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FIRE DEATHS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1970

by

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by

S. E. Chandler

SUMMARY

A preliminary survey shows that 242 persons died in fires in the first quarter of 1970. Two hundred and nine of these were in England and Wales, 30 in Scotland and three in Northern Ireland. This figure is slightly higher than the preliminary estimate for the first quarter of 1969.

The most serious incident was at a hospital in which five elderly men died. There were eleven deaths attributed to electric blankets in England and Wales, compared with three in the first quarters of each of the two previous years.

KEY WORDS: Fatalities, fire statistics.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the ninth of a series of quarterly reports giving preliminary information of deaths in fires attended by fire brigades. The information it contains is based on reports of fires during the first quarter of 1970 received by 28 April 1970 and the figures are subject to revision.

During the first quarter of 1970, 209 persons died in 184 fires in England and Wales. Nineteen of these fires gave rise to more than one death. In Scotland there were 30 deaths in 26 fires - in Northern Ireland two fatal fires resulted in three deaths. These figures are slightly higher than the preliminary estimates for the first quarter of 1969¹, but lower than that for the same period in 1968².

The worst incident during the quarter was at a hospital in Exeter in which five elderly men lost their lives. There was a disturbing high number of incidents attributed to electric blankets, eleven deaths being reported in England and Wales compared with three in the corresponding quarter in each of the previous two years.

Tables 1-4 give details of hazards, times of call, sources of ignition and dates of construction of buildings. Table 5 gives details of the age and sex of fatal casualties; Table 5A shows causes of deaths. Table 6 gives the numbers of fatal and non-fatal casualties in each brigade area.

References

1. CHANDLER, S. E. Fire deaths in the first quarter of 1969. Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization. F.R.Note No. 768/1969.
2. 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.

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	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	184	19	209	44
IN BUILDINGS Total	171	16	193	38
Industry	4	-	4	-
Distributive trades	2	-	2	-
Financial, professional and miscellaneous services	4	1	5	2
Medical services	1	1	5	5
Clubs, hotels, restaurants, etc	1	-	1	-
Houses-detached or semi-detached	13	-	13	-
-terraced	48	7	57	16
-not stated	51	3	55	7
Flats -in blocks	17	-	17	-
-converted	21	3	24	6
-other or not stated	9	1	10	2
NOT IN BUILDINGS Total	13	3	16	6
Road vehicles	4	2	6	4
Caravans	5	1	6	2
Other	4	-	4	-

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	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	26	2	30	6
IN BUILDINGS Total	24	2	28	6
Financial, professional, etc	1	-	1	-
Houses-terraced	2	-	2	-
-not stated	8	1	11	4
Flats -in blocks	4	-	4	-
-"tenement"	5	1	6	2
-other or not stated	3	-	3	-
Other	1	-	1	-
NOT IN BUILDINGS Total	2	-	2	-
Road vehicles	1	-	1	-
Caravans	1	-	1	-

Table 1C Hazard in which fire started (Northern Ireland)

Hazard in which fire started	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL (All in buildings)	2	1	3	2
Distributive trades	1	-	1	-
House	1	1	2	2

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	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	184	19	209	44
Midnight - 02.59	14	2	19	7
03.00 - 05.59	13	4	17	8
06.00 - 08.59	29	2	32	5
09.00 - 11.59	31	5	38	12
12.00 - 14.59	19	1	20	2
15.00 - 17.59	21	2	23	4
18.00 - 20.59	17	2	19	4
21.00 - 23.59	18	-	18	-
Late call	21	1	22	2
Unknown	1	-	1	-

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	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	26	2	30	6
Midnight - 02.59	2	-	2	-
03.00 - 05.59	5	-	5	-
06.00 - 08.59	4	1	5	2
09.00 - 11.59	4	-	4	-
12.00 - 14.59	1	-	1	-
15.00 - 17.59	2	-	2	-
18.00 - 20.59	-	-	-	-
21.00 - 23.59	5	-	5	-
Late call	3	1	6	4

Table 2C Time of call to fires (Northern Ireland)

Time of call to fires	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	2	1	3	2
09.00 - 11.59	1	-	1	-
18.00 - 20.59	1	1	2	2

Table 3A Source of ignition of fires (England and Wales)

Source of ignition of fires	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	184	19	209	44
Crash or collision	3	2	5	4
Malicious or intentional ignition	4	1	5	2
Matches, taper, etc	2	-	2	-
Smoking materials	24	1	25	2
Electric - space heating	18	1	19	2
- wire and cable	5	1	6	2
- blanket	11	-	11	-
Gas - cooking	1	-	1	-
- space heating	5	-	5	-
Solid fuel - fire in grate	16	2	18	4
- other	2	-	2	-
Oil - space heating	11	3	15	7
Other	7	-	7	-
Unknown*	75	8	88	21

*Includes fires recorded as "unknown, pending inquest"

Table 3B Source of ignition of fires (Scotland)

Source of ignition of fires	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	26	2	30	6
Crash or collision	1	-	1	-
Malicious or intentional ignition	2	-	2	-
Smoking materials	2	-	2	-
Electric - space heating	1	-	1	-
- blanket	1	-	1	-
- other	2	-	2	-
Solid fuel - fire in grate	1	-	1	-
Oil - space heating	2	-	2	-
Unknown*	14	2	18	6

*Includes fires recorded as "Unknown, pending inquest"

Table 3C Source of ignition of fires (Northern Ireland)

Inquest findings are still awaited in respect of three deaths in two fatal fires in Northern Ireland.

