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Fire Research Note

F.R.Note No. 768

FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1969

by

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FIRE RESEARCH STATION

May 1969

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SUMMARY

A preliminary survey shows that 220 persons died in fires in the first quarter of 1969. One hundred and seventy-three were in England and Wales, 46 in Scotland, and one in Northern Ireland. This compares favourably with the first quarter of 1968 when the preliminary estimate of fire deaths was 285.

An explosion in a chemical plant killed four. A fire in a fourth-floor maisonette accounted for five deaths. Another fire accounting for four deaths resulted from the activities of children. One fireman was killed at the scene of a fire.

KEY WORDS: Fatalities, fire statistics

FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1969

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the fifth in a series of quarterly reports giving preliminary information on deaths in fires attended by fire brigades. The information contained is based on reports of fires received by 2nd May 1969, and the figures are subject to revision.

The format of these notes has been slightly altered to provide separate figures for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

During the first quarter of 1969, 173 people died in 149 fires in England and Wales, of which 16 were multiple-death incidents. In Scotland 46 deaths occurred in 34 fires (7 multiple death fires) and one death was reported in Northern Ireland. Compared with the first quarter of 1968¹ when the preliminary estimate of number of deaths was 285, there was a reduction of just over 20 per cent. The only black spot appears to have been Glasgow where there were 22 deaths in 18 fires.

One of the worst incidents in the quarter was at a chemical plant in Tees-side where an explosion killed four and injured others. A fire in a house in Birmingham, which was caused by children, resulted in four deaths. In a fourth-floor maisonette near Glasgow, a mother and four children died, rescue attempts by the husband being unsuccessful.

Tables 1 - 6 give further details of the fires. Table 1 shows that fire deaths occurred most frequently in converted flats and terraced houses. Table 2 gives details of the time of call and shows no radical change in the pattern of incidence throughout the day from that previously recorded². From Table 3 it can be seen that about half of the deaths occurred in fires attributed to smoking materials and space heating. Table 4 shows that deaths occur most frequently in older property. The high figure for the period 1930-39 may be partly due to the number of buildings of that period in existence.

Details of age and sex of casualties are shown in Table 5. One fireman was killed on duty during this quarter.

Table 6 gives the numbers of fatal and non-fatal casualties in each fire brigade area.

References

1. CHANDLER, S.E. Fire deaths in the first quarter of 1968. Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization F.R. Note No. 715/1968
2. CHANDLER, S.E. Fire deaths in 1968. Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization F.R. Note No. 750/1969.

Table 1A

Hazard in which fire started (England and Wales)

Hazard in which fire started	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	149	16	173
IN BUILDINGS - Total	143	15	165
Industry	3	2	7
Distributive trades	4	-	4
Financial, professional and miscellaneous services	2	-	2
Medical services	1	-	1
Clubs, hotels, restaurants and public houses	2	-	2
Houses - detached or semi-detached	10	1	11
- terraced	41	4	50
- not stated	42	3	45
Flats - in blocks	6	1	7
- converted	28	3	31
- other or not stated	3	1	4
Non-institutional dwellings as part of other occupancies	1	-	1
NOT IN BUILDINGS - Total	6	1	8
Transport	3	1	5
Caravans	1	-	1
Other	2	-	2

Table 1B

Hazard in which fire started (Scotland)

Hazard in which fire started	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	34	7	46
IN BUILDINGS - Total	33	7	45
Clubs, hotels, restaurants and public houses	1	-	1
Houses - detached or semi-detached	5	-	5
- not stated	3	-	3
Flats - in blocks	3	-	3
- converted	9	3	13
- other or not stated	12	4	20
NOT IN BUILDINGS - Total	1	-	1
Caravans	1	-	1

Table 1C

Hazard in which fire started (Northern Ireland)

One fire occurred in industry giving rise to 1 fatal casualty.

Table 2A

Time of call to fires (England and Wales)

Time of call to fire	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	149	16	173
Midnight - 02.59	12	2	15
03.00 - 05.59	13	2	15
06.00 - 08.59	15	2	17
09.00 - 11.59	20	-	20
12.00 - 14.59	18	-	18
15.00 - 17.59	17	5	26
18.00 - 20.59	8	2	12
21.00 - 23.59	16	2	19
Late call	30	1	31

Table 2B

Time of call to fires (Scotland)

Time of call to fire	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	34	7	46
Midnight - 02.59	11	4	15
03.00 - 05.59	3	-	3
06.00 - 08.59	8	1	10
09.00 - 11.59	5	2	11
12.00 - 14.59	2	-	2
15.00 - 17.59	-	-	-
18.00 - 20.59	2	-	2
21.00 - 23.59	3	-	3

Table 2C

Time of call to fires (Northern Ireland)

The time of call to the one fatal fire in Northern Ireland was 09.49.

Table 3A

Source of ignition of fires (England and Wales)

Source of ignition of fire	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple fatal fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	149	16	173
Children with fire	3	1	6
Malicious ignition	3	-	3
Matches, tapers, etc.	6	-	6
Smoking materials	15	-	15
Electric - space heating	15	1	16
- wire and cable	3	1	4
- blanket	3	1	4
- other	1	-	1
Gas - cooking	5	-	5
- space heating	8	-	8
Solid fuel - fire in grate	23	2	26
Oil - space heating	14	2	16
- other	1	-	1
Other	6	1	8
Unknown*	43	7	54

* Includes fire reported as 'Unknown, pending inquest'.

