

1977

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION
ARSON BUREAU

ANNUAL REPORT



48882

Prepared by the
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Ironson C. La Follette, Attorney General

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FRANK A. MEYERS, ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

NCJRS

JUL 20 1978

ACQUISITIONS

SECTION I - ARSON BUREAU REPORT

ORGANIZATION:

The Administrator of the Division of Criminal Investigation is State Fire Marshal. Operational activities are assigned to the Arson Bureau which is one of the four bureaus of the Division. The Bureau consists of a director and nine deputies who are located throughout the state as follows:

Philip C. Culp, Director	Madison
Henry C. Fiege	Eau Claire
Eldon L. Fremming	Park Falls
Gerald Haffner	Milwaukee
Kermit R. Krupka	Milwaukee
William Lundy	Madison
Leslie A. Meyer	Weyauwega
Joseph P. Murray	Appleton
James Olsen	Milwaukee
Paul R. Sainsbury	Madison

The headquarters office of the State Arson Bureau is located at 123 West Washington Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin, 53702, 608-266-1671.

FUNCTIONS:

The Arson Bureau serves as a supplement to the fire service and local law enforcement. Services provided include:

- a. Investigative assistance on fires of known or suspected incendiary origin;
- b. Investigative assistance on bombings and explosions of suspected criminal origin;
- c. Investigative assistance on fatal fires of undetermined origin;
- d. Training in fire and arson investigation.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FIRE AND ARSON INVESTIGATION:

Fire chiefs are responsible* for investigating every fire in which damage exceeds \$500 and, where the investigation shows that the fire may be of incendiary origin, that fire must be reported to the State Fire Marshal. Accordingly, the responsibility for fire and arson investigation is as follows:

- a. Fire chiefs are solely responsible for fire investigation.
- b. Fire chiefs and the State Fire Marshal have joint responsibility for arson detection.
- c. The State Fire Marshal and local law enforcement have joint responsibility for arson investigation.

*Section 165.55, Stats., reads:

"165.55(1). The chief of the fire department or company of every city, village and town in which a fire department or company exists, and where no fire department or company exists, the city mayor, village president or town clerk shall investigate or cause to be investigated the cause, origin, and circumstances of every fire occurring in his city, village or town by which property has been destroyed or damaged when the damage exceeds \$500, and on fires of unknown origin he shall especially investigate whether the fire was the result of negligence, accident or design. Where any investigation discloses that the fire may be of incendiary origin, he shall report the same to the state fire marshal."

INVESTIGATIONS:

During 1977, the Arson Bureau received 431¹ requests for assistance from local units of government. These requests actually covered over 470 separate fires since some requests covered more than one incident. This is a 15% decrease from 1976. The decrease in requests does not necessarily indicate a decline of arson in the state. There has been increased emphasis on fire and arson investigation at the local level and many local units are now handling cases which would previously have been referred to the Arson Bureau.

Eighty-two requests were declined for a variety of reasons but the over-riding reason was workload. There has been no significant change in this figure for the past three years.

Footnotes correspond to numbered tables in Appendix

CAUSES:

The fact that an investigation was made does not necessarily indicate that the incident was of criminal origin. During 1977, about 47% of the cases investigated were found to be incendiary, 37% accidental, 10% undetermined, and the remaining juvenile, pending, and others.² There was an 8% increase in the number of fires found to be incendiary after investigation.

INCENDIARY LOSSES:

Based on latest available estimates, the damage caused by fires, explosions, and bombings of known or probable incendiary origin investigated by the Arson Bureau exceeds \$4.3 million. The loss was down nearly \$1.5 million from 1976 but it is still slightly higher than the five year average.³

CASE DISPOSITIONS:

As a result of Arson Bureau investigations, 111 adult charges or other dispositions were made. 83% of the charges were for fire related crimes. The remainder were charges incidental to the arson investigation.⁴ The apprehension rate on cases definitely determined to be arson exceeded 48% during 1977.

Forty-eight cases were finally adjudicated in 1977. Nearly 83% resulted in convictions. 42% of those convicted were actually incarcerated with the average sentence being about 7 years. The remainder were placed on probation with the average probation being about 3 years.⁵

In addition, 28 juveniles were apprehended for setting fires in 1977. Four had set fires incidental to play and there was no malicious intent to set the fire. In most of these cases, strong parental supervision was recommended. The remaining 24 juveniles deliberately set fire and had they been adults, they would have been charged with arson or a related offense. Most of these cases were disposed of by reference to the juvenile courts.

