

NFPA Fact Sheets

U.S. fires in vacant buildings

Statistics show that firefighters often have a higher risk of injury or death when fighting fires in vacant buildings. For example, six firefighters died in a 1999 warehouse fire in Worcester, Mass., while searching for a homeless couple known to have been staying in the building.

Facts & Figures*

- There were an average of 14,900 fires in vacant
- U.S. buildings or buildings under construction, renovation or demolition each year between 1994 through 1998, resulting in 13 civilian deaths, 66 injuries and \$118.9 million in direct property damage.
- Two-thirds of fires in vacant properties were incendiary or suspicious, accounting for three-quarters of direct property losses in this category.
- Almost three times as many child-playing fires occurred in vacant buildings as in educational properties.
- There were 5.6 firefighter injuries per 100 special structure (including vacant buildings and buildings under construction) fires per year between 1993 and 1997, compared to 1.9 injuries per fire at structure fires, in general.

(*From NFPA's *U.S. Fire Problem Overview Report: Leading Causes and Other Patterns and Trends*, Marty Ahrens, April 2001; *1999 Firefighter Fatality Report*, Rita F. Fahy and Paul LeBlanc, *NFPA Journal*, July/August 2000; November/December 2000; and NFPA's *Patterns of Firefighter Fireground Injuries*, Michael J. Karter, Jr., NFPA, February 2000.)