



The Newsletter of the New Jersey
Division of Fire Safety

FIRE FOCUS



Excellence in Public Safety

Welcome Back !

For those of you who regularly followed our Fire Focus Newsletter, you know we took a hiatus during the pandemic. Well, we're back! Our aim is to overhaul and combine the old "State Fire Marshal Message" into Fire Focus and make this a quarterly publication. It will touch on the Division of Fire Safety's activities and relay information on "hot topics" within the fire service.

As you know, the mission of the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety is to serve as the central focus for the State's fire service community and the public in all matters relating to fire safety through the development and enforcement of the State Uniform Fire Code, public education programs, and firefighter training programs.

Within the Division, the Bureau of Fire Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing the State's Uniform Fire Code. The Bureau of Fire Department Services is responsible for the training and education of New Jersey's fire service, fire incident reporting, cause and origin investigations, firefighter serious injury and fatality investigations, and fire safety education for the public.

Every day, New Jersey's dedicated first responders assume risks that are unimaginable to the public. Many firefighters go far beyond the call of duty, risking it all to keep their communities and citizens safe. They are decisive in the face of danger, willing to put others first, and are swift to act. They are brave beyond measure - running toward danger when every natural instinct tells them to flee.

The Division of Fire Safety remains extremely proud to operate programs and promote training for our first responders as we continue our goal of Excellence in Public Safety.



Richard J. Mikutsky
NJ State Fire Marshal

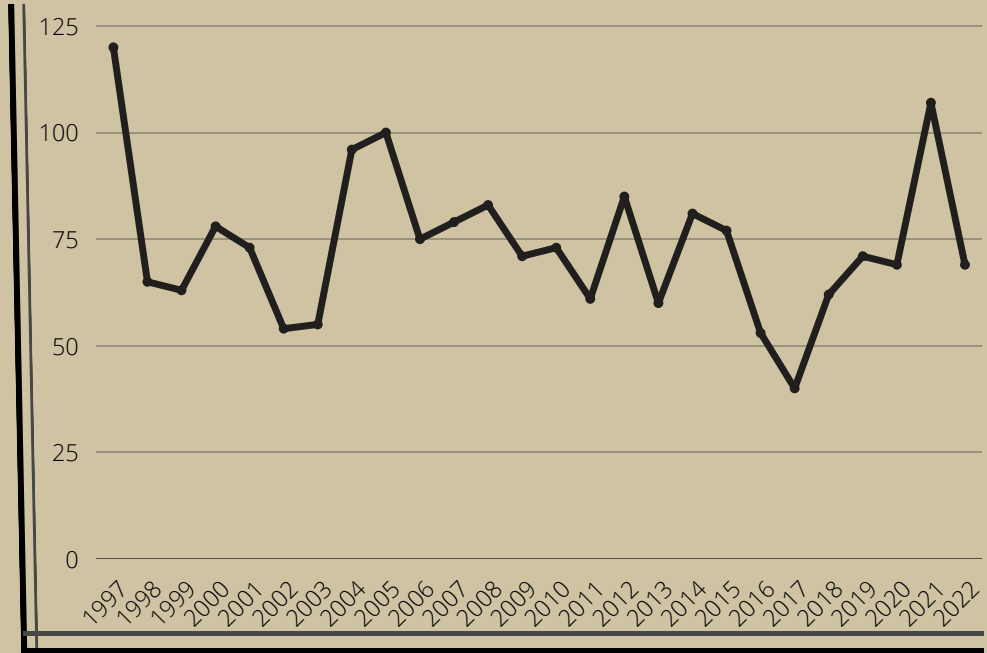


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FIRE IN NEW JERSEY: 2022 RECAP

As we move into 2023, the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety's NFIRS Unit takes a look at the fire statistics and trends throughout our state in 2022. While any loss of life, injury, property loss, etc. are undoubtedly tragic, in some ways 2022 was an improvement over 2021. In other ways - specifically school fires - the uptick in incidents was alarming.

N.J. Fire Fatalities



In 2022 there were 62 fatal fire victims, down approximately 42% from the 107 fatal fire victims in 2021. There were 34 male deceased victims, 25 females, and 3 that are still pending identification. 35 (or 56%) of deceased victims were located in one-family or two-family dwellings, while 13 (or 20%) were located inside vehicles.

