

# **FIRE LOSS IN THE UNITED STATES DURING 2006**

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**Fire Analysis and Research Division**  
**National Fire Protection Association**

**September 2007**



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**[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)**

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## **Abstract**

U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,642,500 fires. These fires resulted in 3,245 civilian fire fatalities, 16,400 civilian fire injuries and an estimated \$11,307,000,000 in direct property loss. There was a civilian fire death every 162 minutes and a civilian fire injury every 32 minutes in 2006. Home fires caused 2,580, or 80%, of the civilian fire deaths. Fires accounted for seven percent of the 24,470,000 total calls. Nine percent of the calls were false alarms; sixty-two percent of the calls were for aid such as EMS.

Keywords: fire fatalities, fire injuries, fire losses, fire statistics, intentional fires, region fire department calls, intentional fires

## **Acknowledgements**

The NFPA gratefully thanks the many fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey for their continuing efforts for providing us in a timely manner the data so necessary to make national projections.

The survey project manager and author of the report gratefully thanks the many members of NFPA staff who worked on this year's survey including Frank Deely, John Baldi, and John Conlon for editing the survey forms and their follow-up calls to fire departments; and Norma Candeloro for handling the processing of survey forms and typing this report.

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## Overview of 2006 U.S. Fire Experience

### Number of Fires

- 1,642,500 fires were attended by public fire departments, an increase of 2.5% from the year before.
- 524,000 fires occurred in structures, an increase of 2.5%.
- 412,500 fires or 79% of all structure fires occurred in residential properties.
- 278,000 fires occurred in vehicles, a decrease of 4.1% from the year before.
- 840,500 fires occurred in outside properties, an increase of 4.9%.
- What do these fire frequencies above mean? Every 19 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the nation. A fire occurs in a structure at the rate of one every 60 seconds, and in particular a residential fire occurs every 76 seconds. Fires occur in vehicles at the rate of 1 every 113 seconds, and there's a fire in an outside property every 38 seconds.

## **Civilian Fire Deaths**

- 3,245 civilian fire deaths occurred in 2006, a decrease of 11.7%.
- About 80% of all fire deaths occurred in the home.
- 2,580 civilian fire deaths occurred in the home, a decrease of 14.9%.
- 445 civilians died in highway vehicle fires.
- 85 civilians died in nonresidential structure fires.
- Nationwide, there was a civilian fire death every 162 minutes.

## **Civilian Fire Injuries**

- 16,400 civilian fire injuries occurred in 2006, a decrease of 8.5%. This estimate for civilian injuries is on the low side, due to under reporting of civilian injuries to the fire service.
- 12,925 of all civilian injuries occurred in residential properties, while 1,425 occurred in nonresidential structure fires.
- Nationwide, there was a civilian fire injury every 32 minutes.

## **Property Damage**

- An estimated \$11,307,000,000 in property damage occurred as a result of fire in 2006, an increase of 6.0% from last year.
- \$9,636,000,000 of property damage occurred in structure fires.
- \$6,990,000,000 of property loss occurred in residential properties.

## **Intentionally Set Fires**

- An estimated 31,000 intentionally set structure fires occurred in 2006, a slight decrease of 1.6%.
- Intentionally set fires in structures resulted in 305 civilian deaths, a decrease of 3.2%.
- Intentionally set structure fires also resulted in \$755,000,000 in property loss, a significant increase of 13.7%.
- 20,500 intentionally set vehicle fires occurred, a decrease of 2.4% from a year ago, and caused \$134,000,000 in property damage, an increase of 18.6% from a year ago.



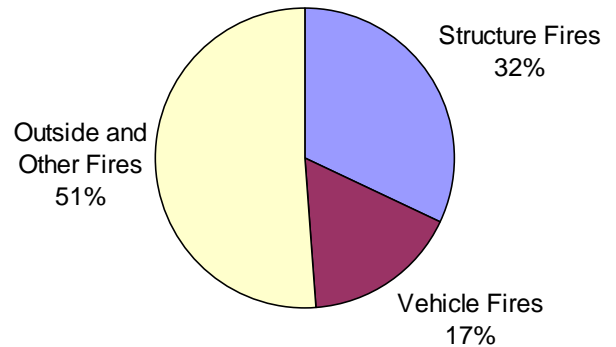
# Fires in the United States During 2006



**1,642,500** fires were reported in the U.S. during 2006.

- up **3%** from 2005
- **3,245** civilian fire deaths
- One civilian death occurred every 2 hours and 42 minutes
- **16,400** civilian fire injuries
- One civilian injury occurred every 32 minutes
- **\$11.3 billion** in property damage
- A fire department responded to a fire every 19 seconds

Fires in the United States During 2006



**524,000** structure fires occurred in the U.S. during 2006.

- up **3%** from 2005
- **2,705** civilian fire deaths
- **14,350** civilian fire injuries
- **\$9.6 billion** in property damage
- One structure fire was reported every 60 seconds



**278,000** vehicle fires occurred in the U.S. during 2006.



- down **4%** from 2005
- **490** civilian fire deaths
- **1,200** civilian fire injuries
- **\$1.3 billion** in property damage
- One vehicle fire was reported every 113 seconds

**840,500** outside and other fires occurred in the U.S. during 2006.

- up **5%** from 2005
- **50** civilian fire deaths
- **850** civilian fire injuries
- **\$0.4 billion** in property damage
- One outside fire was reported every 38 seconds



## **Number of Fires**

In 2006, public fire departments responded to 1,642,500 fires in the United States, according to estimates based on data the NFPA received from fire departments responding to its 2006 National Fire Experience Survey (see Tables 1 and 2). This represents an increase of 2.5% from a year ago, and is the highest total since 2002 when fire departments responded to 1,687,500 fires.

There was an estimated 524,000 structure fires reported to fire departments in 2006, an increase of 2.5%. For the 1977-2006 period, the number of structure fires were at their peak in 1977 when 1,098,000 structure fires occurred (see Figure 1). The number of structure fires then decreased quite steadily particularly in the 1980s to 688,000 by the end of 1989 for an overall decrease of 37.3% from 1977. Since 1989, structure fires again decreased quite steadily 24.7% to 517,500 by the end of 1998 and has stayed in the 505,000 to 526,000 area from 1999 to 2006.

Fire incident rates by community size were examined for the 2002-2006 period (See Figure 2). The smallest communities (populations less than 2,500) had the highest rate with 12.3 fires per thousand population.

Of the structure fires, 412,500 were residential fires, accounting for 78.7% of all structure fires, and an increase of 4.2% from a year ago (see Table 3). Of the residential structure fires, 304,500 occurred in one- and two-family dwellings, accounting for 58.1% of all structure fires. Another 91,500 occurred in apartments accounting for 17.5% of all structure fires.

For nonresidential structure fires, most property types changed little in 2006, though changes occurred in several property types: a decrease of 13.0% in store and office properties to 20,000, a 10.0% increase in other residential properties to 16,500, and an increase of 8.3% in educational properties to 6,500.

For the 1977-2006 period, the number of outside fires were at their high in 1977 when 1,658,500 outside fires occurred. The number of outside fires decreased steadily the next six years to 1,011,000 in 1983 for a considerable decrease of 39.0% from 1977. Outside fires changed little for the rest of the 1980s except for 1988 when 1,214,000 occurred. Outside fires dropped to 910,500 in 1993, and stayed near the 1,000,000 level the next three years. Since 1997, the number of outside fires stayed in the 839,000 to 861,500 level except for 1999 when they jumped to 931,500 and during the 2003-05 period when they were at the 727,500 to 801,000 level.

