

# IFA Voice

*Working*

Smoke Alarms

Save Lives

*Change Your Clock,  
Change Your Battery*



Established 1917 By Firefighters For Firefighters

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# 2019 IFA OFFICERS



# White House Releases Fiscal Year 2020 Spending Proposal;

## Recommends Cuts to Fire Service Programs

On March 11th, [the White House released President Trump's Fiscal Year 2020 budget proposal](#). The \$4.7 trillion spending plan includes \$51.7 billion in funding for the Department of Homeland Security, a \$3.6 billion increase over estimated spending for the current fiscal year.

The spending plan requests \$688,688,000 for the Assistance to Firefighters and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant programs, split evenly between the two programs. This is the same amount the Administration requested in its Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal and a reduction from the \$700 million Congress appropriated for the programs in Fiscal Year 2019.

Additionally, the White House is recommending significant cuts to the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). Under the spending plan, the State Homeland Security Grant Program would be funded at \$331.393 million and UASI would be funded at \$426.461 million, a reduction of more than one-third of the current funding levels for each program.

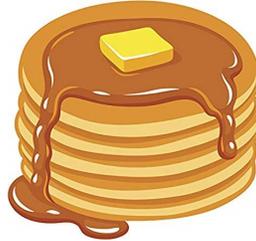


The budget proposal also requests \$46,605,000 for the United States Fire Administration (USFA). Congress appropriated \$45.679 million for USFA in Fiscal Year 2019. Unfortunately, the proposal does not include funding for State Fire Training Assistance, a program that allows the National Fire Academy to partner with state fire training academies in delivering its classes at the state and local levels.

The White House is proposing to fund the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program at \$11.02 million and State Fire Assistance (SFA) program at \$65.93 million. These programs provide assistance to states and local fire departments for wildland fire prevention, detection, and suppression. In Fiscal Year 2019, the programs were funded at \$17 million and \$81 million respectively.

The release of the White House budget proposal is the first step in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget process. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will begin drafting Fiscal Year 2020 funding bills for the individual federal departments and agencies. CFSI will continue to provide updates throughout the process.

# Free Breakfast Anyone



Local 1262 did a solid for the retirees in as they provided them with a free breakfast at the local lodge. The President of the local told the retirees that there will be a freebee every three months as long as the guys enjoy it and the money does not run out. Thanks to Cody Leever, President and to the rest of the union.





# Chesterton Firefighters File Lawsuit Seeking Overtime Pay

A group of fifteen firefighters and their local union, are suing the Town of Chesterton, Indiana, over unpaid overtime that dates back almost 10 years. The suit, which was filed on February 16, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana alleges the town has “willingly, deliberately and intentionally refused to pay Chesterton Firefighters for time and one-half pay for overtime worked” for the past 9 years. The firefighters claim the town violated both the FLSA and other Indiana state laws. They are seeking back wages, an equal amount of liquidated damages, attorney’s fees and expenses.

According to the firefighters, the town has adopted a 27-day work period for FLSA overtime purposes. The FLSA’s §207(k) partial overtime exemption requires firefighters receive overtime for all hours worked over 204 every 27 days. In lieu of paying the firefighters overtime (for all or some of the hours they worked) each work period, the town provided firefighters with the four 24-hour days off per year (similar to vacation leave). The crux of the firefighters’ complaint relates to these four 24-hour paid days off firefighters receive annually and whether those days off in fact reduce or eliminate the need to pay firefighters FLSA overtime. While this practice had been in effect in some form or another since before 2011, firefighters recently questioned whether this paid time off plan met the requirements of the FLSA. According to the firefighters’ complaint the town assured firefighters the paid time off policy met FLSA requirements.



