



UNITED STATES BOMB DATA CENTER (USBDC) ARSON INCIDENT REPORT

2023

The Annual Arson Incident Report (AIR) reviews arson-related incidents from data reported to the United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC) through the Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

(U) The 2023 *Arson Incident Report* (AIR) is an informational product prepared by the United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC), using incident data reported in the Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS) by its more than 2,100 interagency partners and more than 6,000 registered users. This report examines the total number of fire-related incidents reported in BATS for calendar year (CY) 2023 and includes Incendiary (Arson), Undetermined, Accidental, Threats, Natural, and Wildland fire incidents. It is important to note that BATS is a real-time dynamic incident management system that is strictly user dependent; therefore, it is possible that the data represented in this report may differ slightly from previously reported data due to updates or changes made by the owners of individual records. The reader should also be aware that when compared to the data reflected in the Uniform Crime Report and/or National Fire Incident Reporting System, the number of incidents reflected in BATS may differ due to agency participation in BATS. Due to this limited dataset, the USBDC cautions the use of this report for analytical purposes.

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

(U) From January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, BATS captured a total of 21,750 fire-related incidents. Of these, there were 5,440 incidents reported as “Incendiary,” which accounted for 25 percent of all the fires reported. The total amount of damages for all fire types was estimated at \$905,876,940, with 1,158 injuries and 618 fatalities. “Available Combustibles” was identified as the most widely utilized Incendiary Fire Subtype, while “Residential” was identified as the most targeted property type.

LOOKING AHEAD

(U) In 2024, the USBDC will continue to promote additional and complete fire and arson incident reporting to BATS. The USBDC Arson and Explosives Information and Analysis (AEIA) Section will continue to work to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant information regarding arson and the suspected criminal misuse of explosives to increase situational awareness and to detect, deter and prevent criminal acts. For Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) inquiries regarding this product, please submit your request using the following link: <https://www.securerelease.us/>. For any specific questions or concerns regarding FOIA requests, please visit the ATF Freedom of Information Act website at: <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/freedom-information-act-foia>.

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FIRE TYPES – 2023

(U) There has not been a significant change in Fire data captured in BATS between 2019 and 2023. However, 2023 shows a 9-percent decrease from the average of 23,431.

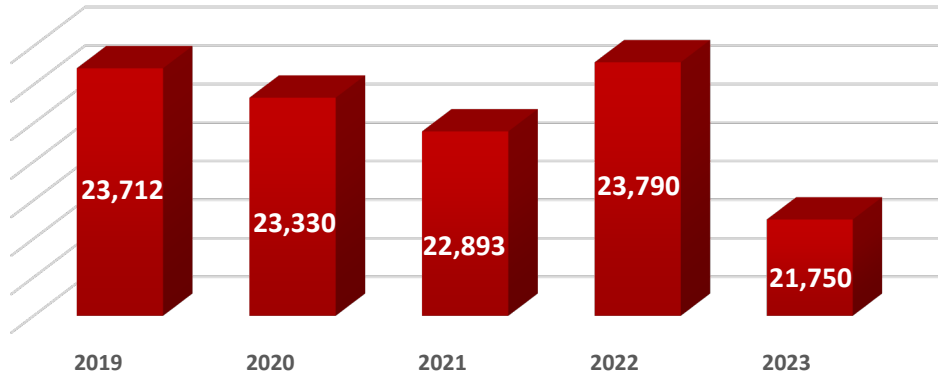


CHART 1. Fire Incidents Reported in BATS, 2019–23

(U) From January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, BATS captured a total of 21,750 fire-related Incidents. Of those 21,750 fire-related incidents, 7,272 were listed in BATS as “Accidental,” 5,402 were listed as “Incendiary,” 119 as “Natural,” and 1,834 were “Under Investigation.” There were 32 incidents entered as “Threat – Arson” and 173 listed as “Wildland.” Total incendiary fires, including incendiary wildland fires, are 5,440. There were 6,342 fires listed as “Undetermined,” which included the final determination/classification of the investigation, along with fires pending further investigative activities and/or laboratory examination. Five hundred ninety-five (595) incidents did not have a fire type selected.

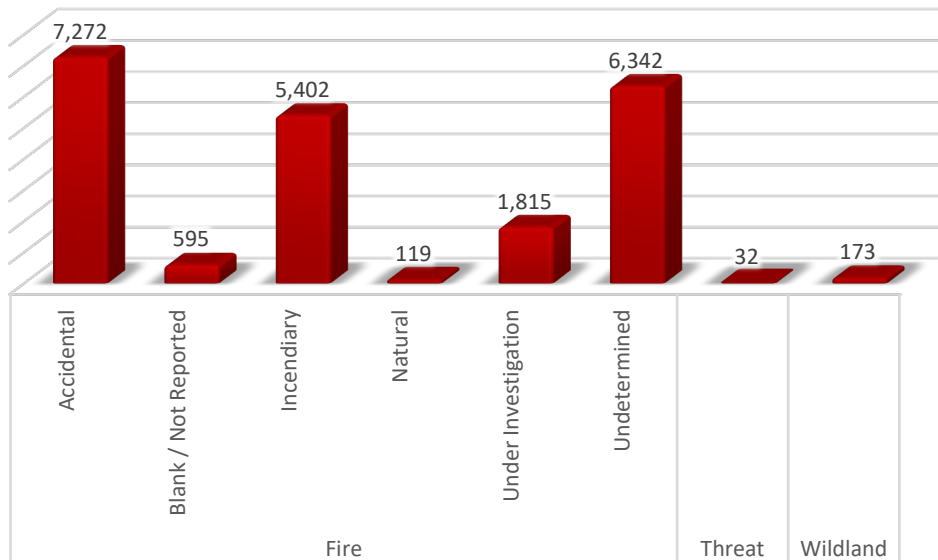


CHART 2. Fire Types as Reported in BATS

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FIRE INJURIES AND FATALITIES – 2023

Injuries					
	Fire Service	Law Enforcement	Suspects	Victims	Total
Accidental	79	12	0	366	457
Incendiary	39	16	37	117	209
Natural	4	0	0	0	4
Under Investigation	26	2	4	49	81
Undetermined	112	9	2	284	407
Total	260	39	43	816	1,158

CHART 3. Fire Injuries

(U) Victim injuries accounted for 70 percent of all injuries reported in CY 2023 and were the highest population reported across all categories. Of the 209 injuries associated with “Incendiary” incidents, “Victims” were reported as the highest population at 56 percent.

