

Lightning Fires and Lightning Strikes

During 2004-2008, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 24,600 fires started by lightning. These fires caused annual averages of

- 12 civilian deaths
- 47 civilian injuries
- \$407 million in direct property damage.

The January 2006 West Virginia coal mine explosion that claimed 12 lives was the deadliest U.S. fire started by lightning in recent years.

Fires started by lightning peak in the summer months and in the late afternoon and early evening.

Outside and other fires accounted for 74% of the lightning fires reported to local fire departments.

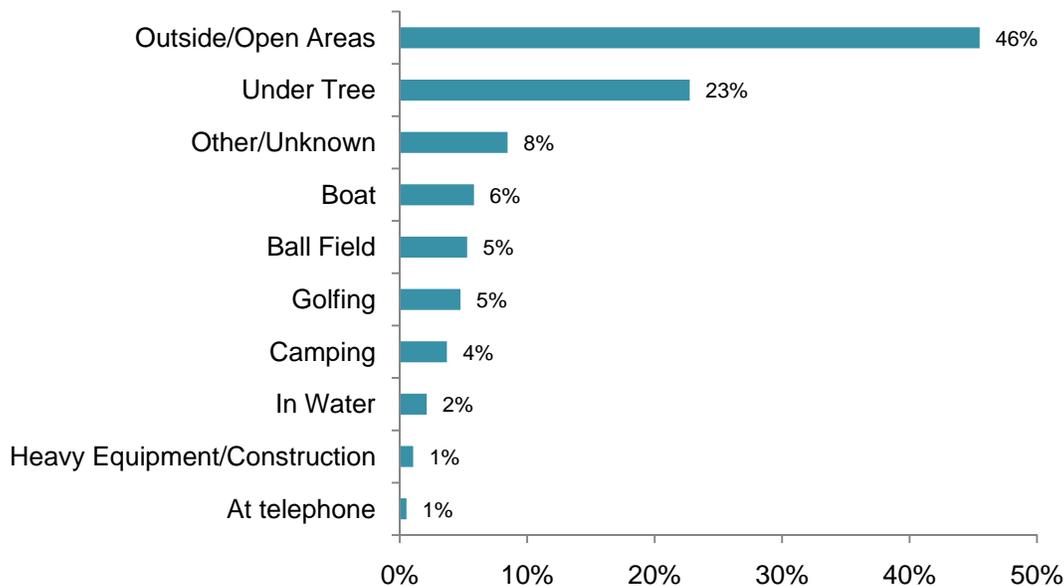
In 2004-2008, only 18% of reported lightning fires occurred in homes, but these accounted for

- 88% the associated civilian deaths
- 77% of the associated injuries
- 70% of the direct property damage

National Interagency Fire Center statistics show that in 2004-2008, an average of 11,400 (14%) of reported wildland fires were started by lightning per year. However, wildland fires caused by lightning caused much more average damage per fire (500 acres vs. 40 acres) than fires caused by humans.

Lightning also causes non-fire deaths and injuries. According to the National Weather Service reports, lightning caused an average of 38 deaths and 238 injuries per year.

Lightning Fatalities by Location: 2004-2008



Source: These statistics are compiled by the Office of Services and the National Climatic Data Center from information contained in *Storm Data*. Online at <http://www.weather.gov/os/hazstats.shtml>.

Source: *Lightning Fires and Lightning Strikes*, Ben Evarts, NFPA Fire Analysis and Research, Quincy, MA, December 2010