

INTENTIONAL FIRES

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Abstract

In 2003-2006, an estimated 316,610 intentional fires were reported to U.S. fire departments, annually. The 316,610 intentional fires were associated with losses of 437 civilian fire deaths, 1,404 civilian fire injuries, and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage. In 2006, 10 firefighters died and 7,200 firefighters were injured, while on duty, at the scene of or during response to intentional fires. In 2007, 18% of arson offenses were cleared by arrest or exceptional means.

Keywords: Arson, intentional fire, suspicious, firesetting, firesetter, fire statistics.

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Intentional Fires Executive Summary

In 2003-2006, an estimated 316,610 intentional fires reported to U.S. fire departments, annually, resulted in 437 civilian fire deaths, 1,404 civilian fire injuries, and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage.

Seventy-six percent of intentional fires occur outside and 8% of intentional fires involve vehicles. All intentional fires have been fairly level since 1999. Of all outside and other fires, 31% are intentional. Ten percent of all structure fires and 8% of all vehicle fires are intentional.

Intentional structure fires account for 16% of intentional fires, but are associated with 86% of civilian deaths, 79% of civilian injuries, and 83% of direct property damage.

More than half (57%) of structure fires in vacant and unsecured buildings are intentional. Forty-two percent of structure fires in buildings that were being demolished were intentional

Half (54%) of intentional structure fires and four out of five civilian deaths (85%) and civilian injuries (82%) occur in homes. In intentional home structure fires specifically, the leading area of origin in the bedroom, and for these fires the leading item first ignited is mattress or bedding material. In public property, including stores or offices, middle, junior high, or high schools, and public assembly facilities, intentional structure fires are most common in the bathroom.

Rates of intentional structure fires or arson offenses, relative to population, are highest in large cities but are also higher in rural communities (less than 2,500 population) than in small towns (say, 2,500 to 9,999 population). The percentage of structure fires that are intentional is largest for the large cities, and for this measure, there is no secondary peak for rural communities.

In 2006, there were an estimated 10 firefighter on-duty deaths, at the scene of or during response or returning to or from an intentional fire. During that same year, there were an estimated 7,200 firefighter on-duty injuries.

In the U.S., typically 1 of every 6 arson offenses (18% in 2007) is cleared by arrest or “exceptional means.”

Juveniles have accounted for roughly half of all U.S. arson arrestees beginning in 1992 (47% in 2007).

The Northeast had the highest arson clearance rates in 2001-2007. Prior to that, the highest arson clearance rates were in the South, now the second highest region.

In 2007, 84% of arson arrestees were male and 75% were white.

23% of intentional fires in 2006 had been motivated by fire-play or curiosity.

Arson arrests and clearance information comes from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports

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Fire departments responded to an estimated **51,840** intentional structure fires annually during 2003-2006. These fires resulted in:

- 377 civilian deaths
- 1,115 civilian injuries
- \$898.1 million in direct property damage

Half of all intentional structure fires are started in the home.

These fires resulted in:

- 85% of the civilian deaths
- 82% of the civilian injuries
- 64% of the direct property damage

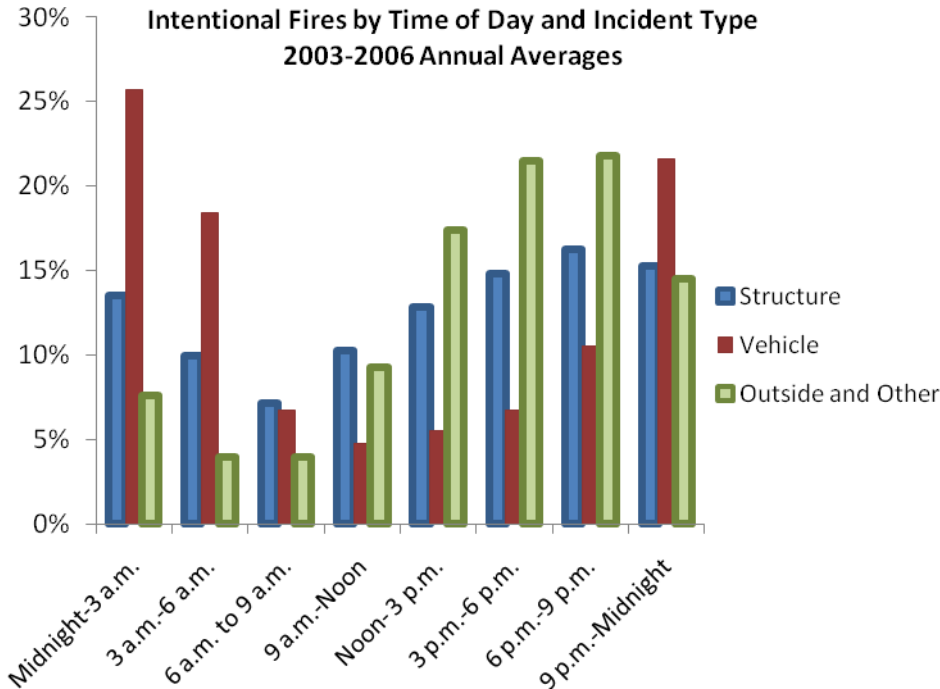
from intentional structure fires.

5% of fires in homes are intentionally started

The bedroom is the leading area of origin for intentional home structure fires.

The bathroom is the leading area in public properties such as stores, offices, or schools.

Large cities have a larger percentage of intentional structure fires.



Although 3 of every 4 intentional fires are started outside most of the intentional fire casualties and property loss resulted from structure fires.

In 2006, 10 firefighters died and 7,200 firefighters were injured, while on duty, at the scene or responding to intentional fires.

**An "intentional" fire is a fire that threatens harm and includes deliberate misuse of heat source or a fire of an incendiary nature.*

According to FBI Statistics, in 2007:

- An estimated 5-7% of arson offenses resulted in convictions
- 18% of arson offenses were cleared by arrest or exceptional means
- 47% of arrestees were under the age of 18