Fatalities					
	Fire Service	Law Enforcement	Suspects	Victims	Total
Accidental	2	0	3	169	174
Incendiary	2	1	10	82	95
Natural	0	0	0	0	0
Under Investigation	3	0	1	55	59
Undetermined	2	0	0	288	290
Total	9	1	14	594	618

CHART 4. Fire Fatalities

(U) Victim fatalities accounted for 97 percent of all injuries reported in CY 2023 and were the highest population reported for all categories. Of the 82 fatalities associated with “Incendiary” incidents, “Victims” were reported as the highest population with 86 percent.

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FIRE DAMAGES – 2023

(U) Damages associated with the 21,750 fire incidents reported in BATS totaled \$905,876,940 for CY 2023. This shows a decrease of \$878,993,921 from CY 2022.

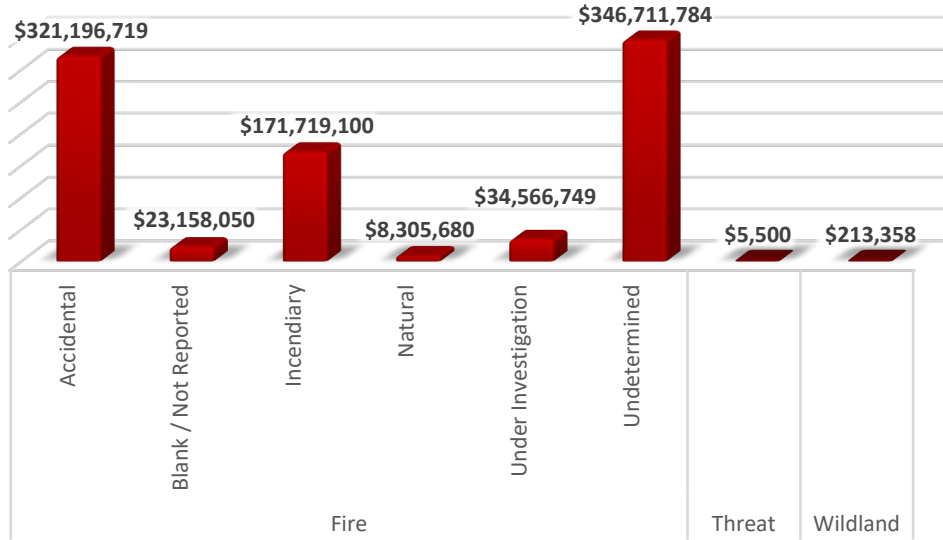


CHART 5. Damage Amount by Fire Type

2023 Arson Incident Report (AIR)**INCENDIARY FIRE SUBTYPES – 2023**

(U) Of the 5,440 Incendiary fire-related incidents reflected in BATS, there were 1,120 Incendiary fires listed as involving an “Accelerant,” along with 2,291 fires involving “Available Combustibles” and 240 fires involving an “Incendiary Device.” “Available Combustibles” accounted for 42 percent of all incendiary fires, while “Accelerant” and “Incendiary Device” were 25 percent combined. There were 1,487 incendiary fires listed as “Unknown” and 302 incendiary fires with no information reported or left blank. The unknown category can include incidents that are under investigation as well as undetermined.

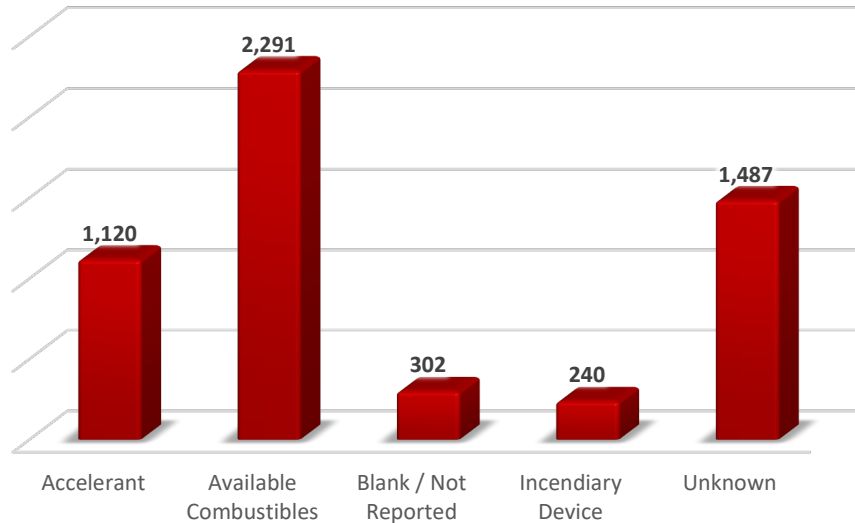


CHART 6. Incendiary Fires by Subtype

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INCENDIARY FIRES – STATES – 2023

(U) A review of the 5,440 incidents listed in BATS as “Incendiary” by location (State) revealed the highest number of incidents were reported in Texas (779), followed by Florida (639) and Ohio (591). These three (3) States accounted for 37 percent of the total “Incendiary” fires reported in BATS during CY 2023.¹