## **Here are some of the firefighters’ allegations from the complaint:**

*At all times relevant herein, Chesterton Firefighters are held to a twenty-seven (27) day work period for purposes of Section 7(k) of the Act.*

*Pursuant to the Act (FLSA), Chesterton Firefighters are owed overtime when their hours exceed 204 hours in the twenty-seven (27) day work period.*

*From at least 2011 until January 1, 2019, the parties entered into yearly employment agreements (hereinafter referred to as the “Former Agreements”).*

*In accordance with Section 3 of the Former Agreements, entitled “Vacation Accrual”, Chesterton Firefighters received four (4) 24-hour shifts in conjunction with other benefits.*

*At some point prior to 2011, Plaintiffs and Defendant entered into negotiations regarding the amount of overtime owed to Chesterton Firefighters in a given work period.*

*Defendant advised Plaintiffs that Section 3 satisfied the Act (FLSA) with respect to overtime owed to Chesterton Firefighters.*

*Section 3 did not and does not satisfy the Act (FLSA) and Chesterton Firefighters are owed compensation for overtime worked.*

*From at least 2011 until January 2, 2019, Chesterton Firefighters were not provided the appropriate compensation for overtime worked.*

*For the years 2010, 2011, and 2012, the Former Agreements allowed for the four (4) 24- hour shifts to be used “the same as vacation days.”*

*From the years 2013 to the present, the Former Agreements allowed for Chesterton Firefighters to use their four (4) 24-hour shifts in accordance with “department policy”.*

*In early 2018, the Plaintiffs were informed that Defendant would no longer be providing the Chesterton Firefighters with four (4) 24-hour shifts which had been in place since 2011.*

*Plaintiffs requested a meet and confer with Defendant.*

*Defendant refused to meet and confer with Plaintiffs in good faith on this issue.*

*Nevertheless, the parties negotiated the terms of the 2019 Agreement.*

*Specifically, Defendant agreed to continue to provide Chesterton Firefighters with their four (4) 24-hour shifts each year in addition to any other time required in order for Defendant to be in compliance with the Act.*

*Defendant represented to Plaintiffs on multiple occasions that “nothing would change”, “everything would remain the same”, and the status quo of the past nearly eight years would be maintained in 2019.*

*During negotiations, Plaintiffs verbalized and memorialized in writing, their concern with losing their ability to utilize their four (4) 24-hour shifts the same as vacation or on an as needed basis.*

*Plaintiffs specifically requested that the department policy referenced in Article VIII, Section 3(d) of the 2019 Agreement be attached to the Agreement as an appendix item for fear that Defendant would enter into the 2019 Agreement and then suddenly change the department policy to Plaintiffs’ detriment.*

*Defendant refused to include the department policy as an appendix item to the 2019 Agreement and reassured Plaintiffs repeatedly that everything would remain the same, including the department policy and Plaintiffs’ usage of the four (4) 24-hour shifts as vacation time or as needed.*

*Given the above representations, the parties entered into the 2019 Agreement on December 26, 2018.*

*The department policy in effect on the date of signing the 2019 Agreement allowed for the Chesterton Firefighters to utilize their four (4) 24-hour shifts the same as vacation time or as needed.*

*On January 2, 2019, one day after the 2019 Agreement became affective, Defendant changed the department policy to Plaintiffs’ detriment.*

# Fire crews build wheelchair ramp for Retired State Fire Marshal fighting Parkinson's disease

COLUMBUS, Ind. – Firefighters step up to help one of the own. This week is the first time in a while that 73-year-old Roger Johnson has gotten out of his home all on his own.

“(It) means a lot, a great deal,” said Johnson, a retired state fire marshal.

Johnson devoted more than 5 decades to the fire profession before battling Parkinson's and Rheumatoid Arthritis



“You kind of think of it in a way, 'If that was me, I would want someone to help me,' and that's how it all kind of started,” said Nick Tuttle, a Columbus firefighter.

Columbus firefighters heard Johnson couldn't get out of his home because he couldn't get down the stairs. Within a week, first responders built a ramp from his backdoor to the garage.

“We saw he needed it done, and we just went and helped him,” said Ben Noblitt, a Columbus firefighter.

Firefighters from all different departments all worked for hours to help a man who has done so much for his community.

“To be able to get out and have the freedom that I've got now is amazing to me,” said Johnson.

