

Gatwick Express carriage fire causes travel chaos after Victoria station shut

One of London's busiest rail stations was evacuated today because of a fire on a train, causing travel chaos throughout the capital.



A fire engine arrives at Victoria Station in London Photo: Alex Benwell

By Andrew Hough

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Trains at Victoria station were suspended after services were unable to leave and arrive following the fire on a Gatwick Express service.

Witnesses reported that the fire was "burning" on one of the Class 442 carriages just before 7am, filling the station with smoke.

Authorities said the train was empty at the time and no one had been reported as injured.



Hundreds of commuters were left standing outside the central London terminal after authorities evacuated the terminal.

Thousands of other commuters were stranded on trains throughout south London, the Home Counties and southern areas of England, for more than an hour.

Authorities warned that severe delays would result for much of the morning. The Gatwick Express is the main train service between central London and the airport.

One commuter said: "There were hundreds of people standing outside the gates after the police had shut them. There was a lot of dissatisfaction among commuters gathering outside, who were speculating as to what had gone on.

"No one was telling us what was going on."

Tom Edwards, an antiques dealer from London, who was trying to get a train to visit his mother, said he spotted flames and black smoke coming from the train.

"There was just a little bit of flames by the wheels," he said.

"They put it out and then started chucking everybody out of the building.

"There was no panic. It could have got pretty bad if they hadn't done something about it straight away."

London Fire Brigade confirmed a train was on fire and said crews were attending.



A staff member from Southeastern trains had told waiting commuters: "Everything's been stopped."

On its Twitter feed, Southern rail confirmed the damaged train was a Gatwick Express service, adding: "No one was hurt which was good."

Network Rail said the station had been evacuated, and no services were "running into or out of the station" for a while.

Station gates were opened and commuters were being allowed about 7.45am, although major delays are expected.

Platforms 12-13-14 will remain closed, authorities said.

The fire comes a day after a helicopter crashed at Vauxhall, just a few miles to the south-east.