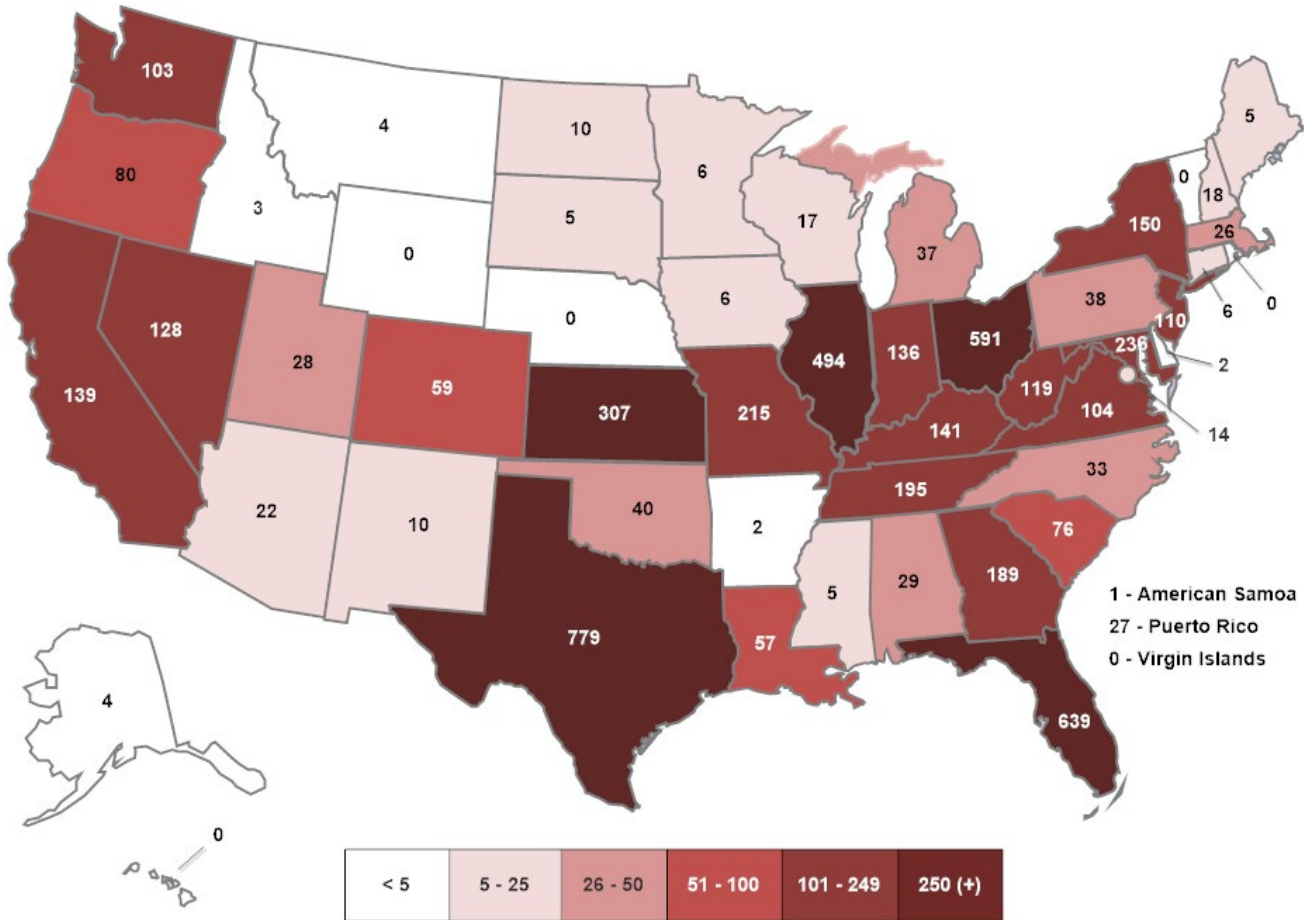


FIGURE 1. Incendiary Fires by State

¹ Of the 5,440 incidents, 1,355 did not have the corresponding State. These incidents were manually updated to be included in the annual statistics. They were not updated in the BATS database.

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INCENDIARY FIRES – FEMA REGIONS – 2023

(U) A breakdown of the 5,440 incidents listed in BATS as “Incendiary” by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region revealed the highest number of incidents occurred in the following regions: Region IV (1,306) and Region V (1,281). These two regions accounted for 48 percent of the total “Incendiary” fires reported in BATS during CY 2023.² The incident that occurred in American Samoa is not reflected in this figure.

