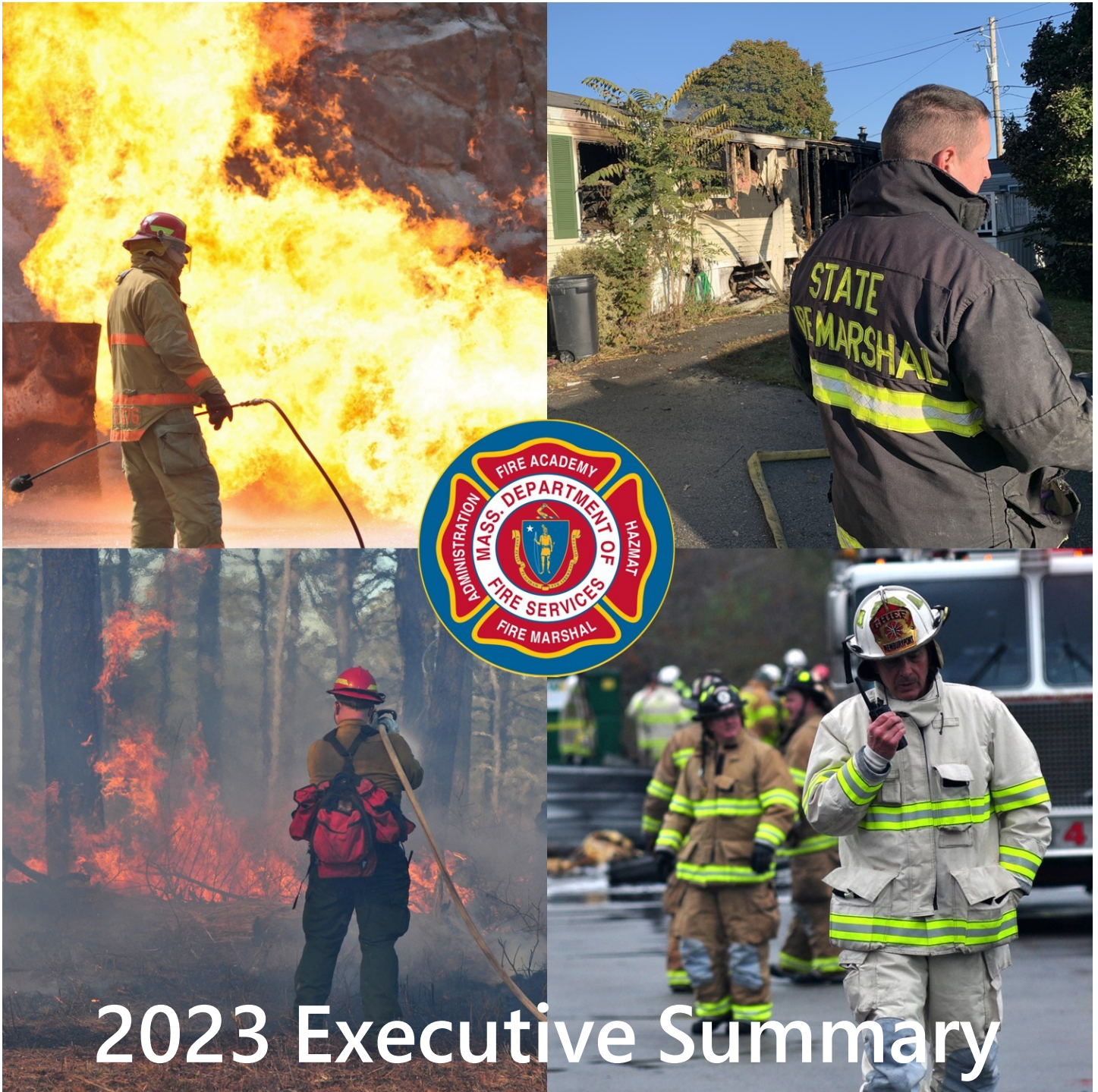


Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System



2023 Executive Summary

Massachusetts Department of Fire Services
State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine

2023 Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System

Executive Summary

Massachusetts recorded 15,264 structure fires, 2,315 vehicle fires, and 8,064 outside/other fires in 2023. There were 25,643 fire and explosion incidents reported by fire departments to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) in 2023. This total represents 15,264 structure fires, of which 82% took place in residential settings. It also represents 2,315 motor vehicle fires and 8,064 outside/other fires. Collectively, the fires in 2023 caused 45 civilian deaths, 213 civilian injuries, 406 fire service injuries, and an estimated dollar loss of \$320.2 million in property damages.

