

Heating system fires, by the numbers

Second only to cooking-related incidents nationwide, heating equipment fires accounted for 14 percent of all reported home fires in 2011, and 16 percent of all home fire-related deaths, according to a 2013 report by the National Fire Protection Association.

Here are more statistics from that report:

- An estimated 50,100 heating fires in residential buildings occur each year in the United States.
- Residential building heating fires peaked in the early evening hours from 5 to 9 p.m. with the highest peak from 6 to 8 p.m. This four-hour period accounted for 30 percent of all residential building heating fires.
- Residential building heating fires peaked in January (21 percent) and declined to the lowest point during the summer months from June to August.
- Confined fires—those fires confined to chimneys, flues or fuel burners—accounted for 87 percent of residential building heating fires.
- Thirty percent of the nonconfined residential building heating fires occurred because the heat source was too close to combustibles.



Graphic by *Dakotafire Media* · www.dakotafire.net
Source: <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v13i8.pdf>

How to build a safer fire

- **Build, smaller, hotter fires** that burn more completely and produce less smoke.
- **Use only seasoned wood**; dryness is more important than the type of wood or its hardness.
- **Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, trash, Christmas trees** or other items that can easily spark a chimney fire.
- **Install a stove pipe thermometer** to monitor flue temps when using wood stoves, and adjust burning practices as needed.
- **Use only appliances listed with the Underwriters Laboratory**, a safety consulting and certification company also known as UL.
- **Place a fire extinguisher near the fireplace or wood stove** to knock down small fires.
- **Keep glass doors on fireplaces closed** to help contain the fire to the firebox.

“Even with doing all of those things, you can still have a chimney fire,” Merriman said. “If you do believe you have a chimney fire ... get everyone out of your house, including yourself, and then call the fire department.”