

Fact Sheet on the Danger of Home Fires

The following statistics were gathered by the Red Cross from several sources, including recent Red Cross polling, the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

- Eighty percent of Americans don't realize that home fires are the single most common disaster across the nation. With average heating costs expected to rise 25 percent more this winter, the Red Cross warns families to understand the dangers of home fires and to take steps now to get prepared.
- The American Red Cross responded to more than 73,000 disasters in communities across the United States last year and 92 percent of these were fire related. (American Red Cross)
- American homes suffer an unwanted fire every 10 seconds, and every 60 seconds they suffer a fire serious enough to call the fire department. (U.S. Fire Administration)
- Home heating bills this winter will on average cost consumers 25.7 percent more than last year. Natural gas and heating oil customers are expected to be hit the hardest. (Department of Energy)
- Every two and a half hours someone is killed in a home fire. In a typical year, 20,000 people are injured in house fires. (U.S. Fire Administration)
- Although children five and under make up about 7 percent of the country's population, they accounted for 14 percent of the home fire deaths, assigning them a risk twice the national average. (National Fire Protection Association)
- Half of all households with children under the age of 18 are using an alternate heating source (fireplace, space heater or stove). (American Red Cross)
- Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths. (National Fire Protection Association)
- Heating fires are the second leading cause of residential fires (cooking is the first). Heating fires are fires that are caused by functioning or malfunctioning central heating units, fixed or portable local heating units, fire places, chimneys and water heaters. (U.S. Fire Administration)
- Fixed and portable space heaters, including wood stoves, were involved in 74 percent of fire-related deaths. (U.S. Fire Administration)
- Space heaters (defined as space heating equipment including portable electric heaters, portable kerosene heaters, wood stoves, fireplaces with inserts and room gas heaters) account for 66 percent of all home heating fires. (National Fire Protection Association)
- Only 42 percent of American households have a family emergency plan. (American Red Cross)