In 2006, there were 840,500 outside fires, an increase of 4.9% from a year ago. In particular, brush fires increased 9.5% to 415,500.



**Table 1**  
**Estimates of 2006 Fires, Civilian Deaths, Civilian Injuries**  
**and Property Loss in the United States**

	Estimate	Range <sup>1</sup>	Percent Change From 2005
Number of Fires	1,642,500	1,613,500 to 1,671,500	+2.5*
Number of Civilian Deaths	3,245	2,905 to 3,585	-11.7
Number of Civilian Injuries	16,400	15,600 to 17,200	-8.5*
Property Loss <sup>2</sup>	\$11,307,000,000	\$10,997,000,000 to 11,617,000,000	+6.0**

The estimates are based on data reported to the NFPA by fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey.

<sup>1</sup> These are 95 percent confidence intervals.

<sup>2</sup> This includes overall direct property loss to contents, structures, vehicles, machinery, vegetation, and anything else involved in a fire. It does not include indirect losses. No adjustment was made for inflation in the year-to-year comparison.

\*Change was statistically significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Change was statistically significant at the .01 level.

**Table 2  
Estimates of 2006 Fires and  
Property Loss by Property Use**

Type of Fire	Number of Fires		Property Loss <sup>1</sup>	
	Estimate	Percent Change from 2005	Estimate	Percent Change from 2005
Fires in Structures	524,000	+2.5*	\$9,636,000,000	+4.8*
Fires in Highway Vehicles	250,000	-3.5	982,000,000	-6.4
Fires in Other Vehicles <sup>2</sup>	28,000	-9.7	337,000,000	+25.3**
Fires Outside of structures with value involved but no vehicle (outside storage, crops, timber, etc.)	82,500	+5.8	262,000,000	181.7** <sup>3</sup>
Fires in Brush, Grass Wildland (excluding crops and timber) with no value or loss involved	415,500	+9.5**	—	—
Fires in Rubbish including dumpsters (outside of structures), with no value or loss involved	212,000	-1.4	—	—
All Other Fires	130,500	+1.6	90,000,000	+32.4
Total	1,642,500	+2.5*	\$11,307,000,000	+6.0**

The estimates are based on data reported to the NFPA by fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey.

<sup>1</sup> This includes overall direct property loss to contents, structure, a vehicle, machinery, vegetation or anything else involved in a fire. It does not include indirect losses, e.g., business interruption or temporary shelter costs. No adjustment was made for inflation in the year-to-year comparison.

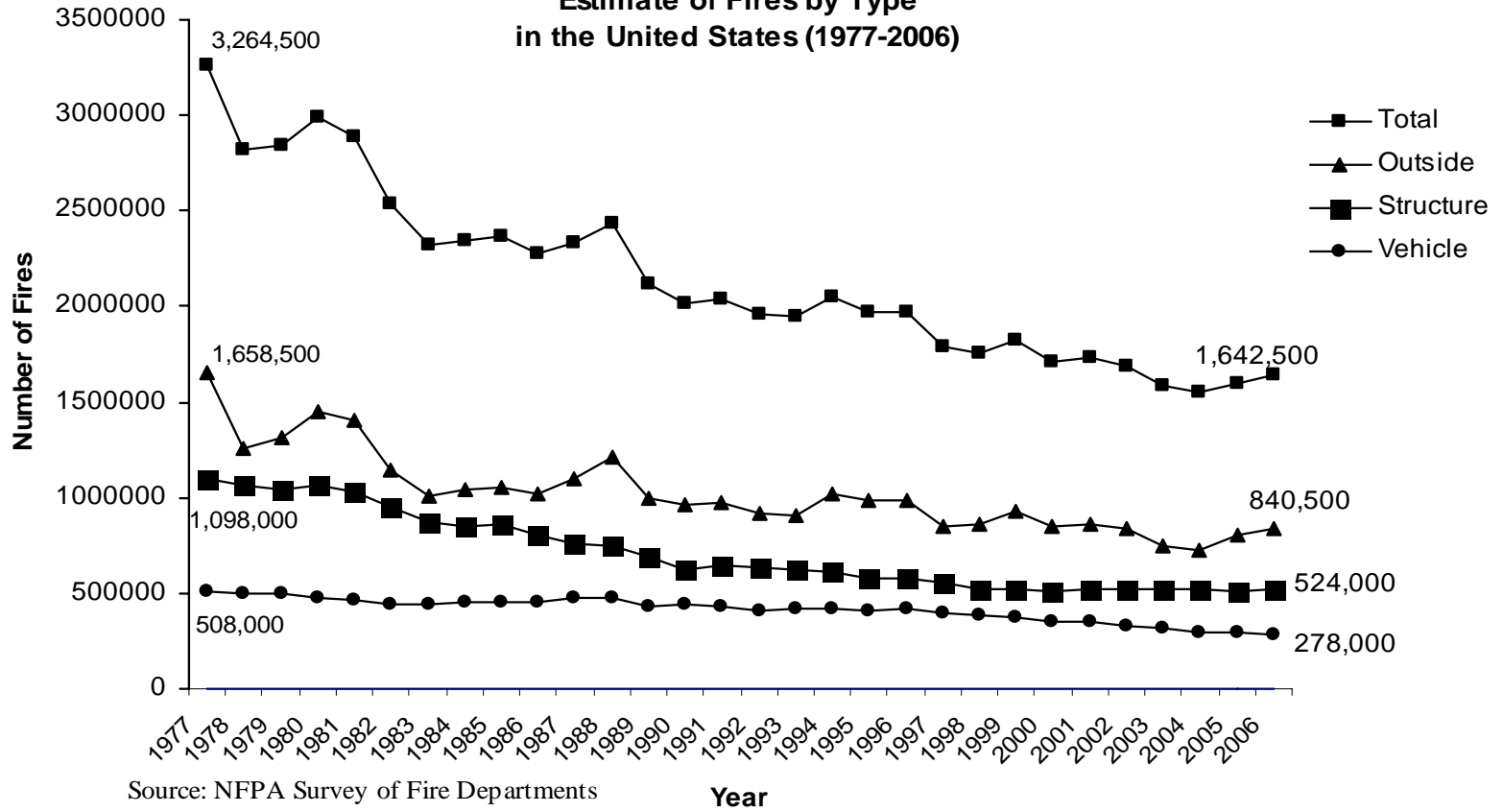
<sup>2</sup> This includes trains, boats, ships, aircraft, farm vehicles and construction vehicles.

<sup>3</sup> This includes a wildfire incident that resulted in \$95 million in property damage.

\*Change was statistically significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Change was statistically significant at the .01 level.

**Figure 1**  
**Estimate of Fires by Type**  
**in the United States (1977-2006)**



Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments  
 for U.S. Fire Experience, (1977-2006)

**Table 3**  
**Estimates of 2006 Structure Fires and**  
**Property Loss by Property Use**

Property Use	Structure Fires		Property Loss <sup>1</sup>	
	Estimate	Percent Change from 2005	Estimate	Percent Change from 2005
Public Assembly	13,500	0	\$444,000,000	+38.8**
Educational	6,500	+8.3	105,000,000	+56.7**
Institutional	7,500	0	42,000,000	+5.0
Residential (Total)	412,500	+4.2**	6,990,000,000	+1.7
One- and Two-Family Dwellings <sup>2</sup>	304,500	+6.1**	5,936,000,000	+2.7
Apartments	91,500	-2.7	896,000,000	-5.5
Other Residential <sup>3</sup>	16,500	+10.0	158,000,000	+8.2
Stores and Offices	20,000	-13.0	691,000,000	+0.6
Industry, Utility, Defense <sup>4</sup>	11,500	0	573,000,000	+52.4**
Storage in Structures	29,500	-1.7	650,000,000	+10.2
Special Structures	23,000	-2.1	141,000,000	-40.8**
Total	524,000	+2.5*	\$9,636,000,000	+4.8*

The estimates are based on data reported to the NFPA by fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey.