MOTIVES:

Although motive is not an element of the crime of arson, the Bureau attempts to establish and classify motive in every incendiary fire. Most prosecutors require some evidence of motive before accepting an arson case and the classification of motive also has value in spotting trends. During 1977, the Bureau was able to develop evidence of motives in over 60% of the arsons investigated. Increases were noted in fraud fires, pyromania fires, and vandalism fires. A significant decrease was noted in spite/revenge fires.⁶

Footnotes correspond to numbered tables in Appendix

FATAL FIRES:

The Arson Bureau is frequently requested to cooperate in the investigation of fatal fires because of the possibility of a fire being set to commit or cover evidence of a homicide. During 1977, the Bureau investigated 25 fatal fires involving 40 fatalities. Six of the fires were determined to be homicide related incendiary fires. In one case, the cause of the fire could not be determined and the remaining fires were all established to be accidental.⁷

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION:

During 1977, the Bureau conducted investigations in 65 of the 72 counties in the state. There are 10 counties in the state having populations over 100,000. These 10 counties account for 55% of the total population and 40% of the requests for investigation. By contrast, there are 48 counties in the state having populations under 50,000. These 48 counties have 13% of the population but they also accounted for 40% of the requests for investigation.

Based on this pattern of requests, it is apparent that arson is a rural as well as urban problem in this state.⁸

TRAINING:

During 1977, the Arson Bureau conducted 31 training sessions for over 1,200 students. Subjects covered included fire investigation, arson recognition, and basic arson investigation. In addition, the Bureau co-sponsored the Annual Wisconsin Arson Seminar which was attended by approximately 200 police and fire officials. This represents a 55% increase in the number of training sessions offered and a 36% increase in the number of students attending.

Footnotes correspond to numbered tables in Appendix.

SECTION II - APPENDIX

TABLE 1
INVESTIGATIONS

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Fires	436	338
Explosions	4	7
Bombings	3	4
Unfounded Complaints	1	0
TOTAL	<u>444</u>	<u>349</u>

TABLE 2
CAUSES

Incendiary	184	163
Accidental	172	131
Juveniles (no malicious intent)	6	2
Undetermined	61	35
Other	4	0
Pending	17	18
TOTAL	<u>444</u>	<u>349</u>

TABLE 3
INCENDIARY LOSSES

<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
\$2,600,000	\$4,200,000	\$3,400,000	\$5,900,000	\$4,300,000

TABLE 4
CASE DISPOSITIONS

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Arson	60	86
Criminal Damage	0	2
Negligent handling of burning material	6	4
Homicide/Attempted Homicide	1	3
Other crimes	31	11
Committed to Mental Institutions	6	4
Other dispositions	1	1
TOTAL	<u>105</u>	<u>111</u>

TABLE 5
SENTENCING

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Cases Adjudicated	34	48
Dismissed-defendant committed	1	5
Dismissed-lack of evidence	4	4
Defendant found not guilty	4	3
Convicted		
Sentenced to Prison	18	15
Suspended Sentence & Probation	7	21

TABLE 6
MOTIVES

Fraud	16	20
Political	0	0
Mental		
Pyromania	6	11
Psychopathic	22	16
Suicide	1	0
Vandalism	18	27
Spite	32	18
Crime Cover-up	12	12
Vanity	1	0
Unknown	76	59
TOTAL	<u>184</u>	<u>163</u>

TABLE 7
FATAL FIRES

(By Cause)