The age group that experienced the highest number of fire fatalities were those ages 61-70 (with 14), followed by ages 51-60 (with 9). All other age groups experiences significantly less, with those ages 6-10 years old not having any fatalities at all.

In 2022 there were 83 school fires. This marks an increase of 130% from the 36 school fires reported in 2021. The highest concentration of these was seen from September 1-December 31 in Union and Mercer Counties. In terms of Property Loss, the monetary value of New Jersey's losses caused by school fires in 2022 was \$10,440,932.20.

Reminders:

- All NFIRS reports should be submitted to: NFIRS@DCA.NJ.GOV
- All reports submitted should have both **DEPARTMENT NAME** and **FDID NUMBER** in the subject line
- Reports are due by the **5th** of the following month



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FTTF ADDRESSES GROWING PROBLEM OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERY FIRES

In recent years, the fire service has become all-too-familiar with the threat posed by lithium-ion batteries. They are in our smartphones, laptops, toys, e-cigarettes; we are surrounded by them at virtually all times. But when they are damaged, or used incorrectly, these batteries can overheat, catch fire, or explode.



On Friday, December 16th, the NJDFS – led by Ben Berkman - hosted the Fire Threat Task Force-Energy Safety Group Electric Vehicles/Lithium Battery Fires Safety & Concerns Seminar. The Energy Safety Response Group consists of FDNY members who have an extensive background in lithium battery fires which have become problematic for today's fire service. Over eighty individuals from the fire service and other local, state, and federal agencies attended the seminar to further understand and enhance their awareness in regard to responding to these types of incidents. Further Fire Threat Task Force seminars are planned for 2023.

As the fire service continues to work on this growing problem, here are some safety tips for everyone to be mindful of when it comes to lithium-ion batteries:

- *Use devices that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.**
- *Keep batteries at room temperature and store away from anything that can catch fire.**
- *Do not continue to charge a device or battery after it's fully charged.**
- *Do not charge a device while it is under your pillow, on your bed, or on a couch.**
- *Only use the proper charging cord that came with the battery or device.**





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WINTER FIRE SAFETY

The holiday season has come and gone - and with it go the fire hazards presented by indoor trees, decorations, holiday lights, displays, and candles. But that doesn't mean the threat of fire will be hibernating for the rest of the winter. New Jersey's coldest months present challenges all their own, holidays or not.

More home fires occur in the winter than any other season. You and your family can be fire smart and fire safe with these seasonal tips:

***Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from any heat source. This includes fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, and space heaters.**



Plug only **1 heat-producing appliance** (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.

***Install and test carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month.**

***Keep portable generators outside. Position them away from windows and as far from your home as possible.**

***After using a fireplace, store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container. Keep the container outside, at least 10 feet from your home.**

***Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents each year.**

As with all seasons – be sure to have/practice your fire escape plan and have working smoke alarms in your home. Keep New Jersey safe and warm throughout the winter!



Half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.



1 in every 7 home fires and 1 in every 5 home fire deaths involves heating equipment.



Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters.





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NEW JERSEY HOSTS 19TH ANNUAL YOUTH FIRESETTER INTERVENTION CONFERENCE



Since 2003, the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety has made it its mission to address the problem of youth firesetting by hosting an Annual Youth Firesetting Conference. On December 1-2, the NJDFS hosted the 19th Annual Conference - welcoming instructors and attendees from around New Jersey, the US, and beyond, to examine all the challenges surrounding youth firesetting. Over 120 people from 13 different states (plus Canada!) spent the two-day event doing just that.

The theme of this year's Conference – "How Youth Firesetting Prevention & Intervention Fits Into Strategic CRR" – put the spotlight on Community Risk Reduction. Karla Klas, who manages the University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center, gave the Keynote Address. In doing so, Ms. Klas gave everyone the tools to modernize their approach to CRR and Youth Firesetting Intervention programs and inspired those present to work outside of their 'comfort zone' to get positive outcomes.

