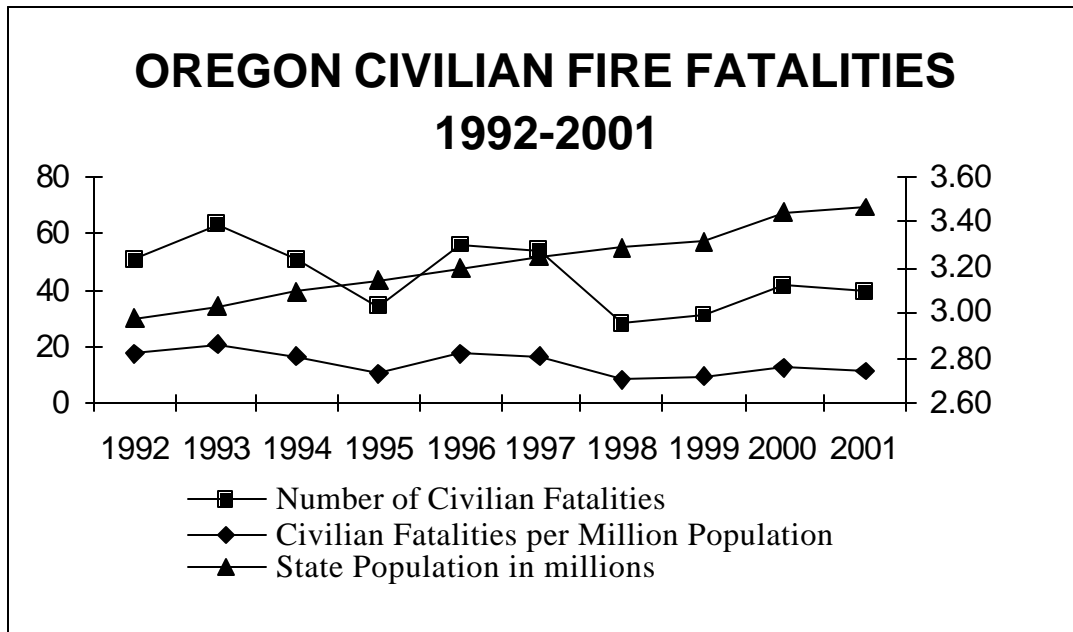


2001 Civilian Fire Fatalities

In 2001, Oregon recorded 40 civilian fire fatalities, a decrease from the 42 fatalities in 2000. This year's fire death toll is also below the last decade's average of 45 deaths annually.

With 40 fatalities and 3.47 million people¹, Oregon's fire fatality rate in 2001 is 11.5 fire deaths per million people. This rate is under the ten-year average of 14 fire deaths per million people and the estimated 2000 national fire death rate of 14.8.²



Of the 40 civilian fire fatalities in 2001, 32 resulted from residential fires, 7 from vehicle fires and one from an outside trash fire. As in previous years, male fatalities outnumbered females (29 males and 11 females). Asphyxiation was the leading cause of death, 63%, as opposed to burns 18% (still waiting for medical examiners' reports on the remaining 19%). Alcohol was a factor in 28% of these fatalities.

Of the 26 fatal residential structure fires (with 32 fatalities), a smoke alarm was reported as present in 11 residences. Of these 11 residences reported as having alarms, only five were reported as working.

Children and the elderly continue to represent a disproportionately high percentage of fire fatalities. Of the 32 residential fire deaths, three were 12 years of age or younger and ten were 66 years of age or older, accounting for 41 percent of residential fatalities. Typically, these highly vulnerable populations are unable to escape from fire before toxic smoke and heat overcomes them.

In 2001, the majority of fatal residential fires were the result of human error. The leading causes were careless smoking (4 fires resulting in 5 deaths) and lack of maintenance on chimneys and wood fireplace inserts (3 fires resulting in 6 deaths).

Additionally, alcohol abuse is a factor in some fire fatalities. Alcohol was a factor in 28 percent of all fire fatalities. Alcohol combined with smoking is deadly because alcohol usage can make a smoker less attentive, less able to react quickly and more susceptible to being overcome by smoke.

Data from the Oregon All Incident Reporting System and OSFM Fire Investigation database.

¹ Population Research Center, Portland State University, Certified Estimates for Oregon, Its Counties and Cities, July 1, 2001.

² McCarthy, Robert S., *Catastrophic Fires of 2000*, NFPA Journal, September/October 2001, p. 86.