Table 4A Date of construction of buildings (England and Wales)

Date of construction of buildings	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	184	19	209	44
Pre 1900	42	6	49	13
1900 - 1909	37	6	44	13
1910 - 1919	4	1	8	5
1920 - 1929	17	1	19	3
1930 - 1939	35	1	36	2
1940 - 1949	4	-	4	-
1950 - 1959	16	1	17	2
1960 onwards	12	-	12	-
Not stated	4	-	4	-
Outdoor fires (not applicable)	13	3	16	6

Table 4B Date of construction of buildings (Scotland)

Date of construction of buildings	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of deaths	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	26	2	30	6
Pre - 1900	8	1	9	2
1900 - 1909	2	-	2	-
1910 - 1919	-	-	-	-
1920 - 1929	2	-	2	-
1930 - 1939	3	-	3	-
1940 - 1949	2	-	2	-
1950 - 1959	1	-	1	-
1960 onwards	3	1	6	4
Not stated	3	-	3	-
Outdoor fires (not applicable)	2	-	2	-

Table 4C Date of construction of buildings (Northern Ireland)

Date of construction of buildings	No. of fatal fires	No. of multiple death fires	No. of death	No. of deaths in multiple death fires
TOTAL	2	1	3	2
Pre-1900	1	-	1	-
1950 - 1959	1	1	2	2

Table 5 Sex and age of fatal casualties

Age (years)	England and Wales		Scotland		Northern Ireland	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
TOTAL	94	115	19	11	2	1
Under 1	2	6	1	-	-	-
1 - 4	13	13	3	-	2	1
5 - 14	1	1	3	1	-	-
15 - 44	20	8	1	-	-	-
45 - 64	12	17	5	2	-	-
65 - 74	16	20	5	4	-	-
Over 75	30	50	1	4	-	-

Table 5A Cause of death

Cause of death	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
TOTAL	209	30	3
Burns	62	6	-
Asphyxiation	88	13	-
Other	4	1	-
Unknown*	55	10	3

*Includes causes of death shown as "unknown, pending inquest"

Table 6. Number of casualties in each brigade area

	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
TOTAL (United Kingdom)	242	1 151
England and Wales	209	1 003
Scotland	30	129
Northern Ireland	3	19

(A) English and Welsh County Borough Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties		Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal		Fatal	Non-fatal
Bath	1	1	Newport (Mon)	-	1
Birkenhead	-	14	Northampton	2	3
Birmingham	6	103	Norwich	2	6
Blackpool	-	12	Nottingham	3	23
Bolton	3	8	Oldham	-	8
Bootle	-	3	Portsmouth	-	2
Bournemouth	1	1	Preston	3	7
Bradford	1	13	Rotherham	-	3
Brighton	4	5	St. Helens	-	1
Bristol	1	10	Salford	2	10
Burnley	1	10	Sheffield	1	3
Burton upon Trent	-	2	Solihull	-	2
Bury	-	3	Southampton	-	3
Cardiff	2	4	Southend	1	-
Coventry	1	13	Southport	-	1
Derby	1	17	South Shields	1	3
Doncaster	-	1	Stockport	-	1
Dudley	3	11	Stoke-on-Trent	1	10
Eastbourne	-	1	Sunderland	2	2
Exeter	5	4	Swansea	1	-
Gloucester	-	3	Tynemouth	-	4
Great Yarmouth	-	4	Wakefield	-	2
Grimsby	-	4	Wallasey	-	6
Huddersfield	-	1	Hartlepool	-	2
Kingston upon Hull	2	8	Wigan	-	5
Leeds	3	16	Wolverhampton	2	16
Leicester	1	5	York	-	1
Liverpool	1	15	Warley	1	9
Luton	-	1	West Bromwich	1	4
Manchester	12	19	Tees-side	1	12
Newcastle/Gateshead	7	21			

(B) English and Welsh County Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties		Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal		Fatal	Non-fatal
Anglesey	2	-	Kent	7	24
Bedfordshire	1	3	Lancashire	6	36
Buckinghamshire	-	2	Lincs(Holland)	1	1
Caernarvonshire	-	2	Lincs(Kesteven)	-	4
Cambridgeshire/Ely	-	4	Lincs(Lindsey)	-	3
Cardigan/Carmarthen	1	2	London(Greater)	57	312
Cheshire	4	9	Norfolk	-	2
Cornwall	-	7	Northamptonshire	2	3
Cumberland	-	11	Northumberland	3	7
Denbigh/Montgomery	2	1	Nottinghamshire	2	6
Derbyshire	5	6	Oxfordshire	-	2
Devonshire	4	3	Shropshire	-	2
Dorset	1	2	Somerset	1	4
Durham(County)	2	-	Staffordshire	3	5
Essex	4	10	Suffolk and Ipswich	2	5
Flintshire	1	-	Sussex, East	4	3
Glamorgan	-	8	Sussex, West	3	4
Hampshire	3	1	Warwickshire	1	2
Hertfordshire	1	6	Wiltshire	2	1
Huntingdon/ Peterborough	1	2	Yorkshire (West Riding)	3	18

(C) Scottish Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
Glasgow	9	49
Lanarkshire	5	5
Central	3	6
Western	1	12
South Western	4	9
South Eastern	5	29
Fife	1	9
Perth and Kinross	1	-
Angus	1	4
North Eastern	-	6

(D) Northern Irish Fire Brigades

Brigade	No. of casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
North Belfast	- 3	7 12

