



HOT TOPICS

The latest news and updates from the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's office

These pictographs will help you to overcome literacy barriers and communicate smoking fire safety messages with pictures to high-risk populations. You can find them and more outreach materials [here](#).



Did you know:

The 2021 national estimates for residential building smoking fires and losses show that there were 7,800 fires, 275 deaths, 750 injuries and \$361,500,000 in dollar loss.



FIRE MARSHAL MUSINGS

Doug Nelson



As we settle into our new location and Agency, we have a number of items that we would like to communicate out to all of you.

First off, the Fire Department Certificate of Existence Program is officially open effective August 1st. Please go online to complete yours prior to October first and contact the main office for any assistance.

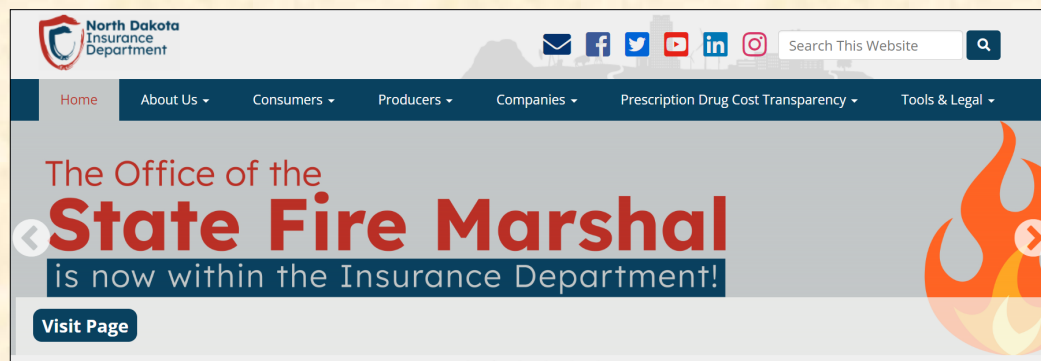
- Our website has changed. Our online presence and information is temporarily located [here](#). We will be located here until our permanent website location is built. Please visit us and let us know what we can provide more of online!
- We are hopeful that we will soon be adding some additional staff, but while we search for qualified candidates, we are also continuing to work with our current staff to ensure we are meeting the needs of the State. Part of this work is our quarterly meetings, one of which we will be having in August. At this meeting we plan to accomplish annual inventory, quarterly vehicle and equipment maintenance, goals and objectives status updates, fire investigation training and our annual physical agility test.
- Something that many fire chiefs may not know is that the State Fire Marshals Office hosts a group consisting mostly of fire chiefs to help guide our office. Currently, the group meets quarterly (usually online) to discuss what our direction, goals and

objectives are and how we are proceeding with them. The make up of the group is three volunteer fire chiefs, two combination fire chiefs, and one full time fire chief. If you have any interest in attending or helping out on this group, please let us know. We welcome guest attendance and also rotate participants every couple of years. We plan to host our next meeting in September.

- The North Dakota Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators (ND-IAAI) will be hosting their annual conference in Bismarck on September 13th, 14th, and 15th. The annual conference consists of fire investigation training, an annual organizational meeting for members, and a banquet. For those that have not attended, it is a great opportunity to learn more about fire investigation and network with other fire investigators in both the public and private sector. The training topic this year is vehicle fire investigation led by two nationally recognized vehicle fire experts. More information coming, watch your email!

Due to the school year right around the corner, I thought it might be good to review or direct you to some of the school fire safety related information available. [North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-06-12](#) states, "Each public and nonpublic school shall conduct fire, tornado and other emergency or disaster drills, including lockdown drills." In 2018, the State Fire Marshals Office along with fire chiefs issued a memo to

the ND Department of Public Instruction explaining the fire code requirements for emergency evacuation drills. The memo stated that schools are required to conduct an emergency evacuation drill monthly. Throughout the year, four of the emergency evacuation drills must specifically be fire drills. Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you or your schools have questions about drills or other school fire safety topics.





BURNING NEWS FROM THE CHIEF DEPUTY

Kimberly Ersland



We talk a lot about the scientific method and the importance of using it correctly. But sometimes it is beneficial to remember why we do it. NFPA 921 Chapter 4 is Basic Methodology and specifically in Section 4.3 is the relationship of the scientific method to fire

investigations.