From the firetrucks on his shoes to the badge on his shirt, it's clear Johnson is proud of his past. With some hardware and some heart, these firefighters did more than just a good deed. These firefighters made a difference in Johnson's life.

“The smile that he had, that was good enough for us,” said Tuttle.

# Elizabeth Jennings

## Congratulations

The Batesville Fire and EMS Department, established in 1887, hired its first full-time female firefighter — the first in the department’s history.

Several women have worked as part-time EMTs or volunteer firefighters, according to a news release, but Lisa Jennings will be first to serve as a full-time firefighter/paramedic.



She was sworn in by Batesville Mayor Mike Bettice .

“I am really excited to have the opportunity to utilize the education I obtained in fire school in addition to my paramedic background,” Jennings said.

Jennings graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 2017 and earned the State of Indiana Firefighter certification in 2018. She was previously an EMT/paramedic in Ripley County and is a member of the UC Health Air Care and Mobile Care Special Events Team in Cincinnati.

Jennings is a Bright resident and mother of four children.

# The Rookie



Someone once said a smart person has knowledge, a wise person shares knowledge. Everyone learns through sharing knowledge and experience. No one benefits more from this sharing than the rookie.

The following are guidelines from working with some extraordinary firefighters. These guidelines can also serve as a refresher for those of us who have more years under our belts.

## **Never disrespect this job by not caring.**

It is an honor to be a firefighter. To become complacent is to dishonor those who have gone before us. This job is not just 10 days and a paycheck. Embrace training as a means to maintain the necessary level of proficiency. Truly loving this job means loving every aspect of it and therefore deserving to wear the badge. This is the greatest profession; treat it as such.

## **Lead by example.**

Even a rookie can lead by example. Do your job well, every time, and that can rub off on the other members of your crew. Soon they may be trying to reach the standard that the rookie has set.

## **Arrive at work at least 30 minutes before shift change.**

Preparation for that big fire begins when you walk through the door. Arriving early allows you to familiarize yourself with the apparatus you are assigned to before that 8:05 fire call. It will also endear you to the off-going crew by grabbing that end-of-shift call. Start off on the right foot — arrive early. If you are on time, you're late. If you're early, you're on time.

## **Talk to the off-going crew.**

Don't let your counterpart leave without getting a report on what happened on that shift. If they had a fire, find out everything about it including what went right and what went wrong. You can learn a lot from both. Did they have any other interesting calls? Was there any equipment moved, replaced or sent in for repair? Don't be the one who frantically looks for the hook that is being repaired. Conversely, don't rush out the door at first sight of your replacement. Share your experiences with the crew that is relieving you. Give them the same courtesy that they extended to you.

## **Introduce yourself to everyone you meet.**

Take the first step in the communication process. This is especially true on your first day in the house. Greet everyone you see with a hand shake and a "Hi, I am firefighter Smith, nice to meet you." Being new, it is imperative that you meet everyone as soon as possible because you rely on them for everything. The sooner you make them aware of your presence the better off you will be.

## **Find out who is the Captain.**

Ask him all of those questions related to your first day in that house. Which bed is mine? What housework do I do? Where can I find a mop?

## **Find out your riding position and your responsibilities.**

He will instruct you on how the crew does things and how you fit in. Understand what is expected of you before you go out the door.

## **Check your equipment.**

This rule can never be overstated. Failing to be prepared is preparing to fail. Check your PPE and SCBA. Check every nozzle every shift. Check the rest of the equipment on the engine or truck to make sure it is where you left it the day before. If you are there for the first time, check to see where everything is. Knowledge of what is in those cabinets means you have one less thing to worry about when the big one hits

## **Wear your safety gear.**

Contrary to what you might think you are not indestructible. You have been given protective clothing to ensure that you go home at the end of your shift. This clothing cannot protect you if it stays on the hook in the apparatus room. Wear your hood, pull down your helmet shroud, button your collar, and wear your structure gloves. Give yourself every chance of getting back home in the same shape as when you left.

