Fire Facts

Everyday Americans experience the horror of fire. But most people don't understand fire. Only when we know the true nature of fire can we prepare our families and ourselves. Each year more than 4,000 American's die and approximately 25,000 are injured in fires many of which could have been prevented. Nearly 1,000 lives are lost to fires that originated in the bedroom and about 100 firefighters are killed in the line of duty each year. Each year in the United States fires kill more American's than all natural disasters combined. About 80% of these deaths occur in residences and it is estimated that over 39% of residential fires and 52% of residential fatalities occur in homes with no smoke alarms. A working smoke alarm dramatically increases a person's chance of survival. Residential sprinklers have also become more cost effective to install in homes although few homes still have them. During the winter months, the potential for fires increase because of the use of Christmas trees, heating appliances such as the furnace, space heaters, and fireplaces as well as the increased use of lighting. House fires in the U.S. that are started by candles are at a 20-year high. Children playing with fire set over 100,000 fires annually and over 30% of those fires kill the children who started them. This is over 800 children killed each year by the fires they set playing. Studies of electrical fires in homes show that many problems are associated with improper installation of electrical devices by do-it-yourselfers. Common errors that can lead to fires include the use of improperly rated devices such as switches or receptacles and loose connections at these devices. A house fire is reported in the United States every 90 seconds this is an average of 1.9 million fires reported each year and someone dies in a house fire every two and one-half hours.

:: FIRE IS FAST

There is little time!

In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house. In minutes, a house can be engulfed in flames. Most fires occur in the home when people are asleep. If you wake up to a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables because fire spreads to quickly and the smoke is too thick. There is only time to escape.

:: FIRE IS HOT

Heat is more threatening than flames!

A fire's heat alone can kill. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this supper hot air will scorch your lungs. This heat can melt clothes to your skin. In five minutes a room can get so hot that everything in it ignites at once: this is called flashover.

:: FIRE IS DARK

Fire isn't bright it's pitch black. Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. If you wake up to a fire you may be blinded, disoriented and unable to find you way around the home you have lived in for years.

:: FIRE IS DEADLY

Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do!

Fire uses up the oxygen you need and produces smoke and poisonous gases that kill. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath. The odorless, colorless fumes can lull you into a deep sleep before the flames reach your door. You may not wake up in time to escape.

:: 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 death, 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.

:: WHERE FIRES OCCUR

Fires in single family dwellings most often occur in the:
1. Kitchen (25.5%)
2. Bedroom (13.7%)
3. Living Room (8.6%)
4. Chimney (8.2%)
5. Laundry area (5%)

Apartment fires most often occur in the:
1. Kitchen (48.5%)
2. Bedroom (13.4%)
3. Living Room (6.4%)
4. Laundry area (3.5%)
5. Bathroom (2.4%)

:: WHO IS AT RISK

Senior citizens age 65 and older 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 the age 75 triple; over the age 85, 3 and on half times the average population. Children under the age of 10 accounted for an estimated 22.2 % 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 an estimated 13% of the population, they account for 26 % of the fire deaths.

NOTE: IN THE ESTIMATED TIME IT TOOK YOU TO READ THIS PAGE THERE HAS BEEN AN ESTIMATED 3 TO 4 STRUCTURE FIRES REPORTED SOMEWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES.