

U.S. FIRE EXPERIENCE BY REGION, 2002-2006

**Michael J. Karter, Jr.
Fire Analysis and Research Division
National Fire Protection Association**

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**National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471
www.nfpa.org**

Abstract

Number of fires per thousand populations for the 2002-2006 period indicate that the South (6.2) and Northcentral (6.0) had the highest overall rates for the five year period. The South with 15.0 and Northcentral with 14.3 had the highest annual average fire death rates per million people for the period. The Northcentral had an average civilian injury rate of 80.0 for the five year period or 31% higher than the national rate. The South had the highest civilian death rates for all community sizes under 100,000. The Northeast with 52% had a higher occurrence of cooking equipment fires than other regions, while the West with 31% had a high occurrence of fires involving heating equipment.

Key words: fire statistics, civilian fire deaths, civilian fire injuries, property loss, region, community size, cause of fire

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National Fire Protection Association
One-Stop Data Shop
1 Batterymarch Park
Quincy, MA 02169-7471
www.nfpa.org
e-mail: osds@nfpa.org
phone: 617-984-7450

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Summary of Major Findings

Fire Incident Rates

- Numbers of fires per thousand populations for the 2002-2006 period show that the South (6.2) and Northcentral (6.0) had the highest overall rates for the five year period.

Fire Death Rates

- The South with 15.0 and Northcentral with 14.3 had the highest annual average fire death rates per million people for the 2002-2006 period. The West had the lowest death rates for all five years. All regions experienced lower death rates in 2002-2006 than in 1997-2001, with the Northeast (down 19%), and the South (down 13%) exhibiting the large decreases.

Fire Injury Rates

- Rates of civilian fire injuries per million people by region indicate that the Northcentral had the highest injury rates all five years. The Northcentral had an average civilian injury rate of 80.0 for the five year period, or 31% higher than the national rate.

Property Loss Rates

- Property loss rates per capita by region for the 2002-2006 period indicate that the West had the highest rate in 2003 due to the Southern California Wildfires that caused two billion in property damage, the South had the highest rates in 2002 and 2004, and the Northcentral had the highest rates in 2005 and 2006.

Introduction

Fire experience varies by region of the country. Regions of the country used in this report are from the U.S. Census Bureau and can be seen in Figure 1. Among the factors that can contribute to differences among regions are: climate, distribution of sizes of communities, percent of population in urban versus rural areas, population age distributions, percent of population below poverty level, percent of population with high school education (see Table 1), and housing characteristics (e.g., age of structure, type of construction, and type of heating equipment). This report examines some of the similarities and differences in fire experience among regions. It examines regional results:

- for all fires during the 2002-2006 period
- for selected occupancies
- for different sizes of communities
- by major cause (2002 to 2005)

2002-2006 Overall Regional Results

The number of fires per thousand people by region and nationwide for the 2002-2006 period can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 2. Nationwide, the highest fire incident rate occurred in 2002 with a rate of 6.0 fires per thousand people. For the remainder of the 5 year period nationwide rates were in the 5.3 to 5.5 range. All regions except the Northcentral also had their highest fire incident rate in 2002.

The South had the highest fire incident rates for 2002-2004, while the Northcentral had the highest rates for 2005 and 2006. The West had the lowest rates all five years.