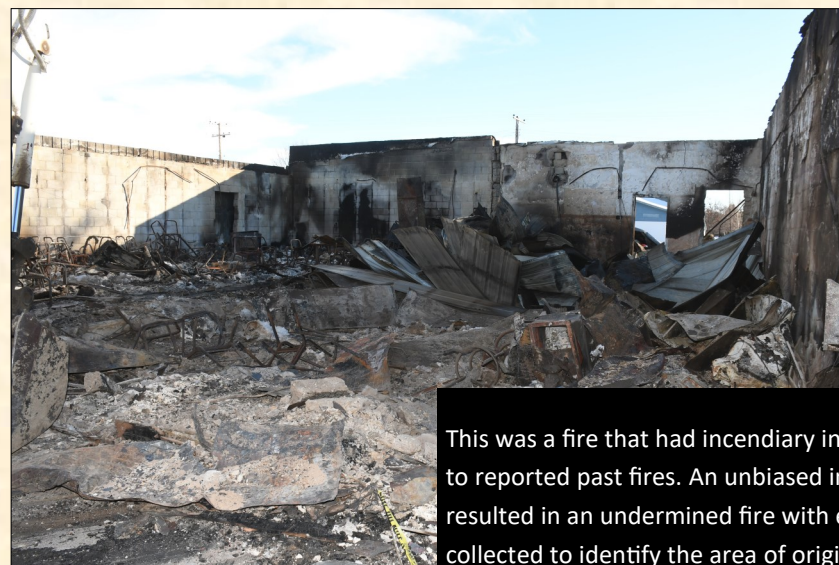
One pitfall of not using the scientific method properly would be presumption bias – or what we often call tunnel vision. It is imperative that investigators collect data BEFORE forming hypotheses (Section 4.3.8). The consequence of not doing so can lead to not gathering all information or incorrect analysis of gathered data, both potentially leading to an incorrect fire cause.

Expectation and confirmation bias can be hard to recognize in our own investigations and we often deny it because “I would never do that”. Expectation bias is described as having reached a premature conclusion without looking for or considering all the relevant data (Section 4.3.9). An example of this might be that a particular appliance is known to have caused fires. Upon finding that appliance in the fire, the investigator makes the assumption it was the cause and in turn seeks data to prove it. We ‘expect’ that to be the cause of the fire so therefore we move forward trying to find out how.

Another form of bias similar to expectation is confirmation bias. This can be relying heavily only on data that fits our hypothesis, disregarding information that refutes it, or quickly discounting other viewpoints because it does not fit the desired narrative. An example of this would be learning that a person had numerous fire claims to their property in the past and the assumption

becomes they must have set the fire. The past information is a verifiable but an investigator must treat it as that – one piece of data. It is not reason to ignore other possible hypotheses or ignore evidence that could disprove the theory. Investigators should continue to gather as much information as possible and critically analyze the data. We should all be working as hard to disprove a theory as we do to prove it.

Bias is at times hard to recognize on the surface, so it is imperative to utilize the scientific method on every investigation, no matter the size, complexity or circumstances. Doing so will help you ensure that your investigation is not affected by bias, defensible in court proceedings but most importantly that it is honest, fair and accurate.

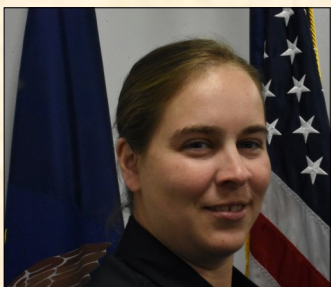


This was a fire that had incendiary indicators due to reported past fires. An unbiased investigation resulted in an undermined fire with enough data collected to identify the area of origin in the attic and credible accidental causes.



ON THE ROAD WITH DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL

Kirstin Greaney-Stanger — District 4



August is here and a new college year right around the corner. With that comes new college students living away from home, in temporary housing such as dormitories, for the first time. College dormitories are classified as a Group R-2 occupancy. Not every community has dormitories, but many may have a Group R-2 occupancy such as: apartment buildings, vacation timeshare properties, hotels (non-

transient), or motels (non-transient) to name a few.

