



KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2021 NFPA REPORT ON FIRE SAFETY IN THE US



There have been many fire prevention successes since the landmark “America Burning” report was issued in 1973, but there is still work to be done to reduce risk, according to a new report from the [National Fire Protection Association®](#) (NFPA®). “[Fire Safety in the United States since 1980: Through the Lens of the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem™](#),” developed by the NFPA Applied Research Division and facilitated by the [Fire Protection Research Foundation](#), the Association’s research affiliate, considered fire incident data and related research and analyzed it against the framework of the [NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem](#).

Success Factors

The new report tells a story of success when it comes to lowering the number of fires and fire deaths.

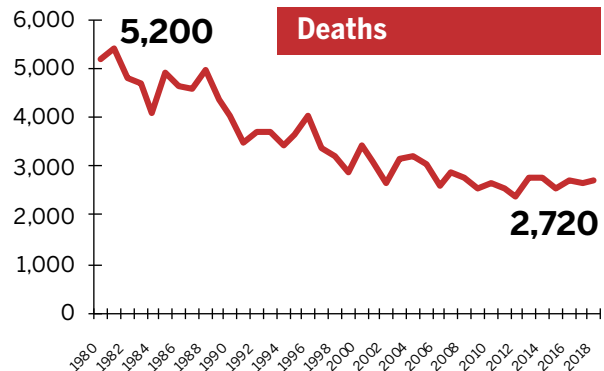
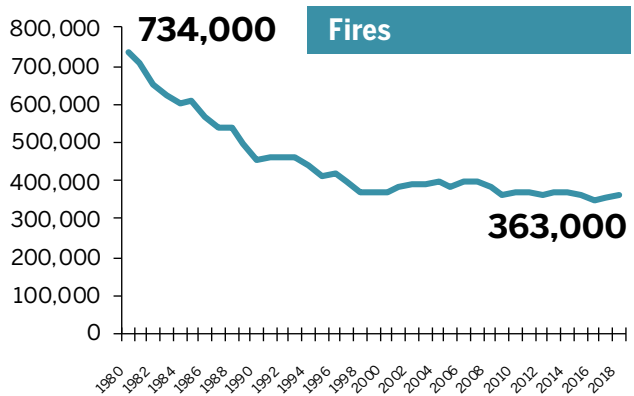
- **The biggest single factor contributing to that progress has been the use of smoke alarms, as mandated by fire and building codes, as well as continued public education about their significance.**
- Standards to reduce fire (child-resistant cigarette lighters, candles) led to a decrease in the overall number of fires.
- Stricter code requirements in apartment buildings and, in particular, high-rise buildings, as well as advancements in other occupancies such as hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and hotels has had a significant impact against loss.

NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem™

The NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem identifies the eight components that must work together to minimize risk and help prevent loss, injuries, and death from fire, electrical, and other hazards.

This new report shows that at least three elements of the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem—government responsibility, development and use of current codes, and an informed public—have had a positive impact on the US fire experience.

Reported home structure fires and associated losses by year: 1980–2018



Source: “Fire Safety in the United States since 1980: Through the Lens of the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem™,” Quincy, MA, 2021.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2021 NFPA REPORT ON FIRE SAFETY IN THE US *CONTINUED*

Key Findings from the New Research

The most successful recipe for fire safety in the built environment is the implementation of fire safety technologies and practices through the use of the latest codes and standards.

- Smoke alarms are a huge success story, bringing down the number of reported fires and fire deaths.
- Cooking remains the leading cause of home fires and injuries.
- Smoking has been the leading cause of home fire deaths for roughly four decades.
- Fire deaths of children under five have dramatically declined, but there has been little change in older adult fire death tolls.
- States with higher fire death rates per million population tend to have larger percentages of people who have a disability; are current smokers; have incomes below the poverty line; live in rural areas; or are either African American or Black, or are Native American or Native Alaskan.
- Wildfire is becoming the dominant type of fire that causes catastrophic multiple deaths as well as large losses.

Next Steps to Increase Fire Safety

- With more **home cooking fires** and cooking fire deaths in recent years than in the early 1980s, it is clear that more work to enhance kitchen safety needs to be done.
- With roughly one of every three fatal home fire victims being **65 or older**, action is needed to protect our vulnerable older population.
- A holistic approach to fire safety and energy efficiency is needed to ensure that new products and technologies do not cause unintended fire risk.

- The impact of **wildfire** on communities must be tackled using all the cogs of the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem and the recommendations put forth in Outthink Wildfire™, an NFPA policy initiative that identifies five tenets and specific recommendations that all levels of government must use to solve the wildfire problem.
- To prevent **consumer electronics** using new technology from becoming fire hazards, product standards need to be developed/updated and consumers need to be informed about potential risks.
- Efforts to **educate** the public about how to protect themselves from fire must be expanded to reduce fatalities and increase life safety.

Major Takeaways

The largest share of reported structure fires and most of the civilian fire deaths and injuries consistently occur in homes. Today, if a home fire is reported, occupants are more likely to die than they were 40 years ago due to flammable contents and more open design plans, which have greatly increased the speed at which fire grows.

The increased use of smoke alarms over the decades correlates with a decrease in the number of fires and fire deaths. **But nearly 3,000 home fire deaths annually are still far too many.** We must vigilantly remind the public about the importance of installing, testing, and replacing smoke alarms.

We will reduce home fire death and destruction by increasing the numbers of new one- and two-family homes built with fire sprinklers. **Fire sprinklers control 97 percent of the fires in which they operate, and more specifically, the risk of dying in a reported home fire is 85 percent lower if sprinklers are present.**

Learn More

- ▶ Download the full report: nfpa.org/fireprogressreport
- ▶ Learn about the project: nfpa.org/fireprogress
- ▶ Review the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem: nfpa.org/ecosystem
- ▶ Find out more about Outthink Wildfire: nfpa.org/outthinkwildfire
- ▶ Access fire statistics and data: nfpa.org/research
- ▶ Read about projects being managed by the Fire Protection Research Foundation: nfpa.org/foundation
- ▶ Explore the benefits of home fire sprinklers: firesprinklerinitiative.org and homefiresprinkler.org