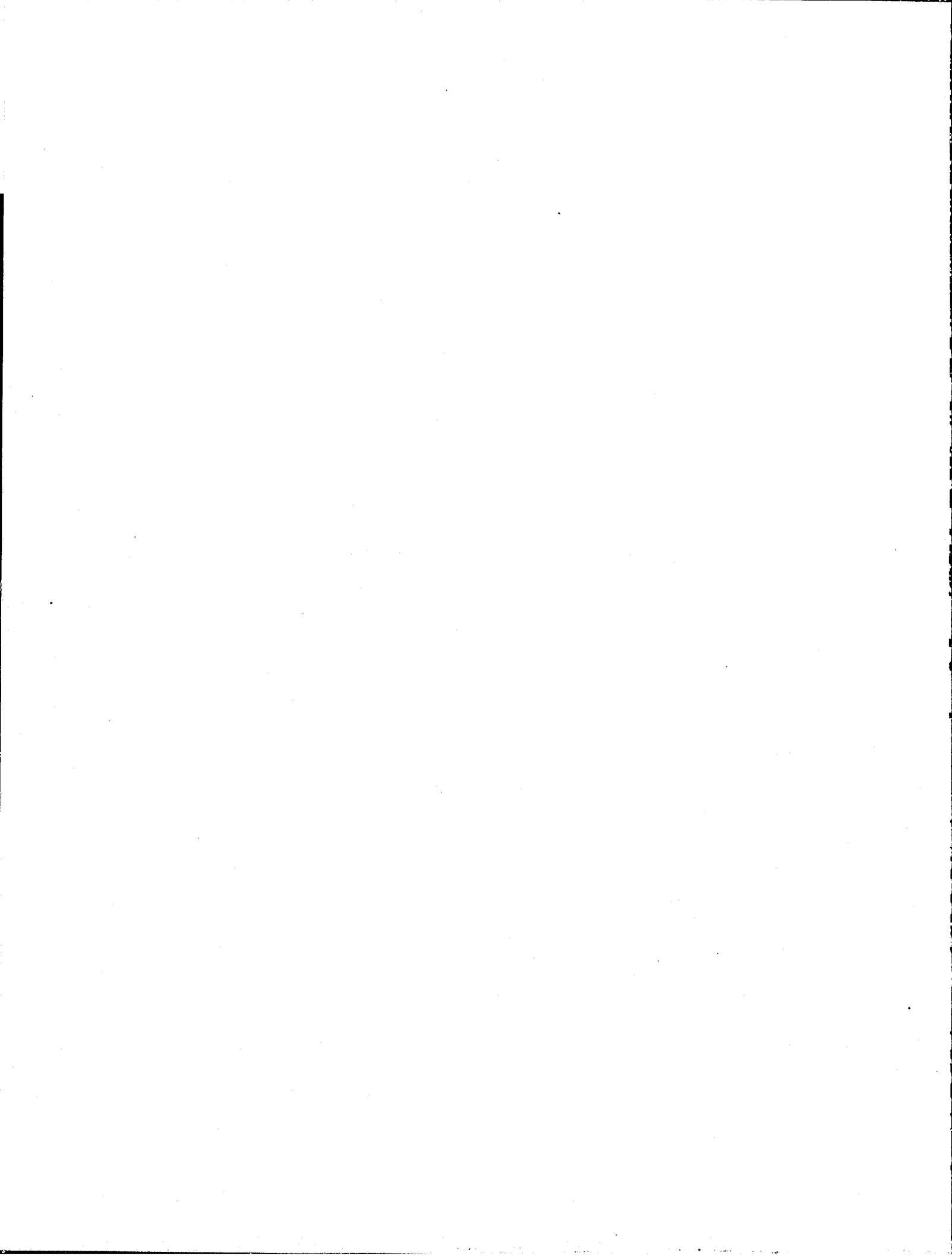
Accidental - various causes	28	18
Incendiary - Homicide	3	6
Incendiary - Suicide	1	0
Unknown - undetermined	6	1
TOTAL	<u>38</u>	<u>25</u>

(By Ages)

0-10	24	12
11-20	5	8
21-30	7	3
31-40	4	5
41-50	5	2
51-60	0	2
61-70	4	2
71 and over	3	6
TOTAL	<u>52</u>	<u>40</u>

