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FIRE SAFETY STATISTICS IN PERSPECTIVE

By Richard Schulte

Need to put the fire safety statistics in perspective? The following are statistics for the United States.

Highway Fatalities-2009 (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)	33,808
Highway Fatalities-2008 (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)	37,423
Annual Average Influenza Fatalities (1976-2007) (Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention)	6,309
Fire Fatalities-2008 (Including Vehicle Fires) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	3,320
Highway Vehicle Fire Fatalities-2008 (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	350
Fire Fighter Fatalities-2009 (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	82
Lightning Fatalities-2006 (Source: National Fire Protection Association/National Weather Service)	47
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Nursing Homes (2002-2005) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	16
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Hotels/Motels (2003-2007) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	11
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Mercantile Occupancies (2003-2006) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	10
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Warehouses (2003-2006) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	5
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Office Buildings (2000-2004) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	1
Annual Average Fire Fatalities-Educational Occupancies (2003-2006) (Source: National Fire Protection Association)	0

It is interesting to note that the number of lightning fatalities in 2006 exceeded the combined annual average number of fire fatalities in nursing homes, hotels/motels, mercantile occupancies, warehouses, office buildings and educational occupancies.

Roughly 80 percent of the fire fatalities which occur in the United States occur in residential occupancies not protected by a sprinkler system. When sprinkler protection is provided for residential occupancies, the number of fire fatalities which occur falls to close to zero.

Do we really need more restrictive fire safety provisions in building codes?

Based upon the statistics above, it is my opinion that the “balanced fire protection” concept being pushed by the Alliance for Fire and Smoke Containment and Control (AFSCC), the trade organization representing the manufacturers of passive fire protection products, is nonsense, *i.e.*, b.s.

The concept of “balanced fire protection” isn’t about fire safety. It’s about using the building code for marketing purposes.

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