

U.S. STRUCTURE FIRES IN OFFICE PROPERTIES

An overview of office property fires, including trend tables, causes, time of day, day of week, month of year, and area of origin. Also includes previously published incident descriptions.

Executive Summary

During the five-year period of 2004-2008, NFPA estimates that U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 3,830 office properties per year. These fires caused an annual average of four civilian deaths, 37 civilian fire injuries, and \$108 million in direct property damage. The vast majority of the fires in this category were in business offices. Reported fires in this occupancy group fell 65% from 10,570 in 1980 to 3,740 in 2008.

Fewer fires occur in this occupancy on the weekends, since they are less likely to be fully populated. The peak times of day for these fires were between noon and 3:00 PM. Only 20% of the fires occurred between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. but these fires accounted for 55% of the direct property damage. Similarly, 19% of fires occurred on weekends, but these incidents caused 30% of the associated property loss. These findings highlight the need for automatic detection and extinguishing equipment to protect these properties when they aren't occupied.

Cooking equipment was involved in 25% of the fires in office properties. However, only 3% of the direct property damage resulted from cooking fires. Electrical distribution and lighting equipment was involved in 13% of the fires resulting in 19% of the direct property damage. The 11% of fires that were intentionally set caused 18% of the direct property damage. Heating caused 12% of the fires and 9% of the property damage. Smoking materials caused 10% of the fires and 6% of the property damage.

Seventeen percent of the fires in office properties began in the kitchen or cooking area; these fires caused only 3% of the direct property damage. Only 13% percent of the fires began in an "office" area; these fires caused 27% of the dollar loss. No other individual area of origin accounted for more than 4% of reported fires

Eighty-two percent of the fires were confined to the room of origin.