TABLE 8
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

COUNTY	1976	1977	COUNTY	1976	1977
Adams	1	3	Marinette	7	12
Ashland	1	5	Marquette	0	1
Barron	9	2	Menominee	3	0
Bayfield	4	3	Milwaukee	64	52
Brown	11	21	Monroe	4	2
Buffalo	2	0	Oconto	9	1
Burnett	1	4	Oneida	6	4
Calumet	0	2	Outagamie	15	22
Chippewa	7	5	Ozaukee	6	10
Clark	10	1	Pepin	1	1
Columbia	6	10	Pierce	5	2
Crawford	4	3	Polk	6	3
Dane	15	21	Portage	9	1
Dodge	13	4	Price	11	7
Door	1	0	Racine	25	11
Douglas	4	4	Richland	2	1
Dunn	5	14	Rock	7	5
Eau Claire	5	6	Rusk	7	4
Florence	0	3	St. Croix	4	7
Fond du Lac	7	7	Sauk	11	10
Forest	3	3	Sawyer	9	5
Grant	3	9	Shawano	7	5
Green	2	2	Sheboygan	12	6
Green Lake	3	1	Taylor	2	4
Iowa	2	3	Trempealeau	1	3
Iron	2	1	Vernon	2	2
Jackson	2	3	Vilas	8	0
Jefferson	10	4	Walworth	10	11
Juneau	2	6	Washburn	4	3
Kenosha	8	12	Washington	9	7
Kewaunee	0	0	Waukesha	20	18
LaCrosse	6	2	Waupaca	4	5
Lafayette	6	4	Waushara	6	11
Langlade	9	6	Winnebago	28	13
Lincoln	2	0	Wood	8	0
Manitowoc	9	3			
Marathon	11	5			
		TOTAL		<u>518</u>	<u>431</u>



SECTION III

1977

WISCONSIN FIRE LOSS STATISTICS

Prepared by the
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY,
LABOR AND HUMAN RELATIONS

DIVISION OF SAFETY AND BUILDINGS

Zel Rice
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Division Administrator

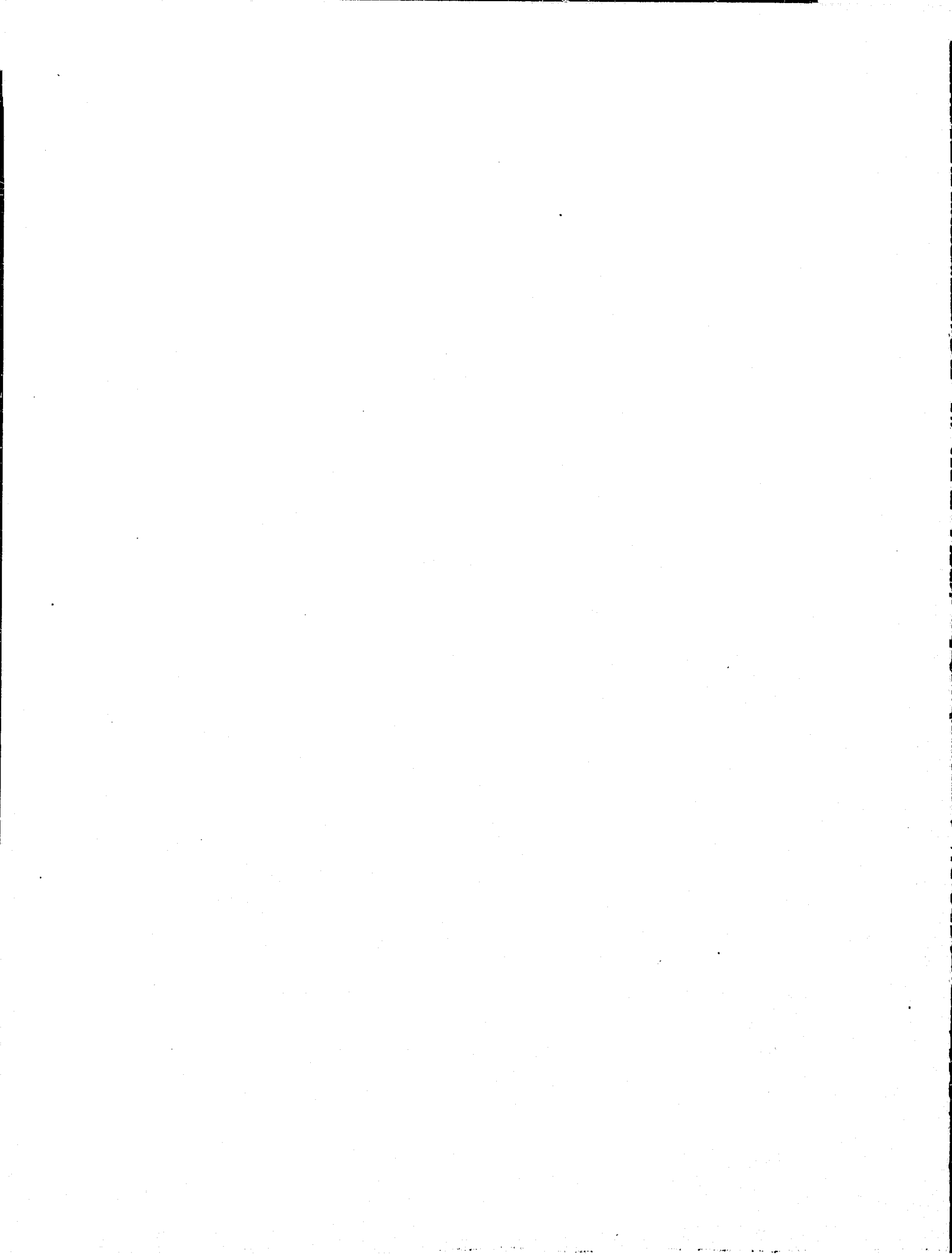
WISCONSIN FIRE LOSS STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to Section 101.141, Wisconsin Statutes, Wisconsin fire loss statistics are compiled by the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations from reports submitted by the insurance industry.