<sup>1</sup> This includes overall direct property loss to contents, structure, a vehicle, machinery, vegetation or anything else involved in a fire. It does not include indirect losses, e.g., business interruption or temporary shelter costs. No adjustment was made for inflation in the year-to-year comparison.

<sup>2</sup> This includes manufactured homes.

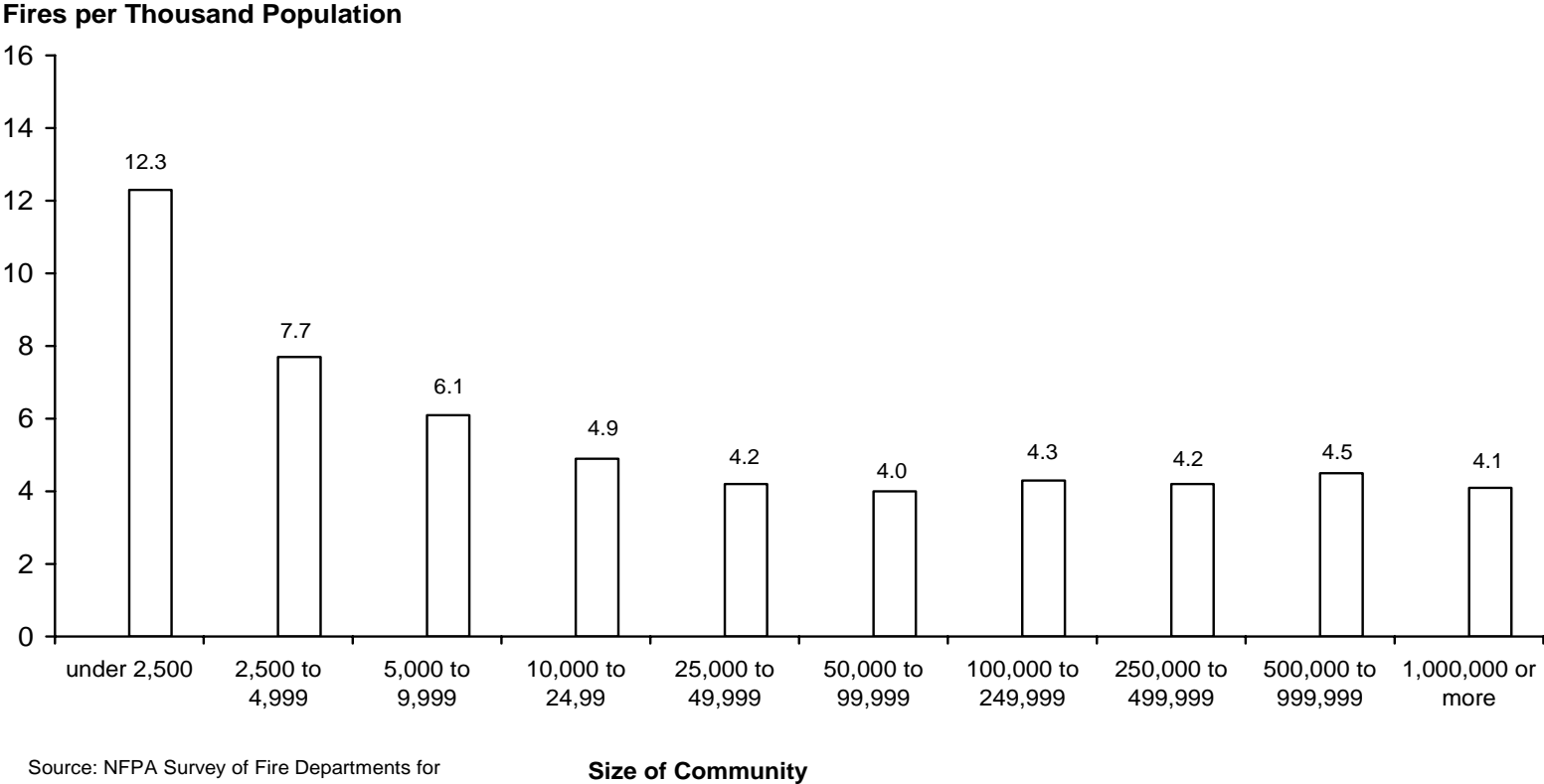
<sup>3</sup> Includes hotels and motels, college dormitories, boarding houses, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Incidents handled only by private fire brigades or fixed suppression systems are not included in the figures shown here.

\*Change was statistically significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Change was statistically significant at the .01 level.

**Figure 2. Fires per Thousand Population  
by Size of Community (2002-2006)**



Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, (2002-2006)

## **Civilian Deaths**

The 1,642,500 fires reported to by fire departments in the U.S. in 2006 resulted in an estimated 3,245 civilian deaths based on data reported to the NFPA (see Table 4). This is a decrease of 11.7% from last year, and the lowest total since the NFPA started using its current survey methodology in 1977-78. The nature of this decrease is better understood when results are examined by property type.

An estimated 2,620 civilians died in residential fires in 2006, a decrease of 14.2%. Of these deaths, 425 occurred in apartment fires. Another 2,155 civilians died in one- and two-family dwelling fires, a decrease of 16.1%. Most of the decrease is due to a 49% drop in death rate for departments that protect communities of 5,000 to 9,999, and a 30% drop in the death rate for departments that protect communities of 2,500 to 4,999 people. Though encouraged by this drop in 2006, we must remain cautious because death rates can vary considerably from year to year, particularly for smaller communities.

In all, fires in the home (one- and two-family dwellings including manufactured homes and apartments) resulted in 2,580 civilian deaths, a decrease of 14.9% from a year ago. Looking at trends in civilian deaths since 1977-78<sup>1</sup>, several observations are worth noting (see Figure 3). Home fire deaths were at their peak in 1978 when 6,015 fire deaths occurred. Home fire deaths then decreased steadily during the 1979-82 period except for 1981, and decreased a substantial 20% during the period to 4,820 by the end of 1982. From 1982 to 1988, the number of home fire deaths stayed quite level in the 4,655 to 4,955 area except for 1984 when 4,075 fire deaths occurred. In the past seventeen years, home fire deaths moved well below the 1982-88 plateau and has stayed in the 3,140 to 3,720 area during 1991 to 2006 except for 1996, 1999, 2001-02, and 2005-06.