Each year, the New Jersey Youth Firesetter Intervention Conference is presented by the NJDFS, Kean University, and the New Jersey Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators. It welcomes people from numerous disciplines – fire service, mental health, law enforcement, social services, and educational professionals – all of whom deal head-on with the youth firesetting problem.

"We are very fortunate in New Jersey to be able to look forward to this event each year," said State Fire Marshal Rich Mikutsky. "It's always a win when the best and brightest in the country on this topic come together to educate us and put the focus on what is a real problem. We certainly have an uphill battle when it comes to combatting the youth firesetting issue in our communities, but the people here and the leadership shown gives me hope we can get to where we want to be."

Plans are already in the works to celebrate 20 years of the Youth Firesetter Conference in 2023 – which is set for November 30th & December 1st at Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville. Registration information will be released in September 2023 on www.keanfiresafety.com.



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NJDFS CELEBRATES CAREERS OF KEY STAFF MEMBERS



Marylain Kemp

As 2022 came to a close, the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety celebrated the retirements of several long-time staff members. Between November and December 2022, the NJDFS saw the end of four stellar careers:

Marylain Kemp, Administration/Personnel Coordinator



Patricia Gaines and Steve Hearn

Kent Neiswender, Training and Certifications Supervisor

Steven Hearn, NFIRS Unit-South Jersey

Patricia Gaines, Bureau of Code Enforcement - Principal Clerk



Kent Neiswender

“At the year’s end, the Division of Fire Safety saw a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise walk out the door,” said State Fire Marshal Rich Mikutsky. “These are folks that, in all facets of the fire service and public safety, have helped protect the citizens of New Jersey and made our state a safer place.” All in all, approximately 120+ years of experience were lost to retirements from the NJDFS this past winter across several units.

State Fire Marshal Mikutsky added, “While all of these staff members will be missed, both as friends and colleagues, the Division of Fire Safety staff stands ready to follow in their footsteps. We have been fortunate to have Marylain, Kent, Steve, and Pat all these years - and we are certainly grateful for all the hard work they put in. They have set a great example for the future of the NJDFS.”



SAVING LIVES IS STRESSFUL!

We've Been Where You Are . . .
Now We're Here For **You**



We get it. The work is stressful and life can get overwhelming. Talk confidentially to a trained peer support specialist who has had similar experiences as a firefighter, dispatcher, or EMS professional. **NJ Fire & EMS Lifeline** is a 24/7 confidential peer support service for New Jersey Firefighters, Dispatchers and Emergency Medical Services Personnel and their families. We offer the following services:

- ✓ **PEER SUPPORT:** telephonic peer counseling, support and clinical assessment
- ✓ **CRITICAL INCIDENT CRISIS MANAGEMENT:** peer-based critical incident stress management (CISM) services available throughout New Jersey
- ✓ **TRAINING:** Resilience and wellness prevention training available to all fire, dispatch and EMS agencies upon request
- ✓ **PROVIDER NETWORK & RESOURCES:** access to providers who are familiar with the unique culture of fire, dispatch and EMS professions

Talk to us and find out more about our **free** and **confidential** services.

888.653.3367 | NJFIREEMS.com |





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You're invited! **FireStat**

Every 1st & 3rd Wednesday 9:15a

If interested in attending please contact
Capt. Ben Berkman: Bennet.Berkman@dca.nj.gov

The purpose of FireStat is to create a single, reliable one-stop fire information sharing platform

Log in to hear:

- *Discussions regarding current topics, trends & patterns
- *Presentations on current/pressing topics
- *Earn FREE CEUs



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!
NJ_FIRESAFETY



The NJ Division of Fire Safety would like to thank Jerry Clark, long-time Editor-In-Chief of the Fire Focus Newsletter. Jerry spearheaded the effort to modernize the newsletter and worked to publish it over his 14-year career at the NJDFS.

Jerry retired in the Summer of 2021.



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Fire Focus Quarterly gladly accepts editorial contributions meeting its internal electronic publication standards from members and affiliates of the *New Jersey Fire Service* and the general public exclusively via email and email attachment only.

Please send material c/o Ashley Bledsoe, Content Producer, Program Specialist 2, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, Community Risk Reduction Unit to: ashley.bledsoe@dca.nj.gov

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