



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

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## Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Valerie Foushee (D-NC)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight**

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:  
*Examining the Risk: The Dangers of EV Fires for First Responders*

February 29, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Obernolte, and thank you for holding today's hearing on this important topic.

The issue of firefighter safety is very near and dear to me: my husband, Stanley, was a firefighter for over 30 years and served as the Fire Marshal for the town of Carrboro, North Carolina before his retirement. I witnessed firsthand the bravery and dedication that my husband and his firefighting comrades brought to the job, as well as the sacrifices that firefighters and their families are required to make. I am incredibly grateful for their service, and we should all be grateful for the service of firefighters around the nation. We must do everything possible to support them and keep them safe, the way they keep us safe every single day.

Today's hearing is focused on electric vehicles, and the distinct safety risks that electric vehicles pose for firefighters and first responders. A key task when considering any emerging technology is to understand the novel challenges posed by the technology and then learn how to mitigate those risks so that society can enjoy its full benefits. Electric vehicles are no different.

It is important to note that EVs are a critical piece of America's clean energy transition, and that the rapid adoption of EVs is essential to achieving President Biden's ambitious goal to make the United States a net-zero emitter of greenhouse gases by 2050. I am proud to say that my home state of North Carolina has become a leader in the development and deployment of EVs here in the U.S.

Furthermore, based on currently available data, there is no reason to believe that EVs are any more likely to catch fire than traditional vehicles powered by internal combustion engines. Nevertheless, EV battery fires are different from internal combustion engine fires, and therefore pose a distinctive risk in terms of firefighter and first responder safety.

I appreciate that today's discussion will be rooted in science, because we cannot understand the safety risks of EVs without understanding the scientific basis that underlies them. Today's EVs are mostly powered by lithium-ion batteries, which offer great benefits when it comes to energy efficiency but can suffer extensive damage from high-speed crashes.

The sources of EV safety risk that we will discuss, such as electric shock, stranded energy, thermal runaway, reignition, and toxic chemical release, are primarily associated with the properties and characteristics of lithium-ion batteries when those batteries are damaged. I believe there are tremendous opportunities for scientific research to reduce these risks by advancing our understanding

of why lithium-ion batteries react in these ways, how the design of lithium-ion batteries can be improved to lessen the risk of fires, and what innovative tools and techniques can be developed to aid firefighters and first responders as they respond to EV fires in real time.

I hope to learn more today about the latest research developments surrounding lithium-ion battery safety, the research gaps that currently exist, and the most promising research pathways towards batteries that are less prone to fire hazards.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to both of our witnesses for your testimony at today's hearing. We are fortunate to hear both of your perspectives, as a leader in the firefighting community and a leader in the field of battery safety research. It is crucial to bring these worlds together to ensure that firefighters and first responders possess the knowledge and the technical capabilities that they need to respond to EV fires safely and effectively.

And Chief Munsey, thank you for your service.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.