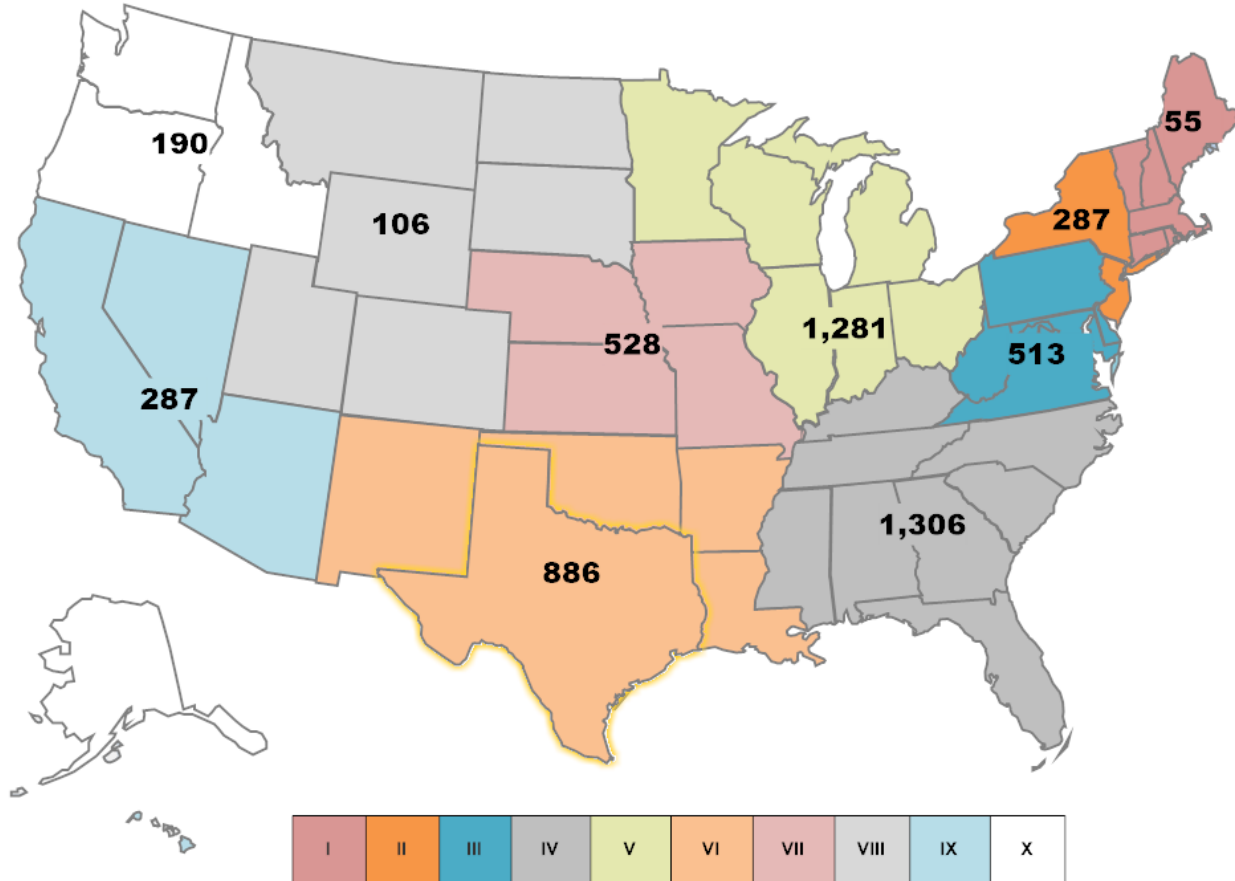


FIGURE 2. Incendiary Fires by FEMA Regions

² Of the 5,440 incidents, 1,355 did not have the corresponding State. These incidents were manually updated to be included in the annual statistics. They were not updated in the BATS database.

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INCENDIARY FIRES – PROPERTY TYPES – 2023

(U) There were 24 different “Property” types selected within BATS that involved “Incendiary” fires for 2023. Of the reported “Incendiary” incidents reported, “Residential” and “Vehicle” fires accounted for a combined 66 percent.³

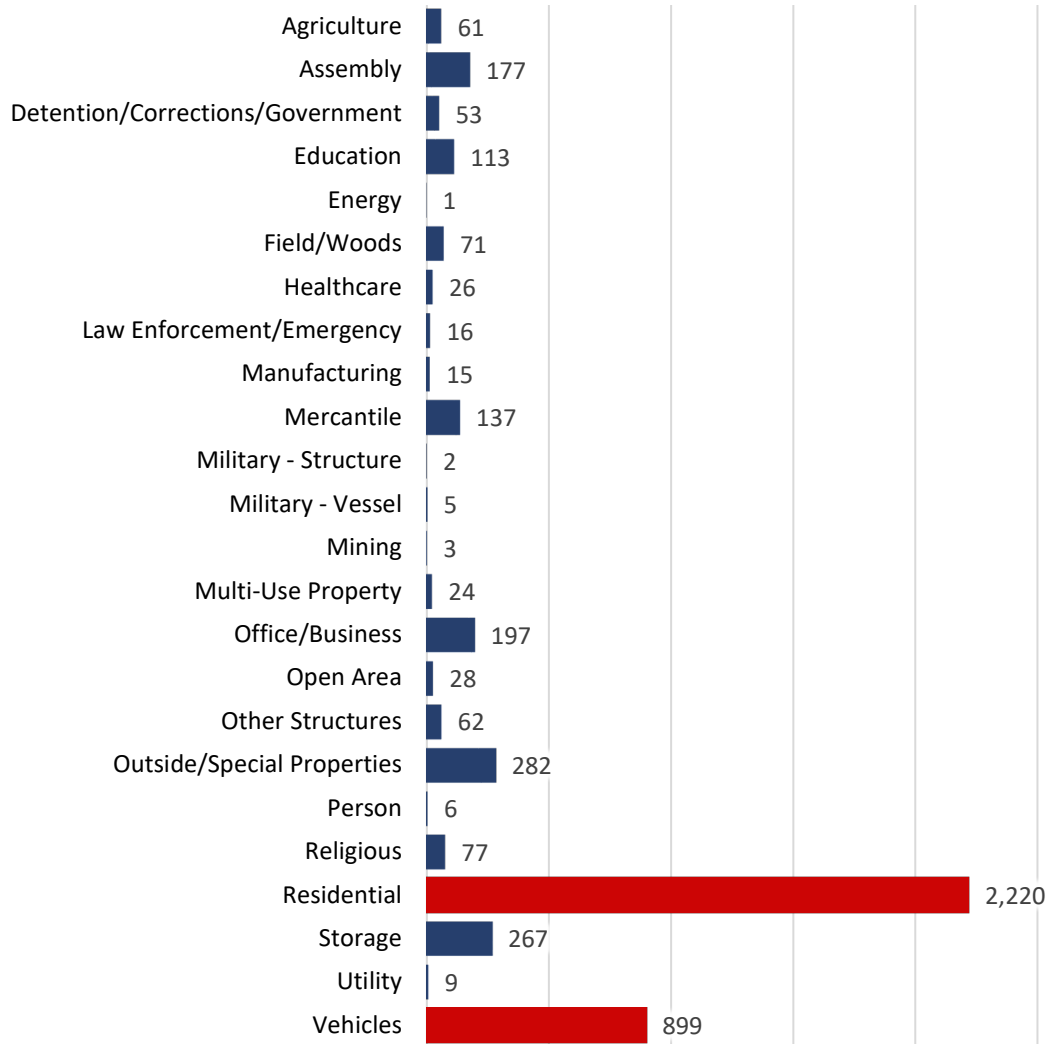


CHART 7. Incendiary Fires by Property Types

³ There were 689 incidents that did not have a property type selected. These incidents were not included when calculating percentages for property types.