Civilian fire deaths increased by 5% over 2022. 45 civilians died in 38 Massachusetts fires in 2023. Civilian deaths increased by two, or 5%, from the 43 fire deaths in 2022. People aged 65 or older, who represent about 17% of the population, represented 57% of fire deaths overall and 67% of residential fire deaths. Of the 45 civilian fire deaths in 2023, 32 occurred in residential structures: none of these structures were protected by fire sprinklers. Six deaths occurred in five motor vehicle fires and two people were killed in two outside fires in 2023.

There were no fire-related firefighter deaths in 2023.

Electrical fires were the leading cause of fatal fires and civilian fire deaths in 2023. These fires caused six, or 19%, of the residential civilian fire deaths. Smoking and cooking tied as the second leading cause of residential civilian fire deaths, each causing four deaths, or 13%.

There were 219 civilian injuries and 406 firefighter injuries. In 2023, fires caused 213 civilian injuries, down slightly from the 239 reported in 2022. The most common type of civilian injury was smoke inhalation. Fires also caused 406 firefighter injuries, a 21% decrease from 2022. The most common type of firefighter injury was reported as overexertion or strain.

Fires decreased overall in 2023. The total number of reported fires fell by 12% from 29,126 in 2022 to 25,643 in 2023. Structure fires decreased by 2% from 2022 to 2023. From 2022 to 2023, motor vehicle fires decreased by 3%. Outside, brush, and other fires decreased by 28% during this same time.

Fire department responses increased in 2023. Although the law states that only fires where a loss is sustained must be reported, many fire departments are reporting all the fire incidents they respond to. This allows for better data analysis, and a more accurate picture of the fire problem in Massachusetts. Many departments are voluntarily reporting the non-fire calls to which they respond. Emergency medical and rescue calls represent 62% of the 1.15 million total responses that were reported to MFIRS in 2023. The total number of calls reported to MFIRS increased by 46,069 calls, or 4%, in 2023.

Cooking was the leading cause of residential fires and injuries in 2023. 70% of all residential building fires were caused by unattended and other unsafe cooking practices in 2023. 73% of residential fires originated in the kitchen. Cooking also caused the most fire-related civilian

injuries. Cooking fires caused 70, or 41% of all 2023 civilian fire injuries and four, or 11%, residential fire deaths in 2023.

Alarms operated in 62% of residential fires overall, but only 50% of fatal fires. Smoke or heat alarms operated in 7,783, or 62%, of the residential building fires in 2023. There were no working alarms in 3% of these incidents. Based on information reported, smoke alarm performance was undetermined in 2,939 incidents, or 23% of Massachusetts' 2023 residential building fires. Smoke alarm performance was determined in 28 of the 31 residential fire deaths in 2023: alarms were present and operated in just 14 of these cases.

Arson decreased in 2023. 606 Massachusetts fires were considered arson in 2023. The 149 structure arsons, 40 motor vehicle arsons, and 417 outside and other arsons caused five civilian deaths, 10 civilian injuries, eight fire service injuries, and an estimated dollar loss of \$5.9 million. This is a 3% decrease in arson from the 627 reported in 2022. From 2022 to 2023, structure arsons decreased by 17% and motor vehicle arsons decreased by 13%. Outside and other arsons increased by 4%.

