



More reports of concerns with trickle chargers

Two more reports of serious incidents with batteries on trickle chargers really highlight the need for care when using a charger, particularly not leaving it connected for a lengthy period unattended.

Mike Breedon reported another serious fire saying "just the other day and local to me, I noticed a cloud of black smoke rising from what appeared to be from the houses just above where I live. Next thing along came two fire engines! It turned out to have been yet another trickle charger problem which was being used to keep a car battery topped up. The result was the loss of the car, the garage, two wooden sheds and a caravan. Fortunately no one was hurt but that was another case so just be aware of problems with trickle chargers."

Roger Martin also sent in a note of his experience saying "I have traditionally used CTEK and Accumate battery charger/conditioners that I rotate around my MGs but as the cars were not being used during the pandemic I specifically bought another charger to be permanently connected on my Midget. Unfortunately, this was a budget item and clearly not up to permanent use, with the result that my Midget battery self-destructed and drenched the battery tray area with sulphuric acid - see the photo longside. Not at all what I wanted. Clearly the moral is you usually get what you pay for! I now have another CTEK and, of course, a new battery in my Midget."

Tony Lake added he had "just picked up on your note on the website. I guess the reason lithium ion battery fires get so much attention in the media is because a number have occurred in high profile vehicles like a Tesla. The pure EV population in the UK is pretty small, around 200,000 but as it grows it will be interesting to see if fast chargers precipitate battery fires.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/12/28/tesla-battery-fire/>

What I hadn't realised is just how many road vehicle fires occur, one claim is around 100,000 a year in the UK of which circa 65% are started deliberately. This website (via the link below) is the Home Office Vehicle Fire analysis for England by year, scroll to the end for the numbers. The incident rate is shrinking, down from 27,728 in 2010/11 to 20,539 in 2019/20, that is still 56 per day! No data on source of the fire. No conclusions drawn, modern vehicles are better engineered though and as older vehicles are retired so I would expect the incident rate to continue to fall.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/915799/road-vehicles-fires-dataset-guidance-sep20.pdf

I have experienced 2 wiring overheating incidents with a quite a bit of smoke. The first was on a Mk1 Cortina in the 60s, a wire had chafed and shorted before the fuse blew, all repairable. Quite an experience though. The second was on my GTV8, I was able to reach for the battery isolator. Don't think that helped because the fuse had already blown. The wire to the overdrive switch had chafed on the gearbox and shorted, the P clip was missing. I have been round my MG wiring and where it goes through pierced holes I have routed it through cable ties, axially split convoluted plastic hose.

<https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/US-Fire-Problem/osvehiclefires.pdf>

This website reports US vehicle fire stats, some big numbers as you would expect, but the same decreasing trend as England.

See our [earlier articles](#) on this topic.