With home fire deaths still accounting for 2,580 fire deaths or 80% of all civilian deaths, fire safety initiatives targeted at the home remain the key to any reductions in the overall fire death toll. Five major strategies are: First, more widespread public fire safety education is needed on how to prevent fires and how to avoid serious injury or death if fire occurs. Information on the common causes of fatal home fires should continue to be used in the design of fire safety education messages. Second, more people must use and maintain smoke detectors and develop and practice escape plans. Third, wider use of residential sprinklers must be aggressively pursued. Fourth, additional ways must be sought to make home products more fire safe. The regulations requiring more child-resistant lighters are a good example, as are requirements for cigarettes, with reduced ignition strength (generally called “fire-safe” cigarettes). The wider use of upholstered

**Table 4**  
**Estimates of 2006 Civilian Fire Deaths and Injuries by Property Use**

Property Use	Civilian Deaths			Civilian Injuries		
	Estimate	Percent Change From 2005	Percent of all Civilian Deaths	Estimate	Percent Change From 2005	Percent of all Civilian Injuries
Residential (total)	2,620	-14.2	80.7	12,925	-6.5	78.8
One-and-Two-Family Dwellings <sup>1</sup>	2,155	-16.1	66.4	8,800	-14.5*	53.7
Apartments	425	-7.6	13.1	3,700	+23.3**	22.5
Other Residential <sup>2</sup>	40	+60.0	1.2	425	-19.1	2.6
Non-residential Structures <sup>3</sup>	85	+70.0	2.6	1,425	-5.0	8.7
Highway Vehicles	445	-11.0	13.7	1,075	-25.9	6.5
Other Vehicles <sup>4</sup>	45	+125.0 <sup>5</sup>	1.4	125	-37.5*	0.8
All Other <sup>6</sup>	50	0	1.5	850	-10.5	5.2
Total	3,245	-11.7		16,400	-8.5*	

Estimates are based on data reported to the NFPA by fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey. Note that most changes were not statistically significant; considerable year-to-year fluctuation is to be expected for many of these totals because of their small size.

<sup>1</sup>This includes manufactured homes.

<sup>2</sup> Includes hotels and motels, college dormitories, boarding houses, etc.

<sup>3</sup> This includes public assembly, educational, institutional, store and office, industry, utility, storage, and special structure properties.

<sup>4</sup> This includes trains, boats, ships, farm vehicles and construction vehicles.

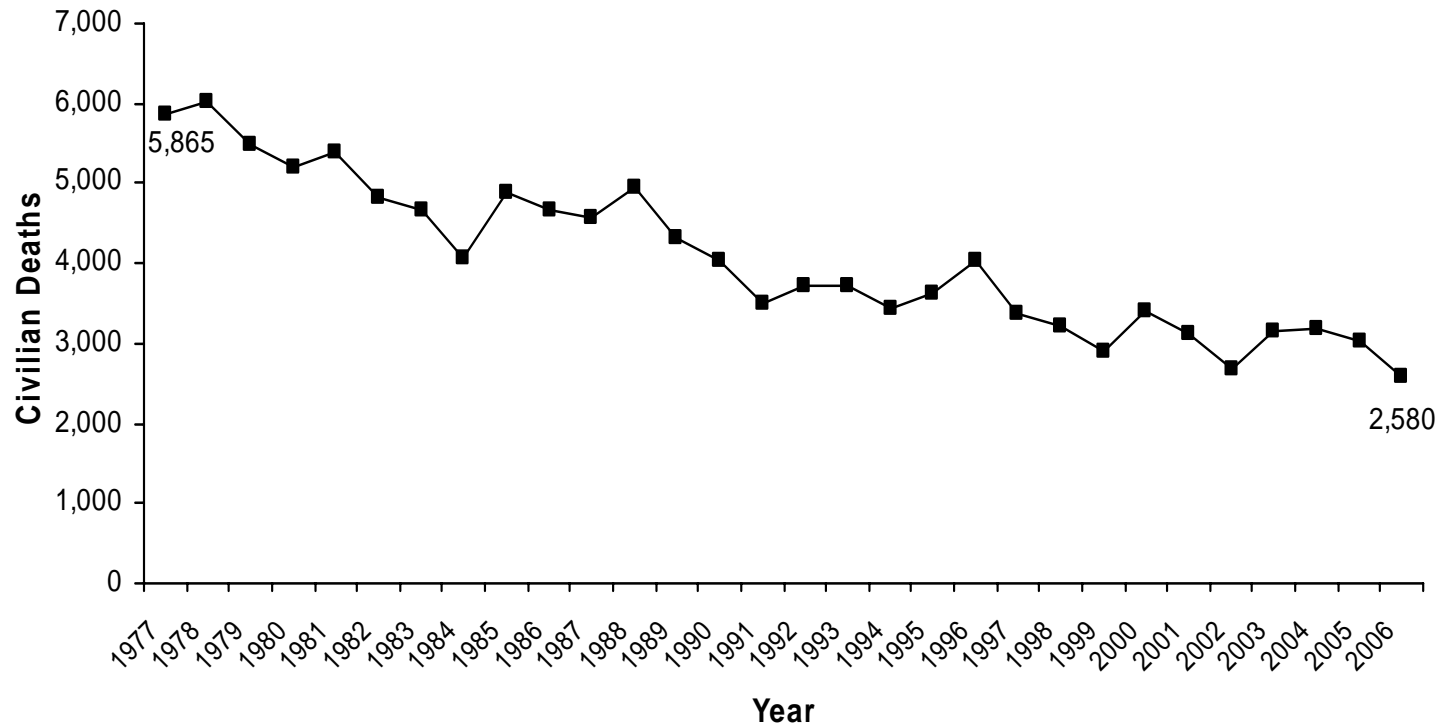
<sup>5</sup> This increase reflects an airplane crash and ensuing fire where 24 people died as a result of fire.

<sup>6</sup>This includes outside properties with value, as well as brush, rubbish, and other outside locations.

\*Change was statistically significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Change was statistically significant at the .01 level.

**Figure 3. Civilian Fire Deaths  
in the Home in the United States (1977-2006)**



Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments  
for U.S. Fire Experience (1977-2006)



furniture and mattresses that are more resistant to cigarette ignitions is an example of change that has already accomplished much and will continue to do more. Fifth, the special fire safety needs of high-risk groups, e.g., the young, older adults, and the poor need to be addressed.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Also in 2006, 85 civilians died in nonresidential structure fires, an increase of 70.0%, and similar to the 2004 level.

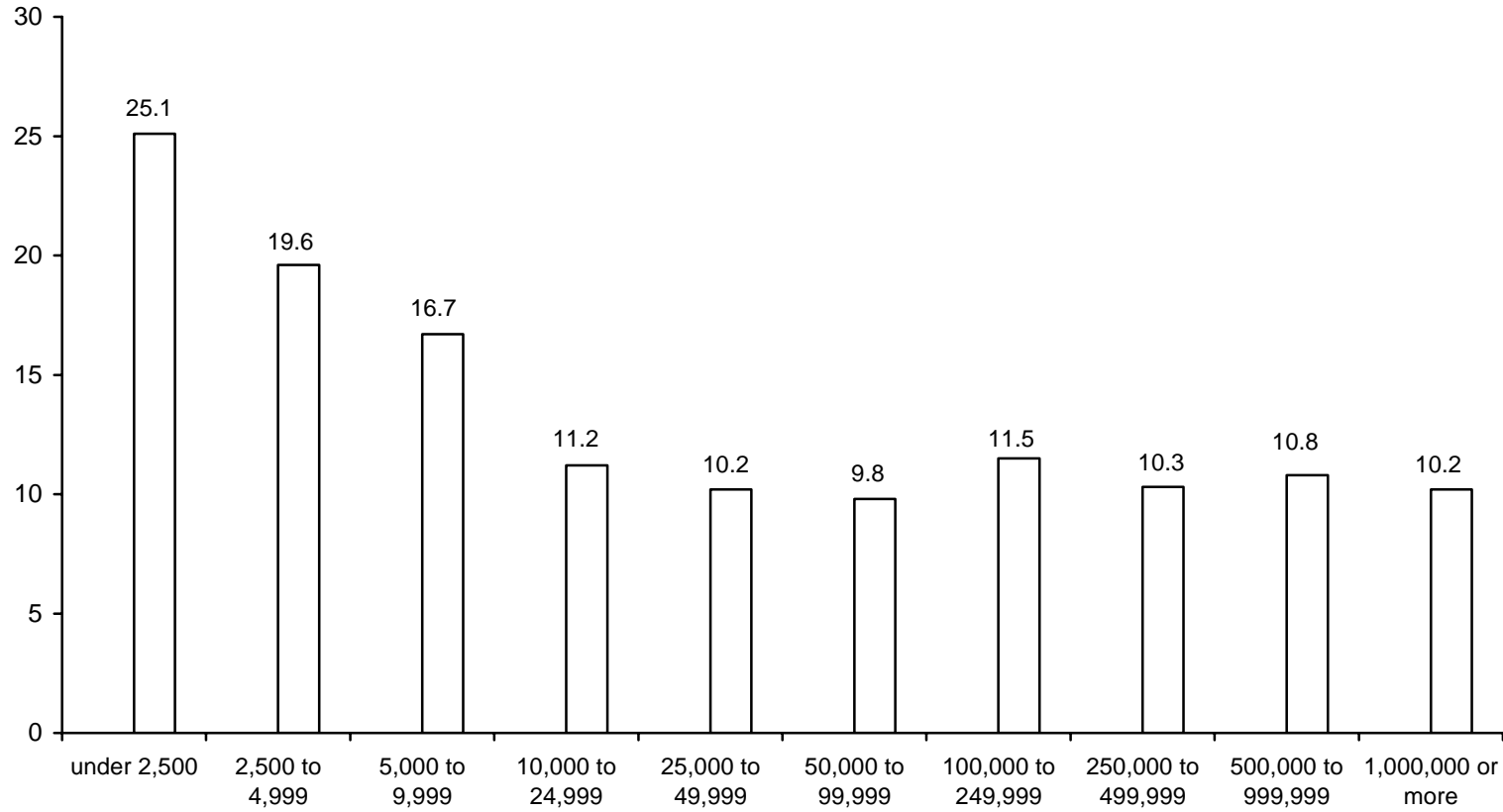
Civilian fire death rates by size of community were examined for the 2002-06 period (see Figure 4). The smallest communities (under 2,500 population) had the highest rate. The rate for communities under 2,500 population was more than twice the national average rate.