Conclusion

The great majority of fires, fire injuries, and fire deaths in Massachusetts last year took place at home. Unsafe cooking practices remained the #1 cause of all fires and civilian injuries. Electrical events, improper disposal of smoking materials, and heating equipment remained the leading causes of fire deaths. While smoking has declined somewhat as a cause of fire deaths in recent decades, all of these factors have remained relatively steady as the leading causes of fires, injuries, and fatalities.

Sadly, the well-known fire protection tools that can help contain fires, reduce injuries, and prevent deaths remain underutilized: only about half the people who died in Massachusetts fires last year were protected by working smoke alarms, and none were protected by home fire sprinklers.

Due to changes in residential construction and furnishings, the US Fire Administration recently warned that we have less time than ever before to escape a fire at home. This is especially true for older adults, who are at vastly disproportionate risk for death or serious injury in a fire. Policies and legislation promoting access to and use of smoke alarms and home fire sprinklers would benefit all residents but especially those already vulnerable due to age.

Massachusetts Fires in 2023

25,643 Fires - Down 12% From 2022

45 Civilian Deaths
0 Fire Service Deaths
212 Civilian Injuries
405 Fire Service Injuries
\$320.2 Million in Property Damage
606 Reported Arsons



Structure Fires

15,264 Fires - Down 2%
37 Civilian Deaths
0 Fire Service Deaths
168 Civilian Injuries
347 Fire Service Injuries
\$282.3 Million in Property Damage
149 Arsons Reported



Motor Vehicle Fires

2,315 Fires - Down 2%
6 Civilian Deaths
21 Civilian Injuries
9 Fire Service Injuries
\$34.4 Million in Property Damage
40 Arsons Reported

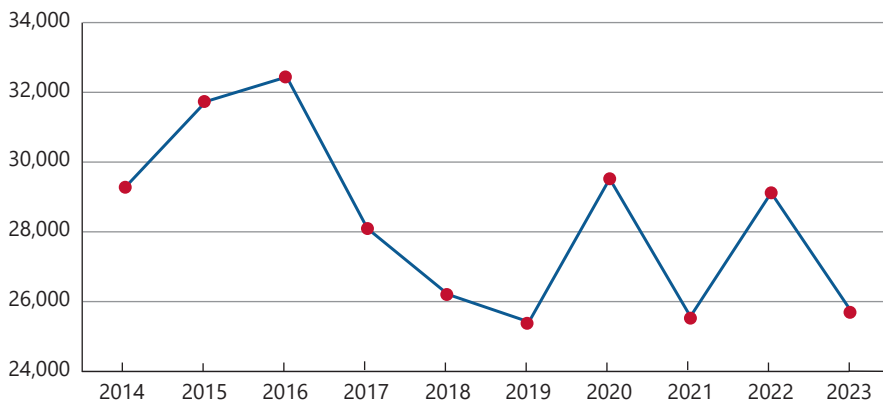


Other Fires

8,064 Fires - Down 28%
2 Civilian Deaths
23 Civilian Injuries
49 Fire Service Injuries
\$3.5 Million in Property Damage
417 Arsons Reported

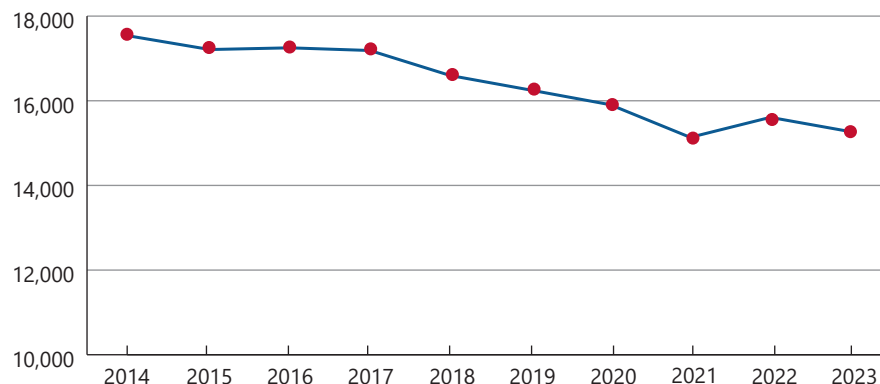


Massachusetts Fires by Year



Fires in 2023
were well below the
10-year average of
28,299.