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INCENDIARY FIRES – TIME/DAY/MONTH – 2023

(U) A review of the time of day that “Incendiary” fires occurred showed a noticeable difference between the hours of daylight and darkness. Incidents of “Incendiary” fires occurring during the predominant 9 hours of darkness (21:00 until 05:59) accounted for 44 percent of the incidents reported in BATS during CY 2023.⁴

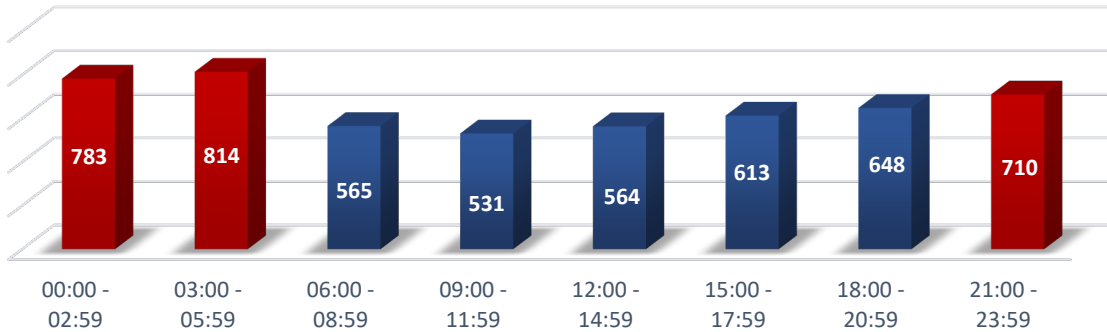


CHART 8. Incendiary Fires by Time of Day

(U) A review of the day of the week revealed that “Incendiary” fires occurred most prevalently at the beginning of the week. Incidents reported during these days accounted for 45 percent of all reported incidents when combined. Friday and Saturday were identified as having the lowest rate of occurrence of “Incendiary” fires.

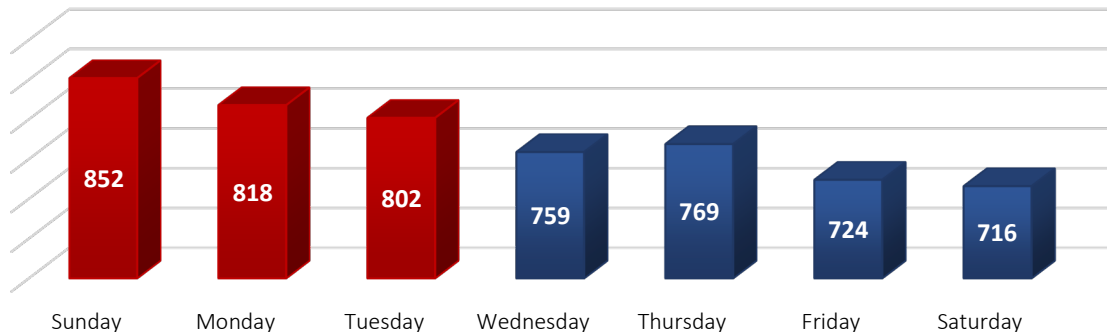


CHART 9. Incendiary Fires by Day of Week

(U) A review of the months that “Incendiary” fires occurred did not show any significant variation among the 12 months of CY 2023. Five (5) months carried the least number of incidents with 7 percent, 4 months showed 8 percent, and 3 months of the year had a maximum of 9 percent in which an “Incendiary” fire occurred.

⁴ There were 212 incidents identified as occurring at 00:00 that were excluded from CHART 9. The default setting in BATS enters 00:00 when users do not enter a specific time.

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INCENDIARY FIRES – VEHICLES – 2023

(U) During CY 2023, there were 899 incidents of incendiary fires associated with vehicles. Of those vehicle fires, 64 percent were associated with an “Automobile/Car,” followed by 10 percent that were associated with a “Truck” (Pickup).

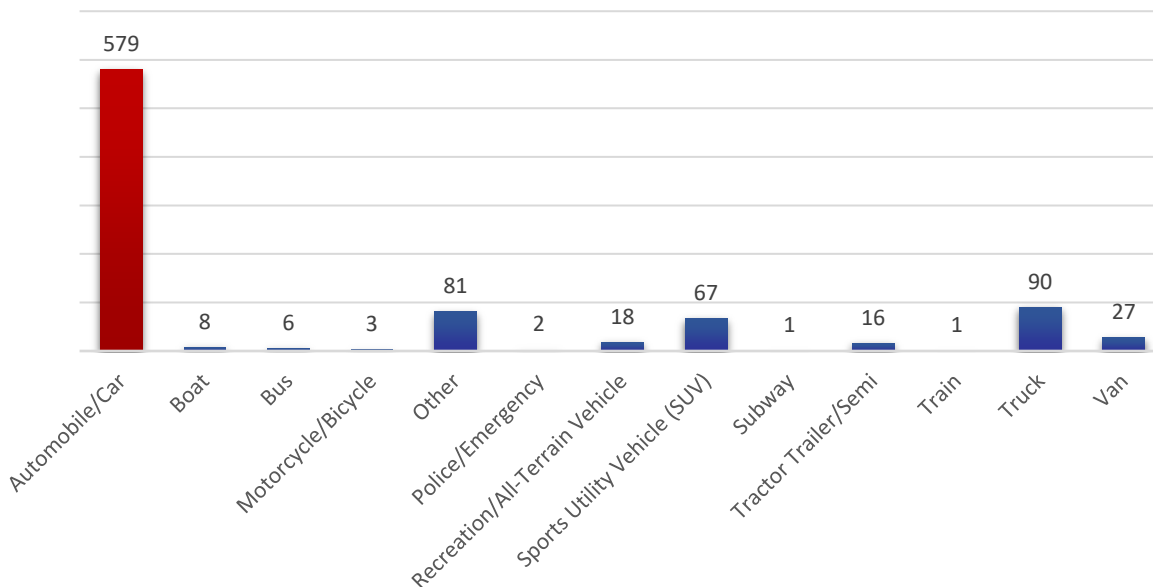


CHART 10. Incendiary Fires by Vehicle Type

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INCENDIARY FIRES – DESCRIPTORS – 2023