## **If you have any questions, ask them.**

Pride has no business impeding knowledge. Not asking something for fear of looking stupid will only get you in trouble. The bottom line is you need to know what you are doing.

## **Don't get caught up in the rumor mill.**

The kitchen table is a great place for knowledge swapping. It is also where rumors are created, sustained and traded. As a rookie, don't take part in the rumor mill. You never know who you may offend. What you say can be incorrectly repeated and used to hurt you. If it is fire talk, sit there and absorb. If it is rumor talk, walk away

## **Don't be in a hurry to gain acceptance.**

Your actions will be closely scrutinized; they must speak for themselves. Pulling a pre-connect correctly is more important to your crew than the fact that you were the chief of your old department.

## **Be a team player.**

Remember, when things go bad, all you have is your crew. Crew continuity is built at the firehouse as well as on the fire scene. If asked, join your crew for P.T. or other non firefighting activities. Attend functions such as retirement parties with your crew. A good crew is built off duty as well as on.

**SCIENTIST SAY** the universe is made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons.  
They forgot to mention morons.

## **Have fun.**

As stated in rule 1, this is the greatest profession in the world. Being enthusiastic about being a firefighter can be contagious. Have fun cleaning the toilets as well as fighting fire. Develop a sense of humor; survival in the firehouse depends on it. Enjoying even the smallest aspects of this job is what leads to a happy career.

## **Have Pride**

Be proud of where you work. You have chosen your department for a reason. You may not always agree with decisions that are being made above you, but do not let that diminish your love for the job and your department. Along with department pride comes company pride. As a rookie you should be looking forward to the time when you will have a permanent house. Work at being the best firefighter, on the best crew, at the best firehouse. Pride will push you to better yourself for the good of your crew. Company pride is the sincerest form of department pride.

## **Don't think, "Been there, done that."**

You are only as good as your next call. Don't be overconfident. Whether you were a hero or a goat will not help you on the next emergency. What will help is the experience and knowledge that you gained.

## **Never stop learning.**

You are finished with the academy and probation. You can stop reading and studying, right? Wrong. The day you stop reading about our job is the day you retire. There is a limitless supply of information out there for you to increase your knowledge base. Practice makes perfect works for reading as well as hands on.

## **Respect your elders.**

There is an extensive amount of information held in the minds of the senior members of the department. To gain this information you must be willing to make the first move. Don't be afraid to ask them questions. Ask the senior engineers about how they fought fires in their firefighter days. Ask the firefighters who are about to retire how they would have fought that last fire you were on. Would they have done anything different then? Don't let that knowledge retire when they do.