1977 STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- 8,720 fire losses were reported resulting in damage of \$53.5 million.
90.38% of this loss was covered by insurance.
- The 8,720 fire losses reported represents a decrease of 33.3% from 1976.
- The total dollar loss attributed to fire increased 11.46% from 1976.
- The number of incendiary and suspicious fires decreased 22.4% during the year and the related dollar loss decreased 4.28%.
- 18% of all fires were attributed to lightning.
- 11.1% of all fires were attributed to defective wiring.
- 15% of all fires involving 28.1% of the total fire losses were listed as being of undetermined origin.
- 29% of all fires and 22% of the total fire loss involved 1 to 4 family dwellings.
- Barn fires decreased 38% from 1976.
- Vehicle fires decreased 14% and the dollar loss from such fires decreased 18%.



FIRE LOSSES IN WISCONSIN
by
TYPE OF PROPERTY

TYPE OF PROPERTY	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
Apartments	260	223	\$ 2,070,297	\$ 2,170,813	\$ 1,907,554	\$ 2,182,415
Amusement Arcades, Billiard Parlors	1	1	894	320	844	272
Boats	15	13	27,799	17,994	23,776	16,859
Boat Houses, Docks, Marina	3	2	49,631	1,751	43,425	1,601
Bowling Lanes	21	13	349,250	177,434	259,198	102,424
Broadcasting: Radio, Television	8	5	15,305	2,858	15,108	2,708
Business Establishments, Other	57	86	1,186,222	881,491	1,055,976	789,769
Churches, Church Properties	24	18	354,731	293,577	331,139	281,743
Club Houses, Lodges, YMCA	27	9	501,566	118,084	392,964	42,703
Coal Yards, Lumber Yards	4	10	2,589	99,601	2,274	99,401
Construction Company & Equipment	13	7	51,179	23,757	48,966	21,561
Dairy Products Mfg.	4	4	2,589	3,877	2,274	3,877
Dry Cleaning, Laundries: Commercial	3	2	2,759	11,053	2,609	11,123
Dry Cleaning, Laundries: Self Service	10	7	30,088	17,907	27,113	17,240
Dwellings-Urban (1-4 family)	3,453	2,545	10,858,826	11,785,246	10,063,429	10,767,606
Educational Institutions	26	20	694,478	1,258,355	681,595	1,742,944
Elevators, Grain Storage, Feed Mills	12	17	252,125	974,796	249,581	800,356
Factories	91	78	2,135,260	4,075,649	1,623,622	3,814,311
Filling Stations, Fuel Depots	9	20	51,798	176,053	35,465	111,586
FARM:						
Barns	772	477	8,030,976	6,062,878	6,990,002	5,237,042
Brooders, Poultry Houses	6	9	31,462	130,950	30,021	92,507
Dwellings - Rural	3,876	2,305	8,996,571	10,128,541	7,806,725	8,703,750
Graneries, Silos	52	75	78,741	209,160	70,025	177,206
Hay, Straw, Grain, etc.	56	32	65,357	25,627	78,386	25,387
Hog Houses	19	12	33,428	30,113	30,777	24,940
Milk Houses	230	72	48,613	34,751	45,398	32,452
Livestock	661	169	409,383	149,648	392,516	143,106
Machinery, etc.	822	371	433,800	334,848	402,980	325,658
Out Buildings, etc.	119	55	477,761	355,377	384,097	304,571
Tractors, Trucks	440	402	289,145	362,005	274,392	344,030