(U) The top 3 “Fire Descriptors” identified for the 5,440 Incendiary fires reported in 2023 were “Ordinary Combustibles,” “Open Flame,” and “Fire Spread/Movement Patterns.” Sixty-three (63) percent of reported Incendiary fires did not identify any type of fire descriptors.

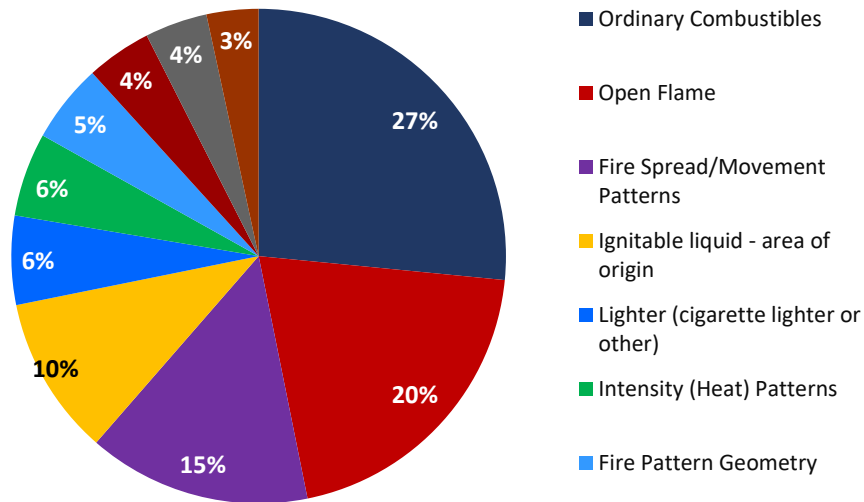


CHART 11. Top 10 Fire Descriptors of Incendiary Fires

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INCENDIARY FIRES – AREAS OF ORIGIN – 2023

(U) The top 3 “Areas of Origin” identified for the 5,440 Incendiary fires reported in CY 2023 were “Transportation,” “Function Areas,” and “Other.” Areas of Origin for 2,900 incidents were not reported or left blank and were not included in the following charts.

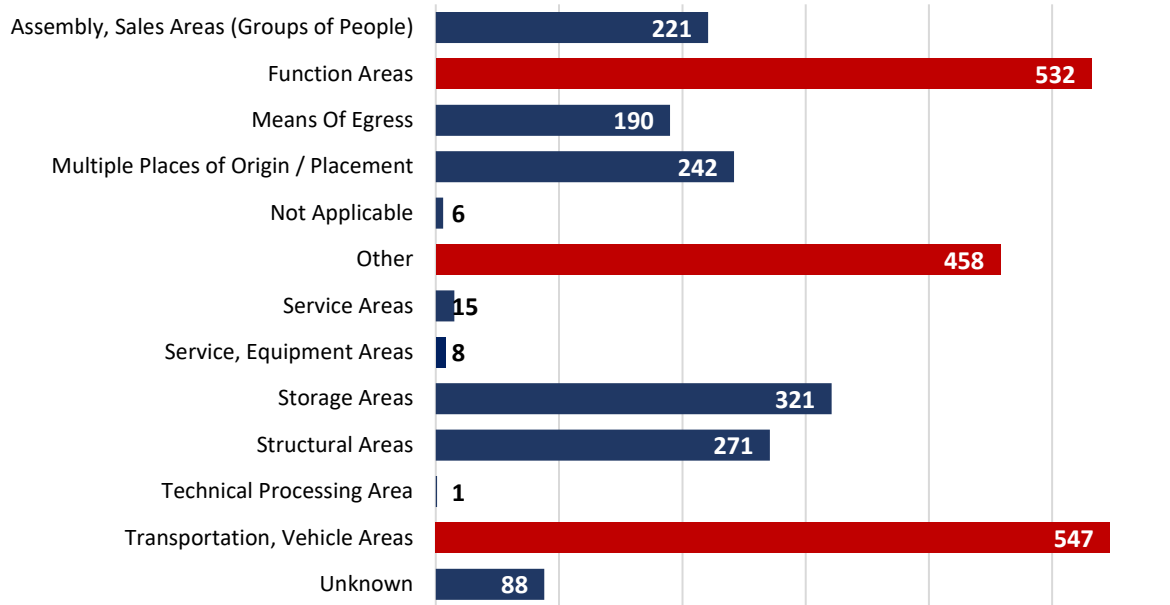


CHART 14. Areas of Origin for Incendiary Fires

(U) The top 3 “Areas of Origin” identified for the 1,935 “Residential” Incendiary fires reported in 2023 were “Transportation, Vehicle Areas,” “Function Areas,” and “Structural Areas.” (See CHART 15.)

(U) The top 3 “Areas of Origin” identified for the 566 Incendiary fires related to “Commercial” use reported in 2023 were “Storage Areas,” “Other,” and “Structural Areas.” (See CHART 16.)

