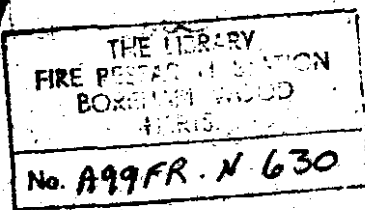


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Fire Research Note

No. 630



FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE OF CHILDREN

by

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FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE OF CHILDREN

by

E. D. Chambers.

SUMMARY

A group of children was asked whether they remembered a fire in their house, what caught fire, and whether the fire brigade was called.

This report has not been published and should be considered as confidential advance information. No reference should be made to it in any publication without the written consent of the Director of Fire Research.

MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FIRE OFFICES' COMMITTEE
JOINT FIRE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE OF CHILDREN

by

E. D. Chambers

INTRODUCTION

Fires are usually recorded in a consistent way only when they are brought to the attention of either a fire brigade or an insurance company, and most statistics are based on these two sources.

It is of some interest to know how many fires are not recorded in this way, since, among other things, this is an indication of how many people might tend to think that a fire 'could not happen to them'.

During an experiment¹ to measure the apparent effectiveness of an educational poster about fire, the opportunity was taken to include a question on this subject in a written questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to 77 children aged 11 and 12.

THE QUESTION

"Answer this question only if you have ever had a fire in your house (apart from in the grate of course).

If you remember one, what actually caught fire?

Did anybody call the fire brigade?"

A slight ambiguity in the wording of the question, which was meant to discourage unintelligent or facetious mention of a non-accidental domestic fire, could mean that a chimney fire would not be recorded although it had occurred. This does not seem very likely though.

SUMMARY OF ANSWERS

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of children remembering a fire</u>	<u>Number of fires to which fire brigade was called</u>
Soot in chimney	6	6
Fat in frying pan	6	-
Carpet	4	-
Electric blanket	2	1
Pillow case	1	1
Chair	1	-
Christmas decorations	1	-
"Shoe" (?)	1	1
"Oil" (probably fuel)	1	1
No details	1	1
<hr/>		
Number of children } remembering a fire }	24	..
Number of children } remembering a fire } to which F.B. was called }	..	11
Number of children } not remembering a fire }	53	..
Number of children } not remembering a fire } to which F.B. was called }	..	66
<hr/>		
Total children questioned	77	77
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DISCUSSION

There is no specific period during which it can be assumed that the fires mentioned would have occurred. Although children would not remember fires happening before they were about 6 years old, they might have heard their parents discussing them, and they could therefore record them as having happened.

The types of fire are very much what might be expected. Fires involving cooking fat seem to happen very often without becoming serious enough for the fire brigade to be called.

Thirty-one per cent of the children had some experience of a fire in their home, and 14 per cent of a fire to which the fire brigade had been called.

CONCLUSIONS

In a sample of children aged 11 and 12, 31 per cent had some experience of a fire in their home, and 14 per cent of a fire to which the fire brigade had been called.

The most frequent types of fire seem to involve soot in chimneys, where fire brigades are usually called, and cooking fat, where fire brigades are usually not called.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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REFERENCE

- (1) CHAMBERS, E. D. Fire education: the apparent effectiveness of a wall chart. Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization Fire Research Note. To be published.

