

The Fire 4-1-1

APRIL 2016

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

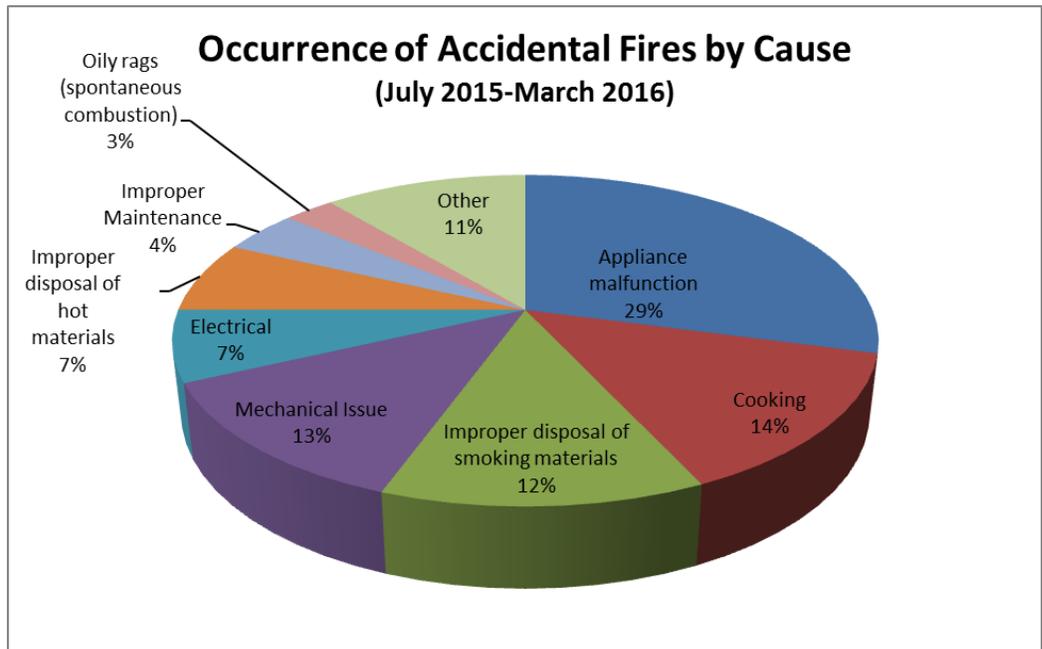
- Appliance Malfunctions account for 29% of all unintentional fires.
- Forty-one percent of the total dollar loss was a result in improper disposal of hot materials, including cigarettes, fireworks, and fireplaces ashes.
- Fireworks, grilling, and mulch fire safety tips.

Unintentional Fire Data

Despite being one of the most industrialized and technologically advanced countries in the world, the United States continues to have a fire problem. Loudoun County is no different and has its own issues that are specific to this area. The Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office conducts fire investigations to help determine what is our community's fire problem. By understanding what issues we encounter regularly, first responders can take the necessary steps to prevent and mitigate these fires. The information included here demonstrates some of the common accidental fire causes encountered in Loudoun County the first three quarters of the fiscal year (July 2015-March 2016). For more specific descriptions of causes visit www.loudoun.gov/finerisk.



Fire Cause	Total # of Fires	Total Damages Per Cause
Appliance malfunction	21	\$154,650.00
Cooking	10	\$137,000.00
Improper disposal of smoking materials	9	\$120,170.00
Mechanical Issue	9	\$1,095,300.00
Electrical	5	\$341,000.00
Improper disposal of hot materials	5	\$1,130,010.00
Other	3	\$0.00
Improper Maintenance	2	\$15,000.00
Oil rags (spontaneous combustion)	2	\$50,250.00
Combustibles in contact with heat source	2	\$0.00
Candles Related	1	\$10,000.00
Fireworks related	1	\$0.00
Lightning	1	\$10,000.00
Burn Injury	1	\$0.00
Total Number of Unintentional Fires	72	
Total Cost of Damages		\$3,063,380.00



Appliance Safety Tips

“42.8% of all appliance malfunctions occurred in heating equipment”

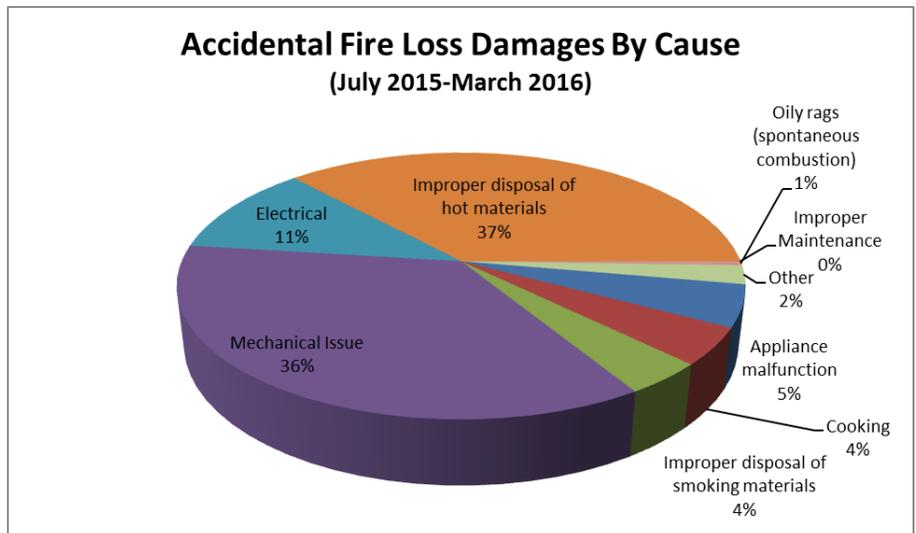
Appliances are found in almost every room of our homes. How we use and maintain these items can increase or decrease our risk of having an appliance related fire. By following these easy tips you can reduce that risk:

- * Have heating equipment cleaned and inspected by a licensed professional each year.

- * Follow manufacturer’s instruction on proper maintenance for any appliance.
- * Plug appliances directly into a wall outlet.
- * Ensure all electrical cords are in good condition and not broken, cracked, or frayed.
- * Clean the clothes dryer

- lint filter before and after each cycle.
- * Keep items that can burn away from heat producing appliances.
- * Purchase appliances that have the label of a independent testing laboratory.
- * Have appliances installed by a licensed professional.

This fire was a result of improperly discarded fireplace ashes. From the surface damage seems minimal but more significant damage was found hidden beneath the deck.



Proper Disposal of Hot Materials

Fires caused by improperly discarded hot materials like smoking materials, fireplaces ashes, charcoal briquettes, and fireworks, cause thousands of dollars worth of damages. These fires occur when the hot materials are placed outside near the exterior of the home. As the materials smolder they can grow and



ignite siding or other nearby combustibles. Most homes do not have outdoor fire safety systems so the fires go undetected making them especially dangerous. Protect you and your family by following these tips:

- ◆ Dispose of cigarette butts in a metal or ceramic container filled with sand.

Clean out this container regularly.

- ◆ Dispose of fireplace or fire pit ashes in a metal or ceramic container.
- ◆ Place the container away from the home and other structures.
- ◆ Soak ashes and hot materials thoroughly with water. Hot materials can smolder for days.
- ◆ Keep children and pets away from the hot materials.

Looking Ahead

During different times of the year, there are certain fire causes that may occur more frequently than others. For example, fires related to home heating rise in December, January, and February, but are rare in the summer months. As you begin to enjoy the warmer weather keep these safety tips in mind.

Grill Safety

- Check the hose of propane gas grills for leaks before use.

- Use grills outdoors, away from the home, deck railings, or overhanging branches.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

Spring Cleaning

- Be sure all cleaning products, household chemicals, paints, and poisons are properly marked and safely stored out of children's reach.

Fireworks Safety

- If you want to see fireworks, go to a public show put on by experts.
- If you choose to purchase consumer fireworks follow local laws.
- Soak fireworks remnants overnight before disposing of them.

Last Year Total Number of Fires Between April 2015 and June 2015.....19

Total Dollar Loss

\$3,669,055

Top Causes

- 1) **Improperly Discard Smoking Materials.....7**
- 2) **Unattended Cooking...4**
- 3) **Electrical.....3**

Mulch Fires

Each year during spring and summer, hundreds of mulch fires are reported across the nation. These fires often start out small and undetected, but can quickly grow into a devastating fire, causing major damage to buildings, homes, and other structures.

Fires that start in landscaping mulch can spread quickly into shrubbery, up exterior walls and into the home or building. To help prevent mulch fires around your home or business, please follow these safety tips:

- Use only approved receptacles to dispose of matches, cigarettes and cigars. Never throw smoking materials into potted plants, landscaping, mulch, or other combustible materials.
- Hot and dry spells, along with windy conditions allow mulch fires to start and spread more readily.
- Immediately report any smoke or fire in a mulch bed via 9-1-1.
- Maintain at least 18 inches of clearance between the edge of the mulch bed and combustible building materials, such as exterior vinyl siding and decks.
- Use materials such as pond stone or crushed rock for the first 18" as a barrier around the foundation of the building and around gas and electrical meters.
- Keep landscaped mulch beds as moist as possible.



This fire was a result of cigarettes butts being disposed of in a plastic planter.



Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office

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www.loudoun.gov/firemarshal

The Fire Marshal's Office seeks to provide a safe working and living environment for residents, workers, and travelers within Loudoun County. Key aspects of the mission include:

- Investigation into the origin and cause of fire- and explosive-related incidents in the county as well as offenses related to threats to burn and/or bomb
- Investigation into the release of hazardous materials
- Juvenile firesetter Intervention
- Proactive public fire and life safety education programs
- Rapid and professional emergency response
- Reduction of fire risk through abatement of common fire prevention code violations

There are several special operational programs, such as the Bomb Squad and the Canine Program, however these are collateral responsibilities assigned to regular staff, which transcend section boundaries.