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TYPE OF PROPERTY

TYPE OF PROPERTY	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
Garages - Private	333	316	918,658	1,137,765	751,375	941,872
Garages - Commercial	12	11	103,227	200,531	91,535	184,918
Halls, Meeting Houses	0	2	-0-	2,829	-0-	2,779
Hospitals, Sanitariums	2	5	7,140	57,481	6,040	56,416
Hotels	5	13	22,230	139,798	21,434	136,925
INSTITUTIONS: PUBLIC BUILDINGS						
City	13	4	41,313	49,450	37,024	46,951
County	5	0	68,294	-0-	68,194	-0-
Federal	0	0	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
State	7	7	90,135	183,933	85,613	177,695
Other	4	3	4,444	19,330	4,244	18,071
Meat Packing, Food Processing	11	6	82,144	220,213	75,944	181,963
Mills - Lumber	13	4	209,969	227,772	165,787	142,374
Mills - Paper	4	0	216,383	-0-	215,395	-0-
Motels	24	15	85,779	348,289	84,069	289,042
Nursing, Convalescent Homes	5	4	29,457	806	20,678	756
Off Premises Personal Property	53	15	37,636	5,504	21,766	5,339
Offices, Commercial Buildings	61	47	409,265	844,013	349,780	868,976
Parks, Campsites	2	3	28,769	13,817	28,299	13,526
Power Plants	0	0	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Restaurants, Supper Clubs, etc.	75	83	1,203,160	1,436,517	1,028,670	1,138,194
Rooming Houses, Fraternities, etc.	1	6	1,624	47,307	1,524	46,912
Seasonal Dwelling - Private	79	69	568,892	548,539	493,285	471,970
Seasonal Dwelling - Commercial	11	15	115,614	113,314	102,431	84,734
Sheds, Shacks, etc.	90	78	313,927	427,319	255,103	432,483
Storage, Warehouses	70	69	1,112,432	1,510,462	964,767	1,363,499
Stores, Shops	98	99	1,803,958	2,870,914	1,607,550	2,769,407
Supermarkets	11	2	77,237	1,994	72,034	1,894

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TYPE OF PROPERTY

TYPE OF PROPERTY	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
Taverns	116	84	1,017,711	1,169,000	956,880	1,010,507
Tents	0	3	-0-	1,427	-0-	1,254
Theaters, Arenas, Auditoriums	1	2	1,158	22,871	1,110	13,508
Trailers, House	175	167	912,358	953,598	770,987	840,926
Trailers - Other	8	9	10,587	15,725	9,901	15,525
Vehicles - Private	531	463	583,663	494,443	573,361	475,634
Vehicles - Commercial	13	3	38,829	18,141	37,809	17,791
Service & Repair Shops	40	25	334,949	544,347	266,466	414,521
Snowmobiles	12	4	19,829	2,630	17,669	2,163
Miscellaneous	101	24	62,543	39,306	46,938	37,459
TOTAL	13,081	8,720	\$48,075,643	\$53,583,899	\$42,515,709	\$48,427,132

FIRE LOSSES IN WISCONSIN

by
CAUSE OF FIRE

CAUSE OF FIRE	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
Accidental, Miscellaneous	53	51	282,429	512,884	263,926	485,523
Ashes, Embers, Rekindle	53	39	303,473	367,977	297,303	353,797
Bonfires, Grass, Rubbish	139	108	512,356	758,337	444,516	543,343
Candles, Lanterns	103	88	268,558	299,915	260,262	279,384
Children at play, Matches	238	170	967,497	1,368,614	934,638	1,265,499
Chimney Fires	286	276	1,058,332	895,042	940,966	812,389
Christmas Trees, Lights, Floods	5	7	18,773	32,469	18,530	31,139
Clothes Dryers	85	56	100,241	317,644	88,632	306,204
Collisions, Wrecks, Overturns	9	7	4,081	14,155	3,362	13,955
Cooking Fires, Burner Carelessness	735	528	1,184,159	1,606,523	1,102,439	1,041,750
<u>Electric:</u>						
Fencers	0	56	-0-	2,632	-0-	2,304
Heaters	36	65	156,205	486,586	147,631	458,989
Heat Lamps	16	22	25,346	192,177	15,579	160,504
Heating Pads, Blankets	23	28	58,629	70,340	56,826	68,469
Irons, Mangles	6	2	6,677	680	6,677	444
Light Bulbs, Lamps, Fixtures	75	75	463,939	420,057	308,167	411,523
Motors (Defective)	42	56	129,798	428,611	79,231	333,189
Radios	3	11	7,202	3,023	7,145	2,843
Refrigerators, Freezers	23	29	73,816	91,741	60,364	88,886
Stoves	163	117	365,724	699,242	344,648	626,581
Television	64	109	203,281	406,521	190,683	392,519
Toasters	33	26	23,240	34,240	21,915	27,126
Washing Machines	10	12	10,047	5,072	9,847	4,478
Other Appliances - Heavy	30	30	74,265	88,231	72,850	76,147
Other Appliances - Light	46	52	120,309	106,739	138,314	105,252
Wiring (Defective)	983	967	8,381,311	10,365,892	7,277,249	9,913,829
Other - Surges, Accidents	81	66	342,376	224,834	301,381	219,049

