



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

NFIRS – Making it Count

No. FM-2011-11 October 13, 2011

Learning Objective: The student will be able to identify the value of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the enhancements to NFIRS.

NFIRS is the fire service's tool to report its emergency responses. It is the largest incident-based database in the world. More than 21.5 million incidents were reported in calendar year 2010 from more than 22,800 fire departments.¹ This means an incident was reported every 1.5 seconds and a fire incident was reported every 25 seconds. The sheer size of this database with more than 35 years of incidents makes it a valuable tool at the local, State, and national levels.

The recent enhancements to NFIRS make the data more accessible to the fire service. The web-based data entry tool (Data Entry Browser Interface (DEBI)) provides a direct link to the national database for entering fire incident reports. The NFIRS Bulk Import Utility (BIU) allows fire departments to submit their incidents directly into the national database using NFIRS compatible software. For summaries and other fire statistics, reports are generated using the NFIRS Summary Output Reports Tool (SORT). The SORT allows fire departments to get statistical reports from their incident data. The NFIRS Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) is scheduled for partial release this year.² The EDW allows fire departments to run reports on any data that is in the database (i.e., local, State, or national). The EDW also allows departments to download incident data for import into local applications (e.g., Access and Excel). This allows departments to compare themselves with other fire departments. All released data are available with the exception of personally identifiable information (PII) (e.g., names and addresses). These enhancements require Internet access and user accounts. In addition to making NFIRS more accessible to the fire service, these enhancements also make the fire service visible to everyone.

Making it count means that the fire service should be reporting all of its emergency response incidents to NFIRS. The numbers tell the fire service's story, and only the fire service can best tell its story. In our ever-changing world, the fire service's first line of defense is timely accurate information that is shared, integrated, analyzed, and acted upon quickly and effectively. NFIRS is the fire service's tool that tells the fire service's story. It is time for the fire service to fully embrace the use of data and to become accountable and responsible for what it reports and how it is being reported. Since NFIRS is becoming more open and visible to its users, the fire service must make it count by caring about its data and sharing its data.

For more information about NFIRS, go to www.nfirs.fema.gov or contact the NFIRS Support Center (femafnirshelp@dhs.gov or 888-382-3827).

Only a complete and accurate NFIRS report can help tell the fire service's story.

¹ As of August 11, 2011.

² Phase 1—release to USFA; Phase 2—release to States' NFIRS program managers; Phase 3—release to fire departments.