Of the 2,705 civilians that died in structure fires, 305 or 11.2% died in fires that were intentionally set.

Also in 2006, 445 civilians died in highway vehicle fires, a decrease of 11.7%, the lowest it's been since 2002. Another 45 civilians died in other vehicle fires, and this includes 24 civilians who died as a result of fire and smoke in an airplane crash incident.

**Figure 4. Civilian Fire Deaths per Million Population  
By Size of Community (2002-2006)**

**Civilian Fire Deaths per Million People**



Source: NFPA's Annual Survey of Fire Departments  
for U.S. Fire Experience (2002-06)

**Size of Community**

## **Civilian Fire Injuries**

Results based on data reported to the NFPA indicate that in addition to 3,245 civilian fire deaths, there were 16,400 civilian injuries in 2006 (see Table 4). This represents a decrease of 8.5% from last year, and is the lowest it's been since 1977-78 when the NFPA started using its current survey methodology.

Estimates of civilian fire injuries are on the low side, because many civilian injuries are not reported to the fire service. For example, many injuries occur at small fires that fire departments do not respond to, and sometime when departments do respond they may be unaware of injured persons that they did not transport to medical facilities.

The NFPA estimates that there were 12,925 civilians injured in residential properties, a decrease of 6.5%. Of these injuries, 8,800 occurred in one- and two-family dwellings, while 3,700 occurred in apartments.

For the 1977-2006 period, the number of civilian injuries has ranged from a high of 31,275 in 1983 to a low of 16,400 in 2006 for an overall decrease of 48%. There was no consistent pattern going up or down until 1995, when injuries fell roughly 5,000 in 1994-95 to 25,775, changed little in 1996, dropped 8% to 23,750 in 1997, changed little in 1998, dropped 5% in 1999, and then increased slightly in 2000, and then dropped 26% in 2001-2006 to 16,400 by the end of 2006.

## **Property Loss**

The NFPA estimates that the 1,642,500 fires responded to by the fire service caused \$11,307,000,000 in property damage in 2006. This is an increase of 6.0% from a year ago.

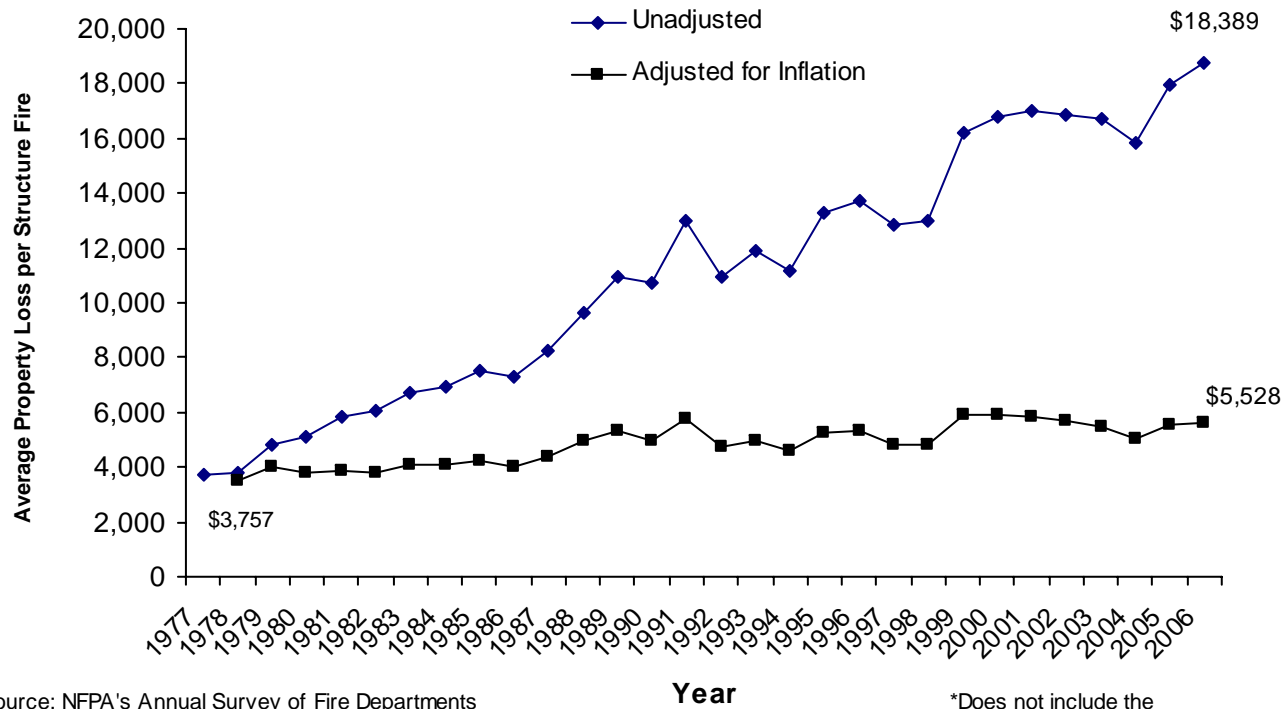
Fires in structures resulted in \$9,636,000,000, a significant increase of 4.8%. Average loss per structure fire was \$18,389, an increase of 2.2%.

Over the 1977-2006 period, and excluding the events of 9/11/01, the average loss per structure fire ranged from a low of \$3,757 to a high of \$18,389 in 2006 for an overall increase of 389%. When property loss is adjusted for inflation, the increase in the average structure fire loss between 1977 and 2006 is 47%.