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CAUSE OF FIRE

CAUSE OF FIRE	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
EXPLOSIONS:						
Boilers, Heaters	17	21	49,707	129,543	40,438	104,745
Dust	3	3	6,646	4,676	5,144	4,212
Dynamite, etc.	0	3	-0-	97,430	-0-	96,436
Flammable Liquids	4	11	19,712	105,070	15,576	86,462
Gas - Natural, LP	78	48	256,617	537,972	236,110	486,329
Exposure	115	98	318,184	645,649	254,430	729,420
Fire Places	176	99	516,075	436,112	482,176	462,047
Fireworks	0	2	-0-	34,856	-0-	34,706
Flammable Liquid Accidents, fumes	65	72	548,453	2,148,898	515,183	2,513,552
Gas Leak	12	44	134,273	375,670	95,765	326,412
Gas Stove, Heaters	24	22	97,287	216,445	90,328	198,629
Gasoline Engines, etc.	4	7	12,285	39,454	12,235	38,124
Grease, Tar, etc.	10	55	27,046	109,028	17,278	105,995
Heating Plants (Defective)	157	185	746,442	1,104,949	660,597	978,093
Heating Plants (Explosions)	119	71	421,659	294,431	394,107	252,047
Incendiary, Suspicious, Vandalism	456	354	4,425,789	4,236,241	3,658,415	3,978,065
Incinerators	1	4	403	762,299	347	567,695
Industrial Accidents	18	16	95,383	94,463	86,583	87,741
Lawnmowers	15	13	18,349	3,449	11,679	3,171
Lightning	4,980	1,574	2,738,717	1,055,870	2,405,978	977,005
Matches (Carelessness)	22	28	122,930	98,312	108,264	93,478
Material in Contact	76	36	138,151	177,660	130,165	153,645
Open Flame	0	6	-0-	41,195	-0-	40,592
Smokers Carelessness	429	315	1,762,358	1,481,699	1,609,219	1,437,997
Sparks	177	121	265,502	973,424	714,244	748,666
Sparks-Locomotives	7	2	71,100	44,654	53,796	27,162
Spontaneous Ignition	84	100	1,143,130	1,054,559	1,098,781	937,790
Steam Pipes	10	6	65,987	5,112	58,942	4,847

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CAUSE OF FIRE

CAUSE OF FIRE	Number of Fires		Amount of Damage		Insurance Paid	
	1976	1977	1976	1977	1976	1977
Stoves, Space Heaters, etc.	142	183	750,610	1,186,618	570,553	1,101,403
Thawing Pipes	10	32	84,432	264,311	76,851	207,451
Torches - Blow, Welding, etc.	57	47	246,764	192,443	237,755	191,730
<u>VEHICLES:</u>						
Exhaust-Backfire	43	33	86,813	74,699	85,531	67,365
Fuel System, Carburators	130	125	143,548	151,789	140,108	147,154
Wiring, Ignition	536	416	310,271	356,990	304,867	351,319
Other-Miscellaneous	69	106	93,711	184,222	90,638	175,144
Snowmobiles	5	1	2,370	324	2,220	324
Unknown or Undetermined	<u>1,690</u>	<u>1,407</u>	<u>16,712,875</u>	<u>15,063,205</u>	<u>14,857,455</u>	<u>13,385,056</u>
TOTAL	13,081	8,720	\$48,075,643	\$53,583,899	\$42,515,709	\$48,427,132



END