

# SCHULTE & ASSOCIATES

Building Code Consultants  
880D Forest Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202  
fpeschulte@aol.com  
847/866-7479

## A SNAP SHOT OF FIRE SAFETY IN THE UNITED STATES

By Richard Schulte

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) report titled "*Structure Fires by Occupancy 2003-2007 Annual Averages*" provides a clear snapshot of structure fires in the United States. The report was developed by the NFPA Fire Analysis and Research Division and is dated June 2010.

The following are just a few excerpts of the data included in the report. The data below are the average annual number of fires, fire fatalities and fire injuries over the 5 year period between 2003 and 2007.

### Educational Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Elementary Schools	1,410	0	7
Middle/High Schools	2,750	0	48

### Health Care Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Medical/Psychiatric Hospitals	1,520	1	28
Nursing Homes	2,930	15	128

### Hotels/Motel/Dormitory/Fraternity/Sorority/Barracks Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Dormitories/Fraternities/ Sororities/Barracks	3,690	6	46
Hotels/Motels	3,970	11	151

## Mercantile/Business Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Department/Discount Stores	540	0	9
Business Offices	3,310	3	31

## Industrial Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Electrical Generating Plants	120	0	0
Manufacturing/Processing	7,220	5	238

## Storage Occupancies

Occupancy	Number of Fires	Civilian Fire Fatalities	Civilian Fire Injuries
Refrigerated Storage	50	0	1
Warehouse	1,360	4	23

## Analysis

A NFPA report titled "*The Total Cost of Fire in the United States*" authored by Dr. John R. Hall, Jr., and dated March 2010 indicates that the total cost of fire, and our efforts to mitigate and otherwise deal with fire, exceeds \$300 billion on an annual basis. Based upon this estimate, there is little doubt that fire is "big business" in the United States.

Based upon the data contained in the NFPA report referred to above, it appears that we have adequately addressed the structure fire problem in the U.S. Given our success in addressing the structure fire problem, perhaps it's time to take a look at our "national fire budget" to see if we can do a little trimming. More than likely, we can achieve equal, or even better results, while reducing our national expenditures for fire protection.

Same or better results at less cost-that sounds like a concept which fits nicely with the times.

\* \* \* \* \*

Copyright © 2011 Richard C. Schulte  
All Rights Reserved

**Editor's Note:** Richard Schulte is a 1976 graduate of the fire protection and safety engineering program at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago. Schulte worked as the fire protection engineer for the San Jose (California) Fire Department from 1980-1982. Schulte was named as one of ENR's "Top 25 Newsmakers of 2004" by Engineering News-Record for his work on critiquing the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11.