

## FIRE SAFETY STATISTICS IN PERSPECTIVE (TEXTING/CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING)

By Richard Schulte

According to a Reuters article titled "*Study: Texts, Phones Kill 16,000*" dated September 27, 2010, texting or cell phone use while driving has been involved in an estimated 16,000 traffic fatalities in the United States in the 7 year period between 2001 and 2007. Doing a little arithmetic, the average number of traffic fatalities in the US which involved texting or cell phone use was roughly 2,285 annually.

. . .the average number of traffic fatalities in the US which involved texting or cell phone use was 2,285 annually.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the number of fatalities caused by structure fires in the US in 2009 was estimated to be 2,695, with 2,565 (95.1 percent) of those fatalities occurring in residential occupancies. In 2009, structure fires in commercial (non-residential) occupancies caused an estimated 105 fatalities (3.9 percent) in the United States.

Most drivers in the US consider using a cell phone for talking while driving to be "safe. The public might consider texting while driving to be a little less "safe" than talking on the cell phone. If talking on a cell phone while driving is considered to be "safe" by the public, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the public would also consider fire to be a relatively minor "safety" problem in commercial buildings based upon the number of fatalities which occur as a result of fires in commercial buildings.

Given that a major fire has never occurred in a high rise building protected by a sprinkler system in the United States since we first began providing sprinkler protection in high rise buildings in the early 1970's, it is highly probable that the public would also consider high rise buildings protected by a sprinkler system to be "safe" if the public was aware of the safety record of sprinklered high rise buildings.

. . .the United States Government, specifically NIST, still considers the level of safety provided for high rise office buildings protected by a sprinkler system to be inadequate.

It appears that there is a difference as to what the public considers to be “safe” and what fire safety professionals consider to be “safe”.

Even though the average number of Americans who die annually as a result of fires in office buildings, both high rise and low rise office buildings, is one, the United States Government, specifically NIST, still considers the level of safety provided for high rise office buildings protected by a sprinkler system to be inadequate.

And you wonder why the United States is close to being bankrupt?

And you wonder why the United States is close to being bankrupt?

\* \* \* \* \*

Copyright © 2010  
Richard C. Schulte