

LIBRARY REFERENCE ONLY

M.O.T. AND F.O.C. 31  
FIRE RESEARCH  
ORGANIZATION  
REFERENCE LIBRARY  
No. A99 FR. N734



# Fire Research Note No. 734

FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1968

by

S. E. CHANDLER

November 1968

# FIRE RESEARCH STATION

FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1968

by

S. E. Chandler

SUMMARY

A preliminary survey of fatal fires in the first nine months of 1968 shows that there have been 597 deaths in 467 fires; 68 of these fires resulted in more than one death. These figures show a welcome reduction in loss of life due to fire during the third quarter of the year.

The most serious incidents during the quarter involved a hotel and a house converted into use as flats, accounting for four and three deaths respectively. Five firemen have died through injuries received whilst fighting fires up to now this year.

KEY WORDS: Fatalities, fire statistics.

Crown copyright

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.

# FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1968

by

S. E. Chandler

## INTRODUCTION

This report is the third in a series of quarterly reports giving preliminary information on deaths in fires attended by fire brigades.

As might be expected during the summer months, there has been a marked drop in deaths during the third quarter of the year compared with the first six months<sup>1</sup>. In reports received by the 31st October, there have been 597 deaths in 467 fires: 68 of the incidents involved more than one death.

The Ilkley Moor Hotel fire which accounted for four deaths was the worst incident during the third quarter of the year. Another multiple death fire, accounting for three persons, occurred in a multiple occupancy house in London. A recent fire in a warehouse, outside the period under review, accounted for five deaths. This fire was thought to have been started by a carelessly discarded light which ignited combustible packing materials stored near to the only exit and spread was extremely rapid.

Tables 1-4 give further details of fatal fires, including multiple death incidents, and numbers of deaths. Forty-seven multiple death fires were in dwellings. Table 2 shows that the sleeping hours, along with the periods 9 a.m. to midday and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. were the worst periods during the day for deaths. Fires discovered during the first six hours of the day often originate late the previous day, possibly as the result of carelessly discarded smoking materials, and smoulder undetected for several hours, but there seems no obvious explanation for the other peaks. Table 3 shows that space heating is a major cause of fire deaths and since this is not used so much in summer, a reduction in fire deaths during those months would be expected. Comparison of Table 4 with previous figures<sup>1</sup> reveals that about two thirds of the deaths in the third quarter were males. This is explained by the lower usage of space heating by females (except the elderly) in the home.

Five firemen have lost their lives at four different fires - two of these fires were in restaurants.

## REFERENCE

1. CHANDLER, S. E. Fire deaths in the first six months of 1968. Joint Fire Research Organization Fire Research Note No.720.

Fire deaths in the first nine months of 1968  
(Provisional figures)

Table 1

Hazard in which fires started

Hazard in which fire started	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
<b>IN BUILDINGS</b>			
Industry	16	4	21
Distributive trades	3	-	3
Financial, professional and miscellaneous services	9	1	10
Medical services	4	1	27
Clubs, hotels, restaurants and public houses	10	3	18
Houses - detached or semi-detached	55	5	62
- terraced	73	15	99
- not stated	109	10	123
Flats - in block	40	4	46
- converted	65	11	85
- other or not stated	24	2	28
Non-institutional dwellings as part of other occupancies	5	-	5
Private sheds, garages, etc.	4	-	4
Other	6	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>539</b>
<b>NOT IN BUILDINGS</b>			
Vehicles	19	6	26
Other means of transport	7	3	13
Caravans	9	-	9
Other	9	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>597</b>

Table 2

Time of call to fires

Time of call to fires	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
Midnight - 2.59 a.m.	58	12	101
3.00 - 5.59 a.m.	58	9	74
6.00 - 8.59 a.m.	51	5	57
9.00 -11.59 a.m.	81	13	97
Midday - 2.59 p.m.	61	4	65
3.00 - 5.59 p.m.	67	14	93
6.00 - 8.59 p.m.	43	4	48
9.00 -11.59 p.m.	44	7	58
No attendance (late call)	4	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>597</b>

Table 3

Source of ignition of fires

Source of ignition of fire	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
Children with fire	22	9	36
Crash or collision	15	7	26
Malicious ignition	12	-	12
Matches, tapers, naked lights, etc.	16	3	19
Smoking materials	97	7	131
Electric - space heating	25	1	26
- wire and cable	11	2	16
- blanket	11	-	11
- other	9	1	10
Gas - cooking	7	-	7
- space heating	14	1	15
- other	1	-	1
Solid fuel - fire in grate	54	6	66
- other	3	-	3
Oil - space heating	30	5	38
- other	5	1	6
Other	13	1	14
Unknown*	122	24	160
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>597</b>

\*Includes fires reported as "unknown, pending inquest"

Table 4

Age and sex of fatal casualties

Age (years)	Male	Female
Under 1	15	9
1 - 5	50	36
6 - 15	18	9
16 - 40	59	35
41 - 65	68	80
66 - 80	52	88
Over 80	27	41
Not stated	5	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>303</b>

