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Home Fire Safety

Fact Sheet: FACTS ON FIRE

Fire in the United States

- The U.S. has one of the highest fire death rates in the industrialized world. For 2001, exclusive of the events of September 11, the U.S. fire death rate was 13.4 deaths per million population.
- Between 1992 and 2001, an average of 4,266 Americans lost their lives and another 24,913 were injured annually as the result of fire. These averages do not reflect the events of September 11.
- About 100 firefighters are killed each year in duty-related incidents.
- Each year, fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined.
- At least 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in residences.
- Between 1992 and 2001, an average of 1.9 million fires were reported each year. Many others go unreported, causing additional injuries and property loss.
- In 2001, direct property loss due to fires was an estimated \$10.6 billion. Additionally, \$33.4 billion in property was lost due to the events of September 11, 2001.

Where Fires Occur

- There were 1,734,500 fires in the United States in 2001. Of these:
 - 50% were Outside Fires
 - 30% were Structure Fires
 - 20% were Vehicle Fires
- Residential fires represent 23 percent of all fires and 76 percent of structure fires.
- Fires in 1-2 family dwellings most often start in the:
 1. Kitchen 25.5%
 2. Bedroom 13.7%
 3. Living Room 8.6%
 4. Chimney 8.2%
 5. Laundry Area 5.0%
- Apartment fires most often start in the:
 0. Kitchen 48.5%
 1. Bedroom 13.4%
 2. Living Room 6.4%
 3. Laundry Area 3.5%
 4. Bathroom 2.4%
- The South has the highest fire death rate per-capita with 17.8 civilian deaths per million population.
- 81% of all civilian fire deaths occur in the home.

Causes of Fires and Fire Deaths

- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. It is also the leading cause of home fire injuries. Cooking fires often result from unattended cooking and human error, rather than mechanical failure of stoves or ovens.
- Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths. Smoke alarms and smolder-resistant bedding and upholstered furniture are significant fire deterrents.
- Arson is both the second leading cause of residential fires and residential fire deaths. In commercial properties, arson is the major cause of deaths, injuries and dollar loss.
- Heating is the third leading cause of residential fires. Heating fires are a larger problem in single family homes than in apartments. Unlike apartments, the heating systems in single family homes are often not professionally maintained.

Who is Most at Risk (1994-1998)

- Senior citizens age 65 and over and children under the age of 5 have the greatest risk of fire death.
- The fire death risk among seniors over 65 is more than double; over age 75 triple; over age 85, 3 and one half times the average population.
- Children under the age of 10 accounted for an estimated 22.2 percent of all fire deaths.
- Men die or are injured in fires almost twice as often as women.
- African Americans and American Indians have significantly higher death rates per capita than the national average.
- Although African Americans comprise 13 percent of the population, they account for 26 percent of fire deaths.

What Saves Lives (1994-1998)

- A working smoke alarm dramatically increases a person's chance of surviving a fire.
- Over 90 percent of U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm. However, these alarms are not always properly maintained and as a result might not work in an emergency. There has been a disturbing increase over the last ten years in the number of fires that occur in homes with non-functioning alarms.
- It is estimated that over 39 percent of residential fires and 52 percent of residential fatalities occur in homes with no smoke alarms.
- Residential sprinklers have become more cost effective for homes. Currently, few homes are protected by them.

Source: National Fire Protection Association 2001 Fire Loss in the U.S., National Fire Protection Association 2001 U.S. Fire Problem, National Fire Protection Association Home Fire Casualties by Age and Sex, and National Fire Data Center Fire in the United States 1989-1998 12th Edition