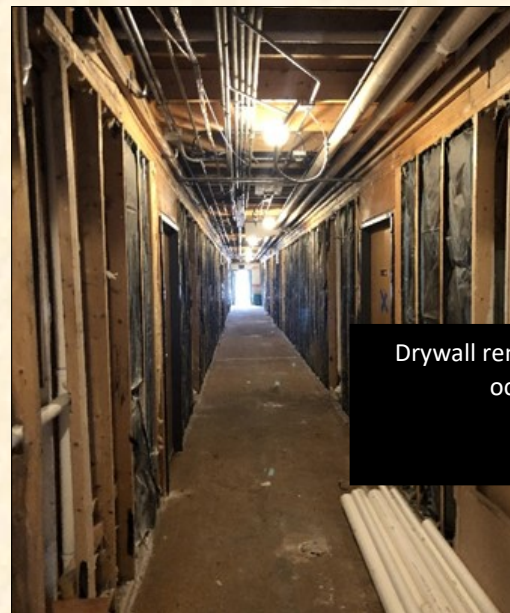
When conducting an inspection in a dormitory, or other Group R-2 occupancy, the fire authority will only conduct the fire inspection in common space areas: hallways, laundry rooms, mechanical rooms, recreation rooms, etc. The fire authority will not enter the occupant's room to conduct a fire safety inspection. The occupant's room is not considered a common space. Common violations may include the following:

1. Emergency exits are not free and clear of obstructions. Emergency exit egress includes the hallways, stairwells, and exit doors.
2. Fire doors do not close or latch. Test all doors on magnetic door holders to ensure they close and latch. Also, fire doors are not to be propped open with door stops, holders, or wedges.
3. Exit signs and emergency lights are not properly illuminated.
4. Smoke detectors and/or fire alarm systems are not properly maintained or working.
5. Exit signs don't point in the direction of travel.
6. Electrical panels are blocked. Electrical panels should have 36" clearance in front. Some electrical panels are located in trash rooms, and trash cans tend to migrate in front of the electrical panels.

7. Fire extinguishers are not properly mounted or in an operable status.

When conducting the fire safety inspection ask the building representative, if the rooms have fire safety plans. Many dormitories will have emergency escape plans in each of the rooms detailing information such as: local emergency numbers, a floor plan showing where the occupant is, the emergency exits, and the direct path to the emergency exits. Some emergency plans may also include shelter in place locations, the location of fire extinguishers, and any AED's.

Always keep in mind if you're not sure of a violation in any Group R-2 building, take a picture or write it down and contact the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office. We will be happy to help you with any code questions.



Drywall removed from corridor of occupied dorm .



ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AREA

Marcy Ost



Now that we've covered all of our special programs we can circle back to my pet project. Community Risk Reduction (CRR)!

It's been almost a year since we really started talking about what we could do for CRR at a state level and it's been a whirlwind! I have met some incredible people and learned even more acronyms!

In June I had the privilege of representing ND at the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) Conference and Expo. They have a Spotlight on Public Education (SOPE) track and I know it sounds cheesy but it really was inspiring! Most of the speakers were from departments and it's crazy what is being done on the local level.

With all the exciting stuff happening across the country it's hard to temper that excitement and remember how small most of our departments are. While getting into the schools and doing several lessons per year on fire safety sounds wonderful, most of you don't have that kind of staffing let alone funding for an inflatable fire house.

One of the biggest things is something you are already doing. Showing up for your community. There was a speaker from the Truama Burn Center at the University of Michigan who talked about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the affect they have on our brains and decision making. Turns out the best way to mitigate poor decision making is with role models and mentors. Consider stepping it up a notch. Host pick up basketball games once a month at the fire hall. Consider partnering with a mentorship program.

Some simple, cheap things you might be able to put in place rather quickly:

1. Create a kit to make teaching fire safety to kids easy for the firefighter "volunteering". Include quick talking points. If you're interested reach out and I'll get you more info.
2. Something similar for meeting with older adults. Again, I have more info.
3. Attend school nights or events geared toward families with special needs kiddos. Turns out a lot of those families avoid doing home safety plans and drills because the noise is often overwhelming for their kids. If it's a sensory issue talk to them about strobes and bed shakers.

One of the really cool things about the CRR community is how happy they are to share their programs and actively help you borrow their ideas. Don't reinvent the wheel!

August Social Media Focuses

*Smoking is the leading cause of home fire deaths.
Campus and first time apartment dwellers fire safety.*

Suggested posts:

- ◆ Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out. Put them out in water or sand.
- ◆ Do not throw out cigarettes into vegetation, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, mulch, leaves, or other similar items—they can easily catch fire
- ◆ Cook only when you are alert, not sleepy or drowsy from medicine or alcohol.