## **Leave work at work.**

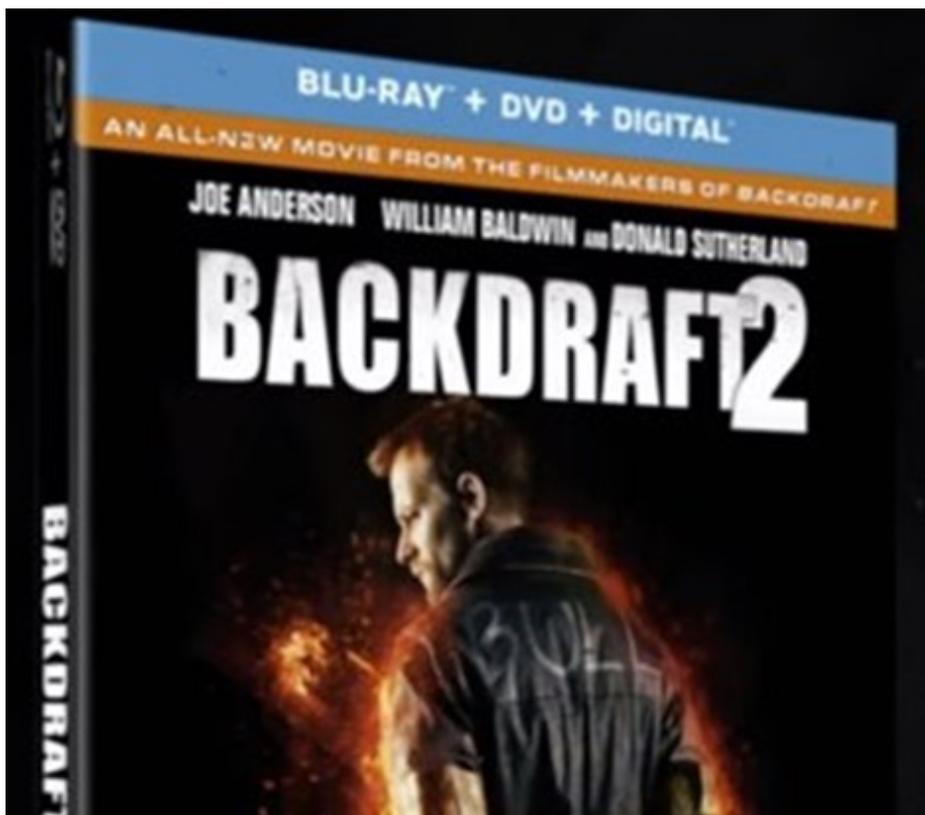
And conversely, leave your home life at home. Your crew does not deserve your wrath because you and a family member had a fight. On the other side, try not to take work problems home. your family does not deserve grief because you pulled the wrong line on a fire.

## **Remember where you came from.**

As your career moves on and you are no longer the rookie, be available to the one who is. Do not be stingy with everything you have learned and been taught. Those rookies shaking in their boots on day one deserves the same respect and tutelage that you received. If hazing and condescension were your tutors then break that chain. Be a true firefighter and help out the rookie, even if you weren't. Individually we can get better, but only as a whole can we become great.

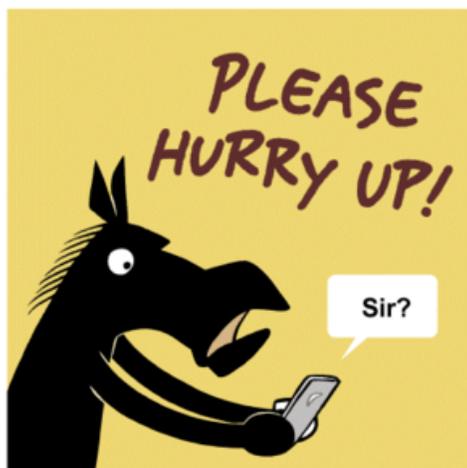
# Backdraft 2

Nearly 20 years after the original became a classic, the sequel to Backdraft is finally happening



UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — It's finally happening: Backdraft 2 will be available to watch on Blu-Ray, DVD and Digital on May 14. The new film will feature Joe Anderson as Sean McCaffrey, son of the late Steven "Bull" McCaffrey, who works as a fire investigator at the same firehouse as his Uncle Brian, played by Billy Baldwin.

The new film will feature Joe Anderson as Sean McCaffrey, son of the late Steven "Bull" McCaffrey, who works as a fire investigator at the same firehouse as his Uncle Brian, played by Billy Baldwin.



NOW I CAN WATCH BACKDRAFT

# On The Government Side



## Torres, Fitzpatrick Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Reclassify 9-1-1 Dispatchers as Protective Service Occupations

***OMB currently classifies 9-1-1 dispatchers as clerical workers—the same category as secretaries, office clerks, and taxicab dispatchers***

***The 911 SAVES Act would update this classification to appropriately reflect the important role of 9-1-1 dispatchers in directing emergency response and providing lifesaving emergency medical instruction***

