenfell, and now Camden Lock, proves that the elimination of fire safety regulations has continued to allow dangerous situations to exist in residential and

commercial property right in the heart of London.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)