- ⇒ **USFA has more messaging (including some for e-cigarettes), social media graphics, pictographs, handouts and a video [here](#).**
- ⇒ **NFPA has a tip sheet and a video [here](#).**

Also happening in August:

20th — International Day of Medical Transporters



FIRE DATA ASSISTANT ZONE

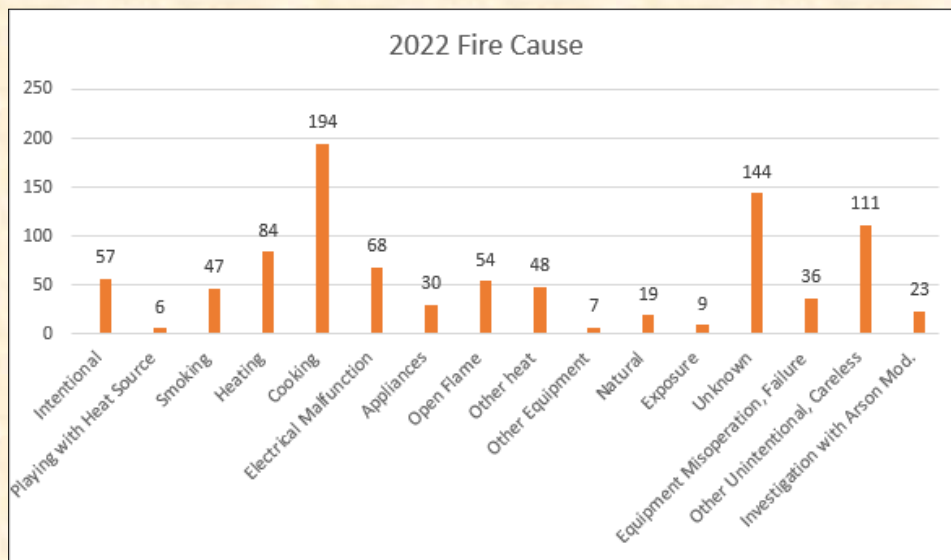
Lydia Citta



Smoking fires is one of the leading causes in the United States for residential building fires. Last year in North Dakota 47 fires were caused from smoking. Luckily for North Dakota that comes in 9th, but still in the top 10.

By educating the public with proper disposal of smoking material and encouraging outside use, we can get this number to zero, and not be part of the national trend. Helpful tips for proper smoking would be to use outside. Make sure the smoking material is completely extinguished before discarding, make sure no smoke is coming from it before discarding. Do not mix discarded smoking materials with the rest of your trash, instead bag them and tightly seal the bag before tossing them into the trash. Do not throw lit smoking materials out the window of a moving vehicle.

Informational tips was found on hototdispose.info/dispose-cigarettes. Fire stats were pulled from reporting fire departments.



The State Fire Marshal's Office can only accept fires reported in a manner that is compliant and compatible with the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). There are four options available to meet this:

- Report fires directly into eNFIRS
- Report using a third party software that is compatible and current with NFIRS
- Report using State (Department of Forestry) contract with Emergency Reporting (ER)
- Report using the NFIRS paper form (acceptable but does not get entered into state or federal database)

Our office will release submitted incident reports into the NFIRS Database monthly.

If you report fires directly into eNFIRS (<https://www.nfirs.fema.gov/NFIRSWeb/login>)

For questions or support for ER (844)253-9337 or support@emergencyreporting.com.



ISO MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Provided by ISO

There have been many questions throughout the state regarding the minimum class 9 standards for ISO as it pertains to funding from the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's office. Following is an outline that a community needs to achieve to qualify as a class 9 community. This information can be found within the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS).

Organization – There must be a fire department that is organized under state law. The organization must include one person responsible for the operation of the department (Chief). The organization must have defined boundaries that they protect.

Firefighter Response – The department must respond a minimum of 4 firefighters (from their own roster/department, not counting auto-aid) to all reported structure fires. The Chief can be counted as one of the 4 responders.

Training – The fire department must document 12 hours of structure fire training in a 12-month period. At minimum, this can be broken up into quarterly sessions of 3 hours each.

Communications – The department must receive alarm notification with no delay.

Apparatus – The department must have an apparatus that meets the general criteria of NFPA 1901 and must include at least a 250 GPM pump and a 200 gallon tank. This apparatus will have equipment needs as well to meet the minimum criteria of an engine.

Housing – The apparatus must be housed in a station with heat providing protection from the weather and freezing.

Once the minimum criteria are met, then the community can be evaluated for a class 1-9. To be recognized as better than a class 9, a community must meet the requirements listed above AND have an engine with a 750GPM (instead of 250 GPM) pump, and a water system capable of delivering 250 GPM for a 2-hour duration. Any portion of an activity the community captures with records will be prorated and proper credit applied.

For more information on the PPC program or your PPC survey, please reach out to your local Field Representative, David Schneibel (dschneibel@verisk.com) or the Field Manager, Randy Downs (rdowns@verisk.com) .