Of the property loss in structure fires, \$6,990,000,000 occurred in residential properties, a slight increase of 1.7%. An estimated \$5,936,000,000 occurred in one- and two-family dwellings, an increase of 2.7%. An estimated \$896,000,000 also occurred in apartments.

Other property damage figures worth noting for 2006 include: \$573,000,000 in industrial properties, an increase of 52.4%; \$105,000,000 in educational properties, an

**Figure 5. U.S. Average Structure Loss per Structure\*  
Fire in the United States (1977-2006)**



Source: NFPA's Annual Survey of Fire Departments  
for U.S. Fire Experience (1977-2006)

\*Does not include the  
events of 9/11/01

increase of 56.7%; \$444,000,000 in public assembly properties, an increase of 38.8%; and \$262,000,000 in fires outside structure with value involved, an increase of 181.7%, and which includes a wildfire incident that resulted in \$95,000,000 in property damage.

It should be kept in mind that property loss totals can change dramatically from year to year because of the impact of occasional large loss fires. The NFPA provides an analysis of these large loss fires in the November/December issue of NFPA Journal every year.

### **Intentionally Set Fires**

Based on data reported by fire departments in the survey, the NFPA estimates there were 31,000 intentionally set structure fires in 2006, a slight decrease of 1.6% from a year ago. (Note the NFPA survey is based on the newly revised NFIRS 5.0 system. This new system has an intentionally set category which is equivalent to the old incendiary category. There is no new equivalent to the old suspicious category which has been eliminated.)

These intentionally set structure fires resulted in an estimated 305 civilian deaths, a decrease of 3.2%. These set structure fires also resulted in \$755,000,000 in property loss, a significant increase of 13.7%.

Also in 2006, there were an estimated 20,500 intentionally set vehicle fires, a decrease of 41.7% from a year ago. These set vehicle fires resulted in \$134,000,000, in property loss, an increase of 18.6%.

### **Region**

Fire loss rates nationwide and by region<sup>6</sup> can be seen in Table 6. The Northcentral had the highest rate with 7.4 fires per thousand people followed by the South (6.3).

The Northcentral with 17.2 had the highest death rate per million population followed by the South (13.0).

The Northcentral with 84.6 had the highest civilian injury rate per million population, while the West had the lowest (46.5).

The Northcentral with \$51.1 had the highest property loss per capita followed by the South (\$40.6).

**Table 5**  
**Estimate of 2006 Losses in**  
**Intentionally Set Structure Fires**

<b>Intentionally* Set Structure Fires</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Percent change from 2005</b>
Number of Structure Fires	31,000	-1.6
Civilian Deaths	305	-3.2
Property Loss <sup>1</sup>	\$755,000,000	+13.7**

The estimates are based on data reported to the NFPA by fire departments that responded to the 2006 National Fire Experience Survey.

<sup>1</sup> This includes overall direct property loss to contents, structure, a vehicle, machinery, vegetation, or anything else involved in a fire. It does not include indirect losses, e.g., business interruption or temporary shelter costs. No adjustment was made for inflation in the year-to-year comparison.

\*The NFPA Survey is based on the NFIRS 5.0 system. This new system has an intentionally set category which is equivalent to the old incendiary category. There is no new equivalent to the old suspicious category, which has been eliminated.

\*\*Change was statistically significant at the .05 level.

**Table 6**  
**Fire Loss Rates Nationwide and by Region, 2006**

<b><u>Region</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Fires per Thousand Population</u></b>	<b><u>Civilian Deaths per Million Population</u></b>	<b><u>Civilian Injuries per Million Population</u></b>	<b><u>Property Loss per Capita</u></b>
Nationwide	5.5	10.9	55.3	\$38.8
Northeast	5.2	8.4	58.8	36.4
Northcentral	7.4	17.2	84.6	51.1
South	6.3	13.0	50.5	40.6
West	4.3	6.6	46.5	34.9

Source: NFPA's; Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience.

Fire incident rates by region and community size are shown in Table 7. The Northcentral had the highest incident rates for communities of 250,000 to 499,999, and the South had the highest rates for communities of 50,000 to 249,999, communities of 10,000 to 24,999, and for smaller communities (populations of less than 10,000).

Civilian fire deaths per million population by region and community size are shown in Table 8. The Northeast had the highest rates for communities of 100,000 to 249,999, the Northcentral had the highest rates for communities of 250,000 or more, the West had the highest rate for communities of 25,000 to 49,999, and the South had the highest rates for communities of 50,000 to 99,999, communities of 10,000 to 24,999, and for smaller communities (populations of less than 10,000).

Civilian fire injuries per million population by region and community size are shown in Table 9. The Northcentral had the highest rate for communities of 250,000 or more, the West had the highest rate for communities of 5,000 to 9,999, the South had the highest rate for communities of less 2,500 population, and the Northeast had the highest rates for communities of 10,000 to 249,999 and communities of 2,500 to 4,999.

Property loss rates per capita by region and community size are shown in Table 10. The Northeast had the highest rates for communities of 50,000 to 99,999, and communities of 2,500 to 4,999, the South had the highest rates for communities of 250,000 or more, and for communities of 5,000 to 9,999, and the West had the highest rates for communities of 100,000 to 249,999, and communities of 10,000 to 49,999 communities of 10,000 to 24,999, and the smaller communities (populations of less than 5,000), and the West had the highest rates for communities of 100,000 to 249,999, and communities of 5,000 to 9,999.



**Table 7**  
**2006 Fires per Thousand Population**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>All Regions</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Northcentral</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
500,000 or more	4.2	*	*	4.3	3.0
250,000 to 499,999	4.4	*	6.2	4.1	3.5
100,000 to 249,999	4.1	5.4	3.8	5.6	2.7
50,000 to 99,999	3.8	4.5	3.0	5.0	3.0
25,000 to 49,999	4.2	4.3	3.2	5.3	4.9
10,000 to 24,999	4.9	4.2	4.1	6.4	5.2
5,000 to 9,999	5.9	4.5	4.8	8.5	7.8
2,500 to 4,999	7.7	6.2	6.9	10.0	9.3
under 2,500	12.9	10.3	11.7	17.6	14.2

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience.

\*Insufficient data

**Table 8**  
**2006 Civilian Fire Deaths per Million Population**  
**by Region and Size of Community**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>All Regions</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Northcentral</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
500,000 or more	10.7	13.4	28.5	10.7	6.8
250,000 to 499,999	8.4	*	12.0	5.8	6.8
100,000 to 249,999	10.8	14.6	11.9	14.4	5.8
50,000 to 99,999	8.9	9.2	8.6	12.2	5.1
25,000 to 49,999	8.6	5.0	8.9	8.5	11.7
10,000 to 24,999	9.1	6.1	8.3	13.3	5.5
5,000 to 9,999	11.7	6.6	9.4	17.5	17.4
2,500 to 4,999	12.4	7.2	12.6	18.7	9.7
under 2,500	17.6	9.8	9.2	56.6	*

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience

\*Insufficient data

**Table 9**  
**2006 Civilian Fire Injuries per Million Population**  
**by Region and Size of Community**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>All Regions</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Northcentral</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
500,000 or more	49.0	*	99.9	49.5	56.2
250,000 to 499,999	62.9	*	96.2	77.4	40.9
100,000 to 249,999	69.4	108.7	99.2	81.2	33.0
50,000 to 99,999	74.2	107.9	76.2	77.7	49.5
25,000 to 49,999	74.2	97.5	80.5	58.9	67.1
10,000 to 24,999	62.6	94.6	61.5	52.8	39.9
5,000 to 9,999	43.2	53.1	33.8	43.1	54.7
2,500 to 4,999	34.0	57.7	33.5	16.4	24.7
under 2,500	56.7	58.9	49.7	74.1	56.2

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience.