Residential Fires - Areas of Origin	Total
Assembly, Sales Areas (Groups of People)	169
Function Areas	381
Means Of Egress	142
Multiple Places of Origin / Placement	192
Not Applicable	5
Other	181
Service Areas	7
Service, Equipment Areas	5
Storage Areas	113
Structural Areas	193
Transportation, Vehicle Areas	488
Unknown	169

CHART 15. Residential Areas of Origin

Commercial Fires - Areas of Origin	Total
Assembly, Sales Areas (Groups of People)	39
Function Areas	62
Means Of Egress	34
Multiple Places of Origin / Placement	39
Not Applicable	0
Other	117
Service Areas	6
Service, Equipment Areas	2
Storage Areas	160
Structural Areas	64
Transportation, Vehicle Areas	24
Unknown	19

CHART 16. Commercial Areas of Origin

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JUVENILE OFFENDER FIRES – 2023

(U) There were 181 Incendiary fires recorded in BATS during 2023 where the suspect was listed as a “Juvenile Offender” (3 percent of total incendiary fires). A review of the property type involved in those 181 incidents revealed the primary property target of juvenile offenders was “Residential” followed by “Education.” These 2 property types accounted for 114 incidents or 63 percent of the property types targeted by juvenile offenders during 2023.

(U) Excitement was established to be the number-one motivator for Juvenile-involved incendiary fire incidents during CY 2023 with 27 incidents. Motivation was either not reported or left blank for 112 incidents.

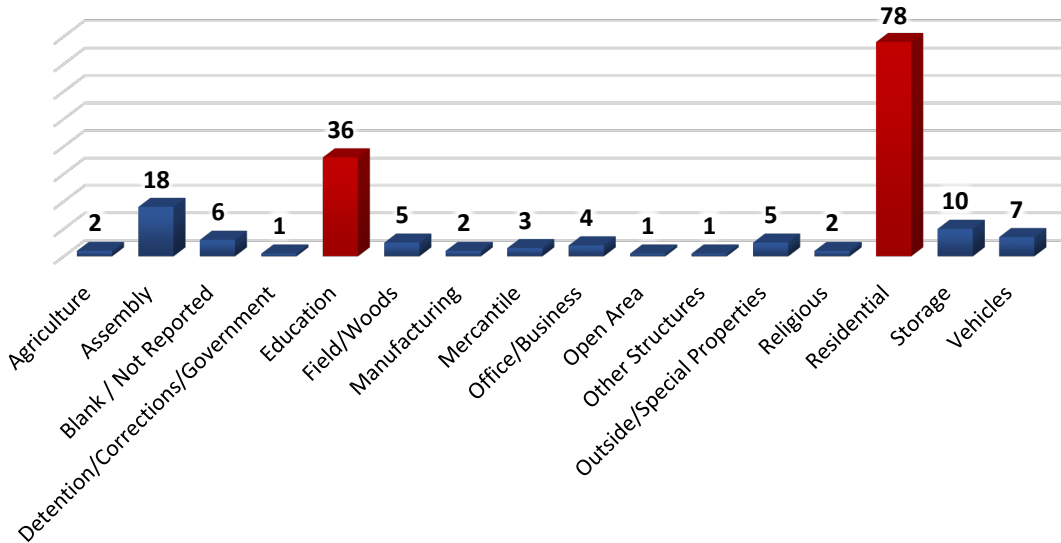


CHART 12. Property Type Targets of Juvenile Offender Fires

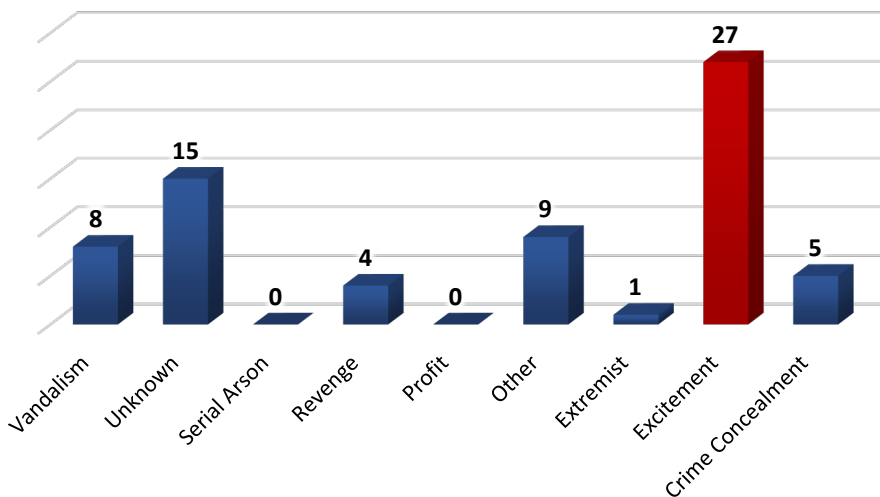


CHART 13. Motivators for Juvenile Offender Fires

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HOUSE OF WORSHIP FIRES – 2023

(U) During CY 2023, BATS captured a total of 217 fire-related incidents involving a House of Worship (HOW). Of these, 77 were listed in BATS as “Incendiary,” 47 as “Accidental” and 2 as “Natural.” There were 57 fires categorized as “Undetermined” and 30 categorized as “Under Investigation,” as the incidents were pending further investigative activities and/or laboratory examinations.