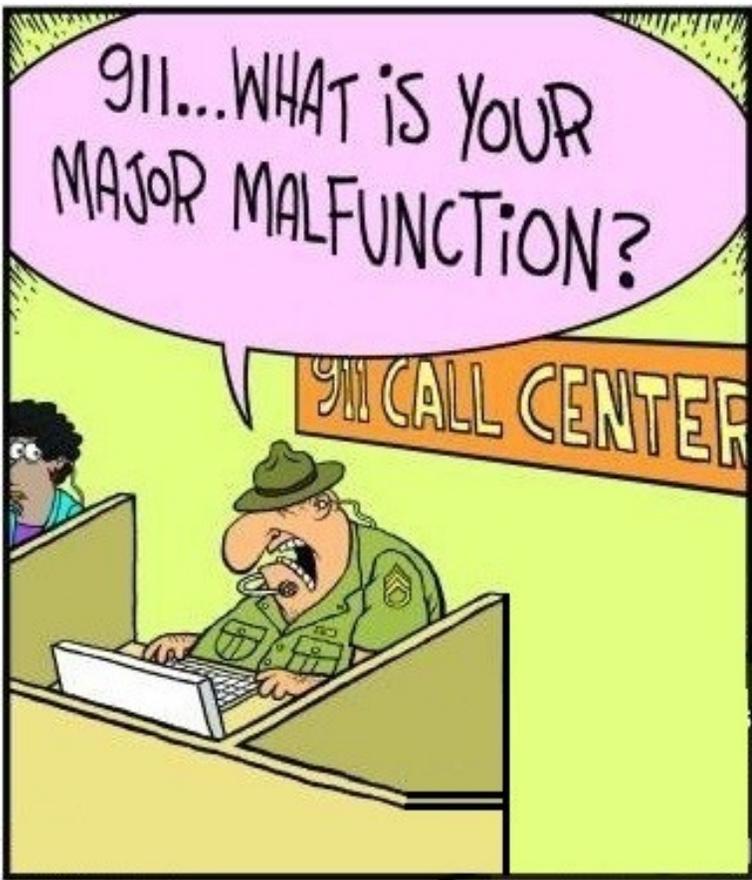


### *The life-line to public safety...*

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Representatives Norma J. Torres (CA-35), the only former 9-1-1 dispatcher serving in Congress, and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1), a former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agent and federal prosecutor, introduced H.R. 1629, the bipartisan *911 Supporting Accurate Views of Emergency Services (SAVES) Act* to reclassify 9-1-1 call-takers and dispatchers from “Office and Administrative Support Occupations” to “Protective Service Occupations” in the Office of Management and Budget Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) catalog. The current classification reflects an outdated, misinformed view of the nation’s 100,000 public safety telecommunicators. The *911 SAVES Act* is the first bill of its kind to give 9-1-1 dispatchers the recognition they deserve for the work they do every day to protect and save the lives of the public and first responders.

**As a former FBI Agent, I know the work done by our 9-1-1 operators and dispatchers is critical for the safety of our community. When we are in danger, we call 9-1-1 and rely on those on the other end of the line to make sure we get the help we need,”** said Congressman Fitzpatrick. **“This legislation will give our 9-1-1 operators and dispatchers the resources, benefits, and recognition they deserve.”**

**“After more than 17 years as a 9-1-1 dispatcher, I know firsthand the challenges our public safety dispatchers face, the stress they are put under, and the critical importance of their work. Without dispatchers, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMTs wouldn’t be able to do their jobs,”** said Congresswoman Torres. **“The 911 SAVES Act recognizes the**



**significance of these roles and ensures all classification standards put public safety first. I’m proud to work with Congressman Fitzpatrick to finally give 9-1-1 dispatchers their due—making us all safer in the long run.”**

Specifically, the *911 SAVES Act* would direct OMB to update their classification for public safety telecommunicators as a protective service within the SOC catalog. Federal agencies rely on the SOC, a vast catalog of occupations, for statistical purposes. Including public safety telecommunicators in the protective service group would make the SOC a more accurate and useful resource, and would better align the SOC with related classification systems. The bill has been endorsed by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International, the NENA: The 9-1-1 Association, and the American Federation of State, County and

Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Federal Communications Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel also applauds all efforts to get 9-1-1 operators the designation they deserve.

