

Fire Deaths and Injuries: Fact Sheet

(according to information provided by the CDC)

Overview

Deaths from fires and burns are the third leading cause of fatal home injury (Runyan 2004). The United State's mortality rate from fires ranks eighth among the 25 developed countries for which statistics are available (International Association for the Study of Insurance Economics 2009).

Although the number of fatalities and injuries caused by residential fires has declined gradually over the past several decades, many residential fire-related deaths remain preventable and continue to pose a significant public health problem.

Occurrence and Consequences

- On average in the United States in 2010, someone died in a fire every 169 minutes, and someone was injured every 30 minutes (Karter 2011).
- About 85% of all U.S. fire deaths in 2009 occurred in homes (Karter 2011).
- In 2010, fire departments responded to 384,000 home fires in the United States, which claimed the lives of 2,640 people (not including firefighters) and injured another 13,350, not including firefighters (Karter 2011).
- Most victims of fires die from smoke or toxic gases and not from burns (Hall 2001).
- Smoking is the leading cause of fire-related deaths (Ahrens 2011).
- Cooking is the primary cause of residential fires (Ahrens 2011).

Cost

Fire and burn injuries represent 1% of the incidence of injuries and 2% of the total costs of injuries, or \$7.5 billion each year (Finkelstein et al. 2006).

Groups at Risk

Groups at increased risk of fire-related injuries and deaths include:

- Children 4 and under (CDC 2010; Flynn 2010);
- Older Adults ages 65 and older (CDC 2010; Flynn 2010);
- African Americans and Native Americans (CDC 2010; Flynn 2010);
- The poorest Americans (Istre 2001; Flynn 2010);
- Persons living in rural areas (Ahrens 2003; Flynn 2010);
- Persons living in manufactured homes or substandard housing (Runyan 1992; Parker 1993).

Risk Factors

- Over one-third (37%) home fire deaths occur in homes without smoke alarms (Ahrens 2011).
- Most residential fires occur during the winter months (CDC 1998; Flynn 2010).
- Alcohol use contributes to an estimated 40% of residential fire deaths (Smith 1999).