Table 3B

Source of ignition of fires (Scotland)

Source of ignition of fire	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple fatal fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	34	7	46
Malicious ignition	1	-	1
Matches, tapers, etc.	1	-	1
Smoking materials	3	1	4
Electric - wire and cable	1	-	1
- blanket	1	-	1
Solid fuel - fire in grate	2	1	4
Oil - space heating	1	-	1
Unknown*	24	5	33

* Includes fires reported as 'Unknown, pending inquest'

Table 3C

Source of ignition of fires (Northern Ireland)

The cause of the one fatal fire in Northern Ireland is 'unknown, pending inquest'.

Table 4A

Date of construction of buildings (England and Wales)

Date of construction	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	149	16	173
Pre-1900	38	2	43
1900 - 1909	29	4	34
1910 - 1919	8	1	10
1920 - 1929	8	1	9
1930 - 1939	29	3	32
1940 - 1949	3	-	3
1950 - 1959	11	2	16
1960 onwards	12	3	15
Not stated, unknown or not applicable	11	-	11

Table 4B

Date of construction of buildings (Scotland)

Date of construction	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths
TOTAL	34	7	46
Pre-1900	7	1	8
1900 - 1909	4	1	5
1910 - 1919	1	-	1
1920 - 1929	3	-	3
1930 - 1939	8	2	11
1940 - 1949	3	1	5
1950 - 1959	2	-	2
1960 onwards	3	1	7
Not stated, unknown or not applicable	3	1	4

Table 4C

Date of construction of buildings (Northern Ireland)

The one fatal fire in Northern Ireland occurred in a building constructed between 1950 and 1959.

Table 5

Age and Sex of Casualties

Age (years)*	England and Wales		Scotland		Northern Ireland	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
TOTAL	83	90	23	23	1	-
Under 1	3	2	2	1	-	-
1 - 4	20	12	8	1	-	-
5 - 14	2	2	-	1	-	-
15 - 44	16	7	3	2	1	-
45 - 64	11	9	6	9	-	-
65 - 74	9	21	4	4	-	-
Over 75	19	37	-	5	-	-
Not stated	3	-	-	-	-	-

* These age-group bands have been revised in order to make comparison with Registrars General's statistics.

Table 6

Numbers of casualties in each brigade area

	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
TOTAL - United Kingdom	220	1221
England and Wales	173	1107
Scotland	46	95
Northern Ireland	1	19

(A) English and Welsh County Borough Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties		Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal		Fatal	Non-fatal
Bath	-	7	Manchester	7	31
Birkenhead	-	10	Merthyr Tydfil	-	1
Birmingham	8	96	Newcastle and gates-		
Blackburn	-	1	head	1	3
Blackpool	1	11	Newport (Mon.)	-	5
Bolton	1	4	Northampton	1	4
Bootle	-	4	Norwich	1	5
Bournemouth	-	4	Nottingham	4	24
Bradford	1	10	Oldham	3	2
Brighton	-	1	Plymouth	-	2
Bristol	1	10	Portsmouth	1	2
Burnley	2	4	Preston	-	21
Burton upon Trent	-	2	Rochdale	2	5
Bury	-	7	Rotherham	2	4
Cardiff	-	1	St. Helens	1	4
Carlisle	1	5	Salford	3	12
Chester	-	1	Sheffield	1	13
Coventry	2	5	Solihull	-	4
Darlington	-	2	Southampton	2	-
Derby	1	6	Southend	3	3
Dewsbury	-	2	Southport	1	5
Doncaster	-	6	South Shields	-	3
Dudley	-	3	Stockport	-	3
Exeter	1	2	Stoke-on-Trent	1	14
Gloucester	-	2	Sunderland	-	1
Grimsby	-	1	Tees-side	6	3
Halifax	-	10	Tynemouth	1	8
Hastings	-	1	Wakefield	-	3
Huddersfield	2	6	Wallasey	-	5
Kingston upon Hull	1	12	Walsall	-	5
Leeds	9	19	Warley	-	10
Leicester	-	1	Warrington	-	5
Lincoln	-	6	West Bromwich	-	8
Liverpool	3	22	Wigan	1	2
Luton	-	4	Wolverhampton	3	15
			York	1	1

(B) English and Welsh County Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties		Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal		Fatal	Non-fatal
Anglesey	-	2	Leicestershire and Rutland	1	2
Bedfordshire	1	6	Lincolnshire (Holland)	-	1
Brecon and Radnor	1	-	Lincolnshire (Kesteven)	-	1
Buckinghamshire	-	8	Lincolnshire (Lindsey)	4	4
Caernarvonshire	-	1	London (Greater)	25	266
Cambridgeshire and Ely	2	5	Monmouthshire	1	-
Cardigan and Carmarthen	-	11	Norfolk	-	2
Cheshire	6	6	Northamptonshire	2	9
Cornwall	2	3	Northumberland	1	5
Cumberland	-	4	Nottinghamshire	2	5
Denbigh and Montgomery	2	5	Shropshire	-	1
Derbyshire	1	9	Somerset	3	2
Devon	-	3	Staffordshire	3	20
Dorset	-	1	Suffolk and Ipswich	1	7
Durham (County)	1	9	Sussex, East	1	4
Essex	5	24	Sussex, West	-	4
Flintshire	2	5	Warwickshire	4	9
Glamorgan	1	-	Wight, Isle of	-	2
Gloucestershire	1	4	Wiltshire	-	7
Hampshire	5	13	Yorkshire (East Riding)	-	2
Herefordshire	-	1	Yorkshire (North Riding)	-	1
Hertfordshire	2	19	Yorkshire (West Riding)	3	39
Huntingdon and Peterborough	-	9			
Kent	5	31			
Lancashire	5	11			

Scottish Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
Glasgow	22	31
Lanark	8	7
Central	4	6
Western	1	12
South Western	4	3
South Eastern	5	21
Fife	-	3
Angus	1	6
North Eastern	-	5
Northern	1	1

Northern Irish Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
North	-	1
South	1	-
Belfast	-	18