APCO Executive Director and CEO Derek K. Poarch said, **“The work performed by Public Safety Telecommunicators is nothing short of extraordinary, and it is 100% ‘protective.’ Passage of the 9-1-1 SAVES Act will be a win for public safety, and APCO’s going to do everything it can to help make sure that happens.”**

# Home Smoke Alarm Key Findings

Smoke alarms were present in three-quarters (74%) of reported home fires in 2012-2016. Almost three out of five home fire deaths in 2012-2016 were caused by fires in properties with no smoke alarms (40%) or smoke alarms that failed to operate (17%).

The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is 54% lower in homes with working smoke alarms than in homes with no alarms or none that worked.

When smoke alarms were present in reported fires considered large enough to activate them, they operated in 88% of the fires, 71% of the deaths and 81% of the injuries.<sup>ii</sup>

People who were fatally injured in home fires with working smoke alarms were more likely to have been in the area of origin, involved in the ignition, to have fought the fire themselves, to have a disability or to be at least 75 years old. They were less likely to have been sleeping than were people who died in fires without working smoke alarms.

Hardwired smoke alarms (with or without battery backup) were found in 48% of reported home fires in properties with smoke alarms; smoke alarms powered by batteries only were found in 46% of such fires. Almost two-thirds (65%) of the deaths from fires in homes with smoke alarms were caused by fires in properties with battery-powered alarms.

In the 2011 *American Housing Survey* (AHS), three out of five (61%) respondents who reported having smoke alarms said their alarms were powered by batteries only. <sup>1</sup>

When present, hardwired smoke alarms operated in 94% of the fires considered large enough to trigger a smoke alarm.

Battery-powered alarms operated 81% of the time. Power source issues, including missing or disconnected power batteries, dead batteries, or disconnection from or other AC power issues, were the most common factors when smoke alarms failed to operate.

Compared to reported home fires with no smoke alarms or automatic extinguishing systems (AES) at all, the death rate per 1,000 reported fires was

- 23% lower when battery-powered smoke alarms are present but AES are not;
- 42% lower when smoke alarms with any power source are present but AES are not;
- 63% lower when hardwired smoke alarms are present but AES are not; and
- 90% lower when hardwired smoke alarms and sprinklers are present.



# Which fires are reported? What counts as a fire?

The 2012-2016 U.S. national estimates of smoke alarm performance in reported home fires, are, by definition, limited to fires reported to local fire departments. Two issues come into play here. Activations of monitored fire detection systems often result in a fire department response. This results in more minor fires being reported in properties with this protection.

These systems are often found in public areas of apartments or other multi-family housing. Smoke alarms operated in 70% of reported fires in apartments or other multi-family housing compared to 45% of fires reported in one- or two-family homes. In many cases, the occupants have already handled the situation. Occupants of properties without monitored systems may not find it necessary to call the fire department for such minor fires.

Cooking is clearly a factor in unwanted activations, 63% of the time an alarm went off it was due to cooking. Beginning in 2020, manufacturers seeking UL listing for their smoke alarms and smoke detectors will be required to demonstrate that the devices are resistant to cooking and other nuisance alarm sources while activating within 3 minutes to burning polyurethane foam.<sup>6</sup> Studies to assess the impact of this new technology on unwanted alarms and on both reported and unreported fires will be needed.

## Smoke Alarm Status in Reported Fires

Fire departments responded to an estimated average of 355,400 home structure fires per year during 2012-2016. Smoke alarms, including those in fires too small to activate them, operating smoke alarms, and those that failed to operate, were present in

three-quarters (74%) of reported home fires. Almost three out of five home fire deaths resulted from fires in properties with no (40%) or no working (17%) smoke alarms.

When smoke alarms were present in fires considered large enough to activate them, they operated in 88% of the reported fires, 71% of the deaths and 81% of the injuries.

Some examples of fatal fires without working alarms are shown below.