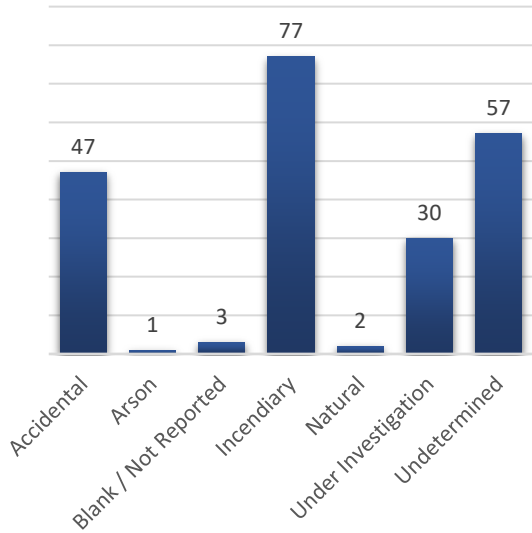


CHART 17. HOW Fires

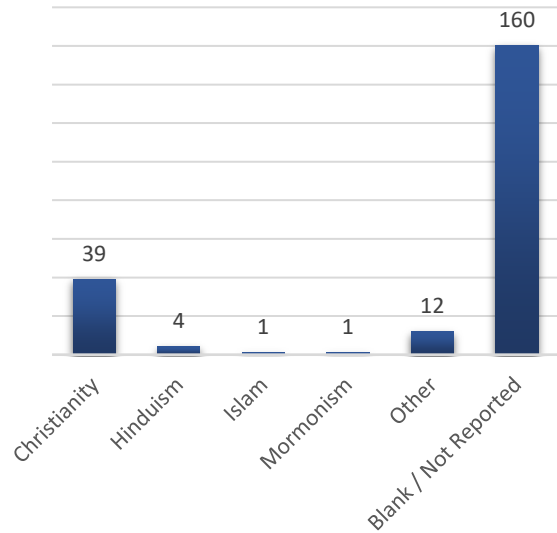


CHART 18. Denomination of HOW Fires

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EDUCATION FIRES – 2023

(U) There were 230 fires associated with an “Education” target during CY 2023. Of those 230 fires reported in BATS, 113 were listed as “Incendiary,” 60 were listed as “Accidental,” and 23 were listed as “Undetermined.” There were also 16 fires listed as “Under Investigation,” as the incidents were pending further investigative activities and/or laboratory examinations.⁵ The Target Subtype category of “High School/Junior High/Middle School” accounted for 53 percent of all fire types and 30 percent of all Incendiary fires associated with an “Education” target.

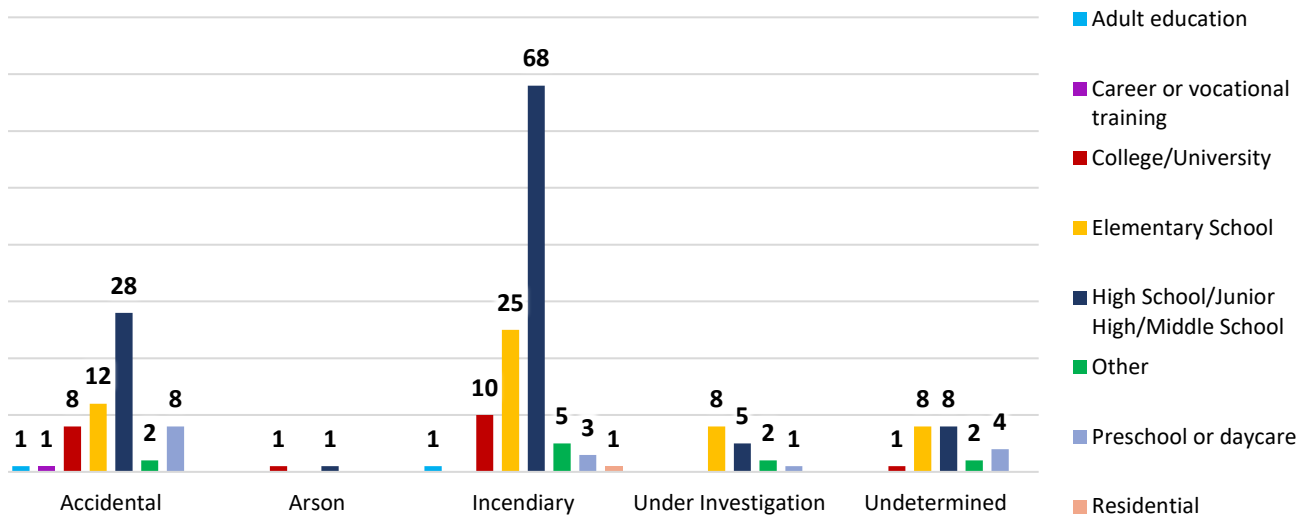


CHART 19. Education Fires

⁵ There were 16 incidents that did not have a subtype entered and were not included in the calculation.

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WILDLAND FIRES – 2023

(U) In 2023, there were 173 “Wildland” fire incidents entered into BATS. Of those 173 fires, 38 were categorized as “Incendiary” and 39 were “Undetermined.”

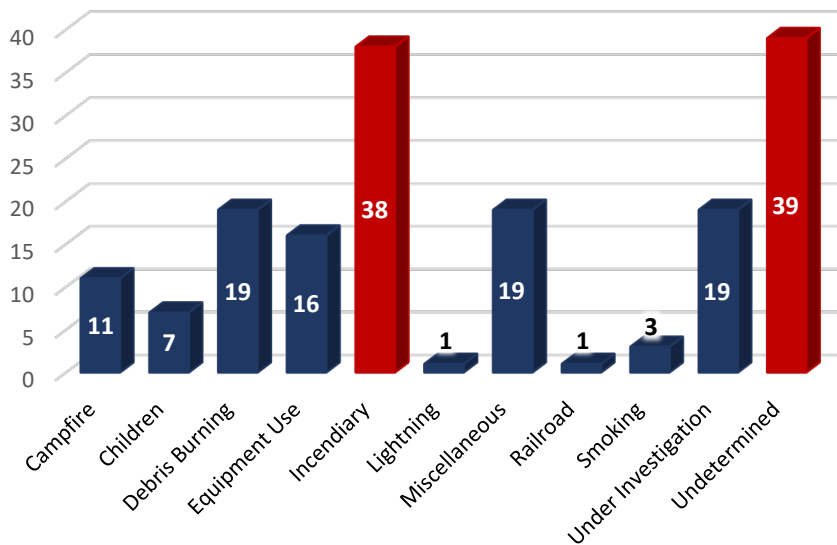


CHART 20. Wildland Fire Types

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