\*Insufficient data

**Table 10**  
**2006 Property Loss per Person**  
**by Region and Size of Community**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>All Regions</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Northcentral</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
500,000 or more	\$29.9	*	*	\$30.9	\$28.6
250,000 to 499,999	34.1	*	\$34.4	40.2	29.3
100,000 to 249,999	33.3	*	27.8	33.6	36.9
50,000 to 99,999	31.8	\$42.6	28.1	33.5	31.9
25,000 to 49,999	36.7	38.1	32.4	40.9	38.3
10,000 to 24,999	43.3	41.4	45.2	40.3	45.7
5,000 to 9,999	50.8	36.3	49.6	67.3	49.3
2,500 to 4,999	64.1	92.5	47.9	72.6	55.9
under 2,500	85.0	86.1	85.7	90.9	67.4

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience.

\*Insufficient data

## **Average Fire Experience**

Average fire experience by community size for all fires and residential properties can be seen in Tables 11 and 12.

**Table 11**  
**Average 2006 Fire Experience by Size of Community**

<b>Population of All Community</b>	<b>Total Fires</b>	<b>Structure Fires</b>	<b>Civilian Deaths</b>	<b>Civilian Injuries</b>	<b>Property Loss</b>
1,000,000 or more	6,595	2,085	19.14	124.82	\$54,797,000
500,000 to 999,999	3,204	1,110	8.7	40.76	23,555,400
250,000 to 499,999	1,524	513	2.97	22.23	12,207,100
100,000 to 249,999	607	204	1.64	10.51	5,347,500
50,000 to 99,999	262	98	0.61	5.10	2,239,800
25,000 to 49,999	148	53	0.30	2.59	1,317,500
10,000 to 24,999	75	25	0.14	0.95	701,000
5,000 to 9,999	42	13	0.08	0.30	385,600
2,500 to 4,999	27	7	0.04	0.12	248,700
under 2,500	15	3	0.03	0.06	113,000

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience

**Table 12**  
**Average 2006 Residential Fire Experience by Size of Community**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>	<b>Civilian Deaths</b>	<b>Civilian Injuries</b>	<b>Property Loss</b>
1,000,000 or more	1,578	14.71	89.00	\$31,336,300
500,000 to 999,999	851	6.20	31.18	13,807,300
250,000 to 499,999	435	2.52	17.54	6,368,800
100,000 to 249,999	174	1.34	9.00	3,040,000
50,000 to 99,999	76	0.50	4.13	1,428,200
25,000 to 49,999	43	0.26	2.01	711,800
10,000 to 24,999	20	0.12	0.71	403,900
5,000 to 9,999	11	0.06	0.20	207,300
2,500 to 4,999	5	0.04	0.07	140,200
under 2,500	3	0.02	0.03	61,800

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience

## Fire Department Responses

In all, fire departments responded to the following estimated number of fires and other incidents in 2006.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent Change From 2005</b>
Fire Incidents	1,642,500	+2.5
Medical Aid Responses (Ambulance, EMS, Rescue)	15,062,500	+4.8
False Alarms	2,119,500	-0.7
Mutual Aid or Assistance Calls	1,159,500	+6.3
Hazardous Material Responses (Spills, Leaks, etc.)	388,500	+3.6
Other Hazardous Responses (arcing wires, bomb removal etc.)	659,000	-1.2
All Other Responses (smoke scares, lock-outs, etc.)	3,438,500	+14.3
Total Incidents	24,470,000	+5.2

A further breakdown on false responses was collected on the 2006 surveys and the results can be seen in Table 13.



**Table 13**  
**Estimates of False Alarms by Type, 2006**

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Percent Change From 2005</b>	<b>Percent of All False Alarms</b>
Malicious, Mischievous False Call	193,500	-19.5	9.1
System Malfunction	721,000	-3.3	34.0
Unintentional Call	850,000	+1.4	40.1
Other False Alarms (Bomb Scares, etc.)	355,000	+14.5	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,119,500</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	

Source: NFPA's Survey of Fire Departments for 2006 U.S. Fire Experience

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Each year, based on a sample survey of fire departments across the country, the NFPA estimates the national fire problem as measured by the number of fires that public fire departments attend, and the resulting deaths, injuries and property losses that occur. This report summarizes key findings based on the NFPA Survey for 2006 Fire Experience. This section explains the major steps in conducting the 2006 survey.

### Sample Selection

The NFPA currently has 30,300 public fire departments listed in the US in its Fire Service Inventory (FSI) file. Based on desired levels of statistical precision for the survey results and the staff available to process, edit, and follow up on the individual questionnaires the NFPA determined that 3,000 fire departments were a reasonable number for the 2006 sample.

Because of the variation in fire loss results by community size, fire departments were placed in one of the following 10 strata by size of community protected:

- 1,000,000 and up
- 500,000 to 999,999
- 250, 0000 to 499,999
- 100,000 to 249,999
- 50,000 to 99,999
- 25,000 to 49,999
- 10,000 to 24,999
- 5,000 to 9,999
- 2,500 to 4,999
- Under 2,500

Sample sizes for the individual strata were chosen to ensure the best estimate of civilian deaths in one- and two-family dwellings, the statistic that most aptly reflects the overall severity of the fire problem. All departments that protect 100,000 people or more were included. These 327 departments in the four highest strata protect 115,781,500.

For the remaining six population strata, assuming response rates similar to the past two years for the four highest strata, a total sample of 2,840 was indicated. Sample sizes for individual strata were calculated using a methodology that assured optimum sample allocations<sup>5</sup>. Based on the average variation in civilian deaths in one- and two-family dwellings by stratum for the last two years and on the estimated number of fire departments, appropriate relative sample weights were determined. Then the corresponding sample sizes by stratum were calculated. The sample size by stratum was

then adjusted based on the response rates from the last two years' returns. A sample size of 14,346 was found to be necessary to obtain the desired total response of 3,000 fire departments. For all strata, where a sample was necessary, departments were randomly selected.

### **Data Collection**

The fire departments selected for the survey were sent the 2006 NFPA Fire Experience Questionnaire during the 2nd week of January 2007. A second mailing was sent in mid-March to fire departments that had not responded to the first mailing. A total of 2,562 departments responded to the questionnaire 1,920 to the first mailing and 642 to the second.

Table 14 shows the number of departments that responded by region and size of community. The overall response rate was 18%, although response rates were considerably higher for departments protecting larger communities than they were for departments protecting smaller communities. The 2,562 departments that did respond protect 109,340,600 people or 37% of the total U.S. population.

After the NFPA received the surveys, technical staff members of the Fire Analysis and Research Division reviewed them for completeness and consistency. When appropriate, they followed up on questions with a telephone call.

After the edit, procedures were completed; the survey data were keyed to a computer file, where additional checks were made. The file was then ready for data analysis and estimation procedures.

### **Estimation Methodology**

The estimation method used for the survey was ratio estimation, with stratification by community size. For each fire statistic a sample loss rate was computed for each stratum. This rate consisted of the total for that particular statistic from all fire departments reporting it, divided by the total population protected by the departments reporting the statistic. Note that this means that the departments used in calculating each statistic could be different, reflecting differences in unreported statistics. The sample fire loss rates by stratum were then multiplied by population weighing factors to determine the estimates were combined to provide the overall national estimate.