- A Louisiana man died of smoke inhalation after a cooking fire that began while he was sleeping. No smoke alarms were present in the single-family home.
- Six people, including four children under six years of age died in a Georgia manufactured home fire caused by an improperly installed wood-burning heater. No smoke alarms were present.<sup>8</sup>
- The sole smoke alarm in the hallway a one-story Michigan house was missing its battery when a space heater ignited clothing that had been left to dry overnight in a sunroom. The room flashed over, and the fire spread to the dining area. Two residents were killed and three were injured.

Although slightly more homes with reported fires have hardwired smoke alarms (with or without battery backup), smoke alarms powered only by (or intended to be powered by) batteries were found in almost two-thirds of the fire deaths in home with smoke alarms. When present, hardwired smoke alarms operated in 94% of the fires considered large enough to trigger a smoke alarm. Battery-powered alarms operated 81% of the time.

Most homes still have smoke alarms powered by batteries only. In the 2011 *American Housing Survey* (AHS), three out of five (61%) respondents who reported having smoke alarms said their alarms were powered by batteries only, one-third (33%) said their alarms were powered by electricity and batteries, and 7% had alarms powered by electricity only.<sup>10</sup>

For many years, NFPA 101<sup>®</sup>, *Life Safety Code*<sup>®</sup>, and other codes have required smoke alarms in new construction to be hardwired with battery backup. Yet the AHS found that in 30% of homes that were less than five years old and had smoke alarms, the alarms were powered by battery only.

In 2012-2016, the death rate per 1,000 reported fires was more than twice as high in fires with smoke alarms powered by batteries (8.4) as it was in fires with hardwired smoke alarms (3.6).

## Causes of Smoke Alarm Failure

During 2012-2016, local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 25,700 home fires per year in which smoke alarms should have operated but failed to do so. These fires caused an average of 440 deaths and 1,440 injuries annually.

When smoke alarms failed to operate, it was typically because of disconnected or non-working power sources. Battery problems were most common. See Figure 6. It appears that the fire service had a harder time identifying causes of non-operation in hardwired smoke alarms. NFPA routinely allocates unknown data in our national estimates

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# Smoke Alarm Failure

The reason for failure was originally undetermined for half of all hardwired alarms, but less than one-third of the battery-powered alarms. The percentage of unclassified reasons was roughly four times as high for hardwired smoke alarms as for battery-powered alarms.

Smoke alarms powered by lithium batteries do not require annual battery changes. These batteries are sometimes referred to as “10-year batteries.” Two studies show that installation programs should follow up more frequently to ensure smoke alarm protection where these alarms were installed.

A follow-up study of lithium battery-powered smoke alarms installed in 1998-2001 in five states investigated whether these alarms were present and operational eight to ten years later. *At least one* of the installed alarms was still present and functional in only 38% of the homes visited. Slightly more than one-third (37%) of the installed alarms were missing, one-third (33%) were present and operational, and slightly less than one-third (30%) were present but not operational.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the alarms used in the program had battery chambers that permitted replacement. Although all of the alarms started with lithium batteries, more than two-thirds had non-lithium batteries eight to ten years later. Three-quarters (78%) of the smoke alarms that still had lithium batteries were still functional at the time of the evaluation. Smoke alarms that had been installed in the kitchen were less likely to be functional.

Rental properties and properties that had changed occupants were more likely than owner-occupied properties and properties with the same occupants to be missing at least one program-installed smoke alarm at the time of the evaluation.

From December 2011 through October 2012, members of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department (DFRD) conducted follow-up home visits to homes in which smoke alarms with lithium batteries that had been installed from 2001-2010 to monitor how these smoke alarms functioned over time.<sup>12</sup>

- In the second year group, 88% of the smoke alarms were present and 84% were working.
- In the fourth year group, 75% were present and 55% were working.
- In the sixth year group, 71% were present and 27% were working.
- In the eighth-year group, 63% were installed and 20% were working.
- In the tenth-year group, 55% were installed and 22% were still working.

Reminders to change the smoke alarm battery when changing the clock can cause some people to replace a lithium battery with a conventional battery with a shorter lifespan. New technology can complicate messaging.

## CHECK YOUR BATTERIES YEARLY



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