



2015: Fires in Kansas

Kansas Fire Incident Reporting System Annual Report

Report Roadmap

Bonner Springs Fire Department