MONTHLY REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS

If you report fires directly into eNFIRS

Ensure reports are entered, complete and submitted.

In eNFIRS this means to SAVE a lot and make sure that your incident page says “successful” once complete and saved.

If no fires or incidents occurred in the previous month, please enter a “no activity report” by completing the following steps:

In eNFIRS, click on the “Incidents” Tab

Click “Create Incident” from the dropdown menu

Check/mark the “No Activity” box

Fill both the incident number and exposure fields with zeros.

The incident date field should be the last day of the month of no activity.

SAVE the incident

Now your department/District will count as actively reporting even though no incidents occurred.

If you report using a third party software compatible with NFIRS:

Ensure your reports are entered, complete and submitted.

Submit your incidents to nfirs@nd.gov in a .txt file that can be imported into eNFIRS.

We will report back to you with any discrepancies or notification of successfully completed import.

*FEMA releases NFIRS updates every year in October. It is a good idea to contact your third party software and make sure they are compliant with NFIRS updates.

If you report using the State provided contract with Emergency Reporting:

Ensure your reports are entered, complete and “reviewed” (i.e. the “Lock” Logo is GREEN). If not reviewed, they cannot be released to the SFM’s Office or imported into eNFIRS.

In Emergency Reporting, you MUST ensure that the “Lock” Logo is GREEN in order for your incident to be complete and available for our office to export.

• If reporting fires using the NFIRS paper form:

(acceptable but does not get entered into state or federal database)

Ensure all required modules on report are complete and legible.

Required modules for all fires include:

Basic Module

Fire Module (Wildland Module may be used with this for applicable fires)

Structure Fire Module

Civilian Fire Casualty Module

Fire Service Casualty Module

Mail or email completed paper forms to the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

Paper reports submitted without all required incident information will not be accepted.

For any questions on this process, reporting of fire incidents, or eNFIRS user account assistance, please contact the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

RESOURCES

Links from this issue:


USFA Smoking Fire Safety outreach materials—<https://www.insurance.nd.gov/tools-legal/state-fire-marshal>

Temporary Web Site—<https://www.insurance.nd.gov/tools-legal/state-fire-marshal>

NDCC 15.1-06-10— <https://ndlegis.gov/cencode/t15-1c06.pdf#nameddest=15p1-06-12>

NFPA Smoking outreach material— <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Top-fire-causes/Smoking>

E-cigarette Fire Safety




Fires with electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) can happen while they are being used, charged or transported. Battery failures can lead to small explosions.

Use e-cigarettes with caution and follow these safety tips:

- Do not charge your e-cigarette with a phone or tablet charger.
- Replace the batteries if they get wet or damaged.
- Do not charge your e-cigarette overnight.
- Protect your e-cigarette from extreme temperatures.
- Store loose batteries for your e-cigarette in a case. Keep them away from metal objects.

For more information about e-cigarette safety, visit www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/tips-help-avoid-vape-battery-explosions.


For more information and free fire-safety resources, visit www.usfa.fema.gov.



Click here to add image.



Smoking & Home Fire Safety



The place where we feel safest — at home — is where most smoking-materials structure fires, deaths, and injuries occur. Smoking materials are the leading cause of fire deaths. Smoking material fires are preventable.

Smoking Safety

- If you smoke, use only fire-safe cigarettes.
- If you smoke, smoke outside. Most deaths result from fires that started in living rooms, family rooms and dens or in bedrooms.
- Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches, and other smoking materials up high out of the reach of children, in a locked cabinet.

Put It Out

- Use a deep, sturdy ashtray. Place it away from anything that can burn.
- Do not discard cigarettes in vegetation such as mulch, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, leaves or other things that could ignite easily.
- Before you throw away butts and ashes, make sure they are out, and dousing in water or sand is the best way to do that.

Smoking and Medical Oxygen

Never smoke and never allow anyone to smoke where medical oxygen is used. Medical oxygen can cause materials to ignite more easily and make fires burn at a faster rate than normal. It can make an existing fire burn faster and hotter.

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES


Fires have occurred while e-cigarettes were being used, the battery was being charged, or the device was being transported. Battery failures have led to small explosions. Never leave charging e-cigarettes unattended. E-cigarettes should be used with caution.

FACTS

- The risk of dying in a home structure fire caused by smoking materials rises with age.
- One out of four fatal victims of smoking-material fires is not the smoker whose cigarette started the fire.

Name of Organization Goes Here

Contact Information Goes Here



Your Source for SAFETY Information
NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269

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