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Fire Research Note

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FIRE EXTINGUISHERS IN PRIVATE DWELLINGS

by

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E.D. Chambers and Carolyn M. Jessop

KEY WORDS: British, domestic, extinguisher (hand-operated), extinguishing agent, statistics, survey.

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INTRODUCTION

During a market research survey on another subject¹, the opportunity was taken to ask a stratified random sample of private householders in the north east of England whether they owned a fire extinguisher, and if so, what type. Although the responses were somewhat lacking in detail, it was felt that they were of sufficient value to justify making an analysis generally available.

METHOD

The number of interviews was 2904, and 171 respondents (or 6 per cent) claimed to own a total of 176 fire extinguishers. The form in which the question was put, which might have influenced stated ownership to some extent, is given in Appendix I.

Many respondents could supply few details or none; it is presumed that since the relevant questions came towards the end of a rather long interview, it was generally not convenient to ask to examine the extinguisher itself. The details given were used so far as possible to identify the general type.

TABLE 1
EXTINGUISHERS PER RESPONDENT

Extinguishers per respondent	Respondents	Extinguishers
None	2733	-
One	167	167
Two	3	6
Three	1	3
TOTAL	2904	176

TABLE 2
LOCATION AND TYPE OF EXTINGUISHER

	House	Car	Garage	Other	Totals
Powder	20 (29%)	11 (20%)	8 (22%)	7 (41%)	46 (26%)
Foam	13 (19%)	13 (22%)	8 (22%)	4 (24%)	38 (22%)
CTC	-	3 (6%)	6 (17%)	-	9 (5%)
Water	6 (9%)	2 (4%)	-	1 (6%)	9 (5%)
BCF	-	3 (6%)	2 (5%)	-	5 (3%)
CO ₂	1 (1%)	-	-	-	1 (1%)
Don't know	29 (42%)	22 (41%)	12 (33%)	5 (29%)	68 (39%)
TOTALS	69 (100%)	54 (100%)	36 (100%)	17 (100%)	176 (100%)

TABLE 3
KNOWLEDGE OF MAKE OF EXTINGUISHER

Make given	59
No make given	<u>117</u>
TOTAL	176

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Brand names were few and it is felt that a future survey would more usefully be based on actual examination of extinguishers. This would also tend to eliminate possible spurious claims to ownership.

A surprising fact is the high proportion of householders claiming to own foam extinguishers; a type that is neither suitable for general use nor cheap. The only marginally possible explanation that has been put forward is that they mistakenly believe that a quite different type that they own contains foam (not a tribute to general education on the subject). The high ratio of car/garage to house extinguishers is interesting, as is the comparatively low proportion of householders with both.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCE

1. SALES RESEARCH SERVICES LTD. Report on a survey on a Fire Prevention Campaign in the Tyne-Tees area. Prepared for the Home Office by Sales Research Services Ltd., Ewell, Surrey. April 1970.

APPENDIX I

Question to which Responses were analysed

31(a) HAVE YOU GOT A FIRE EXTINGUISHER? Yes 22/1
No 2

If 'No', go to Qn. 32

If 'Yes' :

(b) WHAT TYPE OF EXTINGUISHER IS IT? Probe carefully to obtain
details of type

23/

(c) WHERE DO YOU KEEP IT?House 24/1
Garage 2
Car 3
Other 4