Structure Fires by Year



Structure fires
were below 2022, and
remained below the
10-year average
of 16,402.

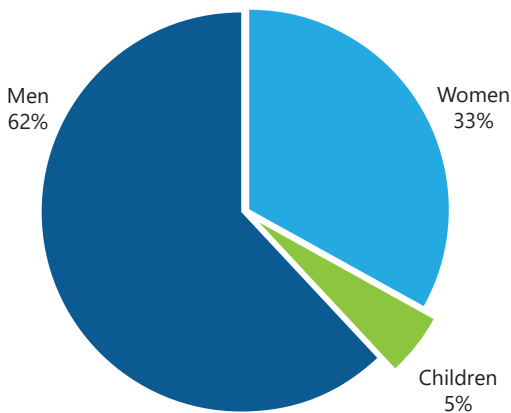


Department of Fire Services

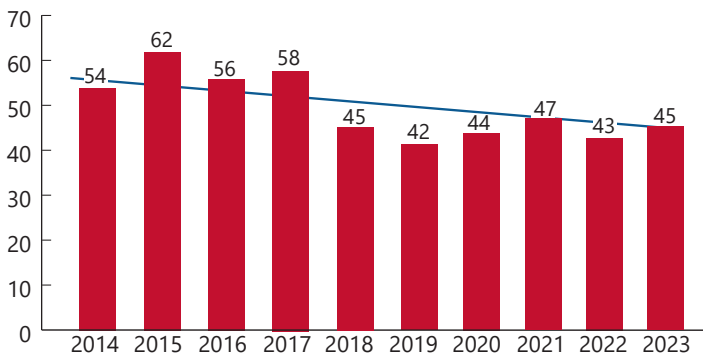
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Massachusetts Fire Deaths in 2023

Civilian Fire Deaths

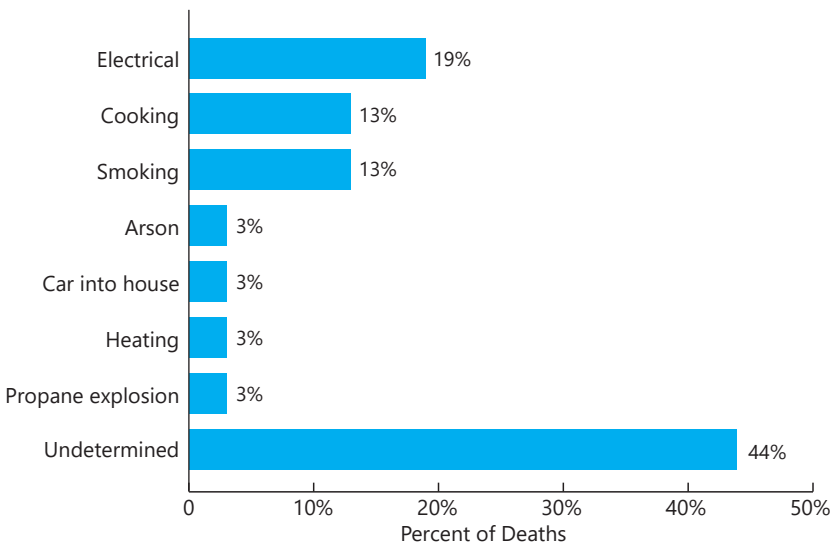


Fire Deaths by Year



- 38 fatal fires killed 45 civilians: 28 men, 15 women, and 2 children.
- 26 of these victims (58%) were age 65 or older.
- 32 of these fatalities (71%) occurred at home.
- No firefighters died in fire-related incidents.
- 5 people died in 5 fires that were intentionally set. All of these were successful attempts at self-immolation.

Causes of Residential Structure Fire Deaths



71% of fire deaths in 2023 took place at home. Be sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home, test them every month, and replace them every 10 years!



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