If this method of estimation is to be effective, estimates of the total number of fire departments and the total population protected in each stratum must be accurate. The NFPA makes every effort to ensure that this is the case. The population weights used for

**Table 14**  
**Number of Fire Departments Responding to 2006 NFPA Survey, by**  
**Region and Community Size**

<b>Population of Community</b>	<b>All Regions</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Northcentral</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
1,000,000 or more	9	2	0	4	3
500,000 to 999,999	30	1	3	16	10
250,000 to 499,999	31	2	7	10	12
100,000 to 249,999	123	8	26	46	43
50,000 to 99,999	234	29	74	73	58
25,000 to 49,999	201	31	77	65	28
10,000 to 24,999	416	76	169	123	48
5,000 to 9,999	450	107	183	104	56
2,500 to 4,999	506	116	204	128	58
Under 2,500	560	85	295	107	73
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,560</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>1,038</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>389</b>

the national estimates were developed using the NFPA FSI (Fire Service Inventory) File and U.S. Census population figures.

For each estimate, a corresponding standard error was also calculated<sup>6</sup>. The standard error is a measure of the error caused by the fact that estimates are based on a sampling of fire losses rather than on a complete census of the fire problem. The standard error helps in determining whether year-to-year differences are statistically significant. Differences that were found to be statistically significant were so noted in tables. Property loss estimates are particularly prone to large standard errors because they are sensitive to unusually high losses, and, as a result, large percentage differences from year to year are not always statistically significant. In 2006, for instance, property damage in storage properties was estimated to be \$650,000,000. This represented an increase of 10.2% from the year before, but was found not to be statistically significant.

In addition to sampling errors, there are nonsampling errors. These include bases of the survey methodology, incomplete or inaccurate reporting of data to the NFPA, differences in data collection methods by the fire departments responding. As an example of a nonsampling error, most of the fires included in the survey took place in highly populated residential areas, because the fire departments selected for the surveys are primarily public fire departments that protect sizable residential populations. Fires that occur in sparsely populated areas protected primarily by State and Federal Departments of Forestry are not likely to be included in the survey results.

The editors of survey data attempted to verify all reported civilian deaths in vehicle fires. They contacted most of the fire departments that reported fire-related deaths in vehicles and found that many of the deaths were indeed the results of fire. In some instances, however, impact was found to have been the cause of death. This effort can have a considerable impact on the estimates.

The results presented in this report are based on fire incidents attended by public fire departments. No adjustments were made for unreported fires and losses (e.g., fires extinguished by the occupant). Also, no adjustments were made for fires attended solely by private fire brigades (e.g., industry and military installations), or for fires extinguished by fixed suppression systems with no fire department response.

## **Fire Experience of Nonrespondents**

A telephone follow-up was made to a sample of nonrespondents to determine whether fire departments that did not respond to the survey experienced fire loss rates similar to those that did respond. This would help the NFPA determine whether we received questionnaires only from departments that had experienced unusually high or low fire losses.

The sample of nonrespondents selected was proportional by state and population of community to the original sample selected for the survey. As a result of these efforts, 176 fire departments were successfully contacted and answered some of the questions about their fire experience.

Table 15 compares fire loss rates for both respondents and nonrespondents. For communities of 100,000 to 249,999, the nonrespondent rate was 15% higher for fires, 115% higher for civilian deaths, and 8% higher for property loss. (The result on civilian deaths was statistically significant).

For communities of 50,000 to 99,999, the nonrespondent rate was 13% higher for fires, and 22% higher for civilian deaths, while the respondent rate was 19% higher for property loss. (None of these results were statistically significant).

For communities of 25,000 to 49,999, the nonrespondent rate was 24% higher for number of fires, 155% higher for civilian deaths, and 19% higher for property loss. (None of these results were statistically significant).

For communities of 10,000 to 24,999, the nonrespondent rate was 4% higher for number of fires, and 47% higher for civilian deaths, while the respondent rate was 32% higher for property loss. (None of these results were statistically significant).

For communities of 5,000 to 9,999, the nonrespondent rate was 24% higher for the number of fires, and 5% higher for civilian deaths, while the nonrespondent rate was 137% higher for property loss. (The result on property loss was found to be statistically significant).

**Table 15**  
**A Comparison of Respondents and Nonrespondents\***  
**to the 2006 NFPA Survey by Community Size**

Population of Community	Number of Fires (Per Thousand Population)				Civilian Deaths (Per Million Population)				Property Loss (Per Capita)			
	Respondents		Nonrespondents		Respondents		Nonrespondents		Respondents		Nonrespondents	
	n	Rate	n	Rate	n	Rate	n	Rate	n	Rate	n	Rate
100,000 to 249,999	105	4.1	25	3.6	122	10.8	21	5.0	75	33.3	19	30.9
50,000 to 99,999	209	3.8	34	4.3	230	8.9	33	10.9	140	31.8	18	26.8
25,000 to 49,999	179	4.2	39	5.2	199	8.6	40	21.9	97	36.7	26	43.6
10,000 to 24,999	392	4.9	42	4.7	412	9.1	42	6.2	187	43.3	27	57.3
5,000 to 9,999	427	5.9	33	7.3	450	11.7	33	12.3	224	50.9	16	21.5

\*Some departments did not return the questionnaire. A sample of these nonrespondents was contacted by telephone and questioned about their 2006 fire experience.

Note: "n" refers to the number of departments reporting the statistic.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Civilian:** The term “civilian” includes anyone other than a firefighter, and covers public service personnel such as police officers, civil defense staff, non-fire service medical personnel, and utility company employees.

**Death:** An injury that occurred as a direct result of a fire that is fatal or becomes fatal within one year.

**Fire:** Any instance of uncontrolled burning. Includes combustion explosions and fires out on arrival. Excludes controlled burning (whether authorized or not), over pressure rupture without combustion, mutual aid responses, smoke scares, and hazardous responses (e.g., oil spill without fire).

**Injury:** Physical damage that is suffered by a person as a direct result of fire and that requires (or should require) treatment by a practitioner of medicine (physician, nurse, paramedic, EMT) within one year of the incident (regardless of whether treatment was actually received), or results in at least one day of restricted activity immediately following the incident. Examples of injuries resulting from fire are smoke inhalation, burns, wounds and punctures, fractures, heart attacks (resulting from stress under fire condition), strains and sprains.

**Property Damage:** Includes all forms of direct loss to contents, structure, machinery, a vehicle, vegetation or anything else involved in the fire but not indirect losses, such as business interruption or temporary shelter provisions.

**Structure:** An assembly of materials forming a construction for occupancy or use in such a manner as to serve a specific purpose. A building is a form of structure. Open platforms, bridges, roof assemblies over open storage or process areas, tents, air-supported, and grandstands are other forms of structures.

**Vehicles, Highway and Other:** Fires in these instances may have been associated with an accident; however, reported casualties and property loss should be the direct result of the fire only. Highway vehicles include any vehicle designed to operate normally on highways, e.g., automobiles, motorcycles, buses, trucks, trailers (not mobile homes on foundations), etc. Other vehicles include trains, boats and ships, aircraft, and farm and construction vehicles.



## Footnotes

1. Note that the NFPA changed its survey methodology in 1977-78, and meaningful comparisons cannot be made with fire statistics estimated before 1977.
2. John R. Hall, Jr., *Characteristics of Home Fire Victims Including Age and Sex*, July 2005, Quincy: National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division.
3. Rita F. Fahy and Alison L. Miller, "How Being Poor Affects Fire Risk", *Fire Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January 1989), p. 28
4. As defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the four regions are: Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Northcentral: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.
5. Steve K. Thompson, *Sampling*, John Wiley, New York, NY, 1992, pp. 107-111.
6. William G. Cochran, *Sampling Techniques*, John Wiley, New York, NY, 1977, pp. 150-161.