



FACT SHEET » RESEARCH

An Overview of the U.S. Fire Problem

In 2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,345,500 fires. These fires caused 3,280 civilian deaths and 15,700 civilian injuries. In the same year, 68 firefighters were fatally injured and 68,085 firefighters experienced non-fatal injuries while on duty.

The 2015 fire statistics (except those for firefighter fatalities) are projections derived from NFPA's annual fire department survey. The 2,605 departments that responded to the sample survey protect 126 million people, or 39% of the total U.S. population.

On average, U.S. fire departments responded to:

- ▶ A fire every 23 seconds
- ▶ A structure fire every 63 seconds
- ▶ A home fire every 86 seconds
- ▶ An outside or unclassified fire every 52 seconds
- ▶ A highway vehicle fire every 181 seconds

On average, fire claimed nine lives every day.

Highway vehicle fires caused 14% of the civilian fire deaths.

In 2015, the 445 deaths caused by car, truck, and related vehicle fires was more than five times the 80 deaths resulting from non-residential structure fires.

Three of every five road vehicle fire deaths resulted from fires caused by collisions or overturns.

Roughly half (48%) of all reported fires were outside or unclassified types of fires.

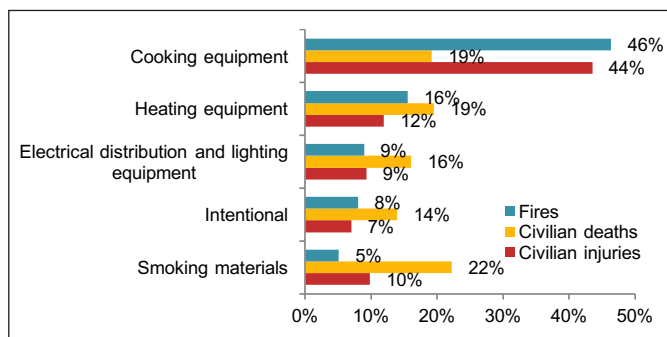
Brush, grass, or forest fires accounted for 22% of these fires; 12% were outside rubbish fires, 6% were outside fire involving property of value, and 8% were unclassified or other non-structure, non-vehicle fires.

Home Structure Fires

In 2015, home structure fires caused 78% of the civilian fire deaths and 71% of the civilian fire injuries. (Homes include one- and two-family homes, apartments, townhouses, row houses, and manufactured homes.)

The graph below shows how the leading causes vary depending on whether the interest is in fires, deaths, or injuries.

Leading causes of home structure fires: 2010–2014



Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries and is tied for the second leading cause of home fire deaths.

Unattended cooking is the leading factor contributing to these fires. Frying poses the greatest risk of fire.

More than half of all cooking fire injuries occurred when people tried to fight the fire themselves.

Smoking has been the leading cause of home fire deaths for decades.

Two-thirds (66%) of the home smoking material fire fatalities resulted from fires originating with upholstered furniture or with mattresses or bedding.



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Heating equipment was involved in one of every five home fire deaths.

Heating equipment ranked second in reported home fires, home fire deaths (tied with cooking), and home fire injuries. Portable and fixed space heaters, including wood stoves, are involved in more fires than central heat. These fires are also more likely to result in death than central heating fires.

Intentional fires were the fourth leading cause of home fires.

Intentional fire setting was blamed for 8% of home fires, 14% of home fire deaths, and 7% of home fire injuries. According to FBI statistics, two out of every five people arrested for arson in recent years were under 18.

Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was the fourth leading cause of home fires.

This category includes fixed wiring, meters, switches, receptacles, outlets, cords and plugs, and lighting equipment. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 9% of home fires and fire injuries and 16% of home fire deaths.

Electrical factors can play a role in any fire involving equipment powered by electricity. Electrical failures were factors in 13% of home fires.

Almost all U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm, but three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or none that worked.

People who are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications, have disabilities, or are very close to where the fire started, may not be able to act on a smoke alarm's warning. Nuisance alarms are the leading reason for disabling smoke alarms.

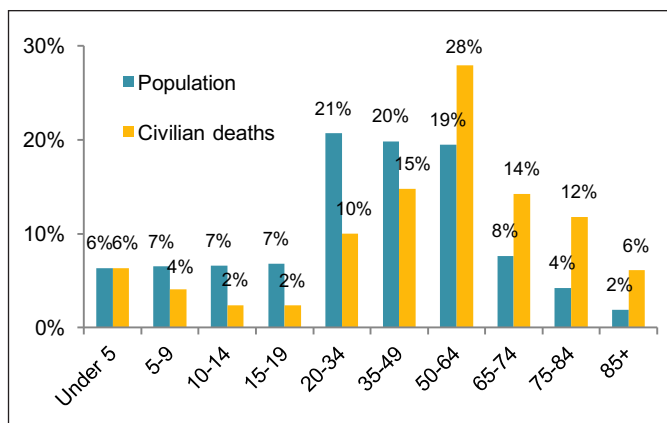
Sprinklers decrease the fire death rate per 1,000 reported home fires by about 80%.

NFPA's Fire Sprinkler Initiative®: Bringing Safety Home is a nationwide effort to encourage the use of home fire sprinklers and the adoption of fire sprinkler requirements for new construction.

See www.firesprinklerinitiative.org.

Compared to their share of the population, older adults were more likely to die in home fires than people in other age groups.

Percent of population and home fire deaths and injuries by age group: 2010–2014



States with the highest fire death rates tend to have higher percentages of:

- ▶ Adults who did not finish high school
- ▶ African American or Native American residents
- ▶ Smokers
- ▶ Households living in poverty
- ▶ People living in rural areas

Source: NFPA Research: www.nfpa.org/research

Contact information: 617-984-7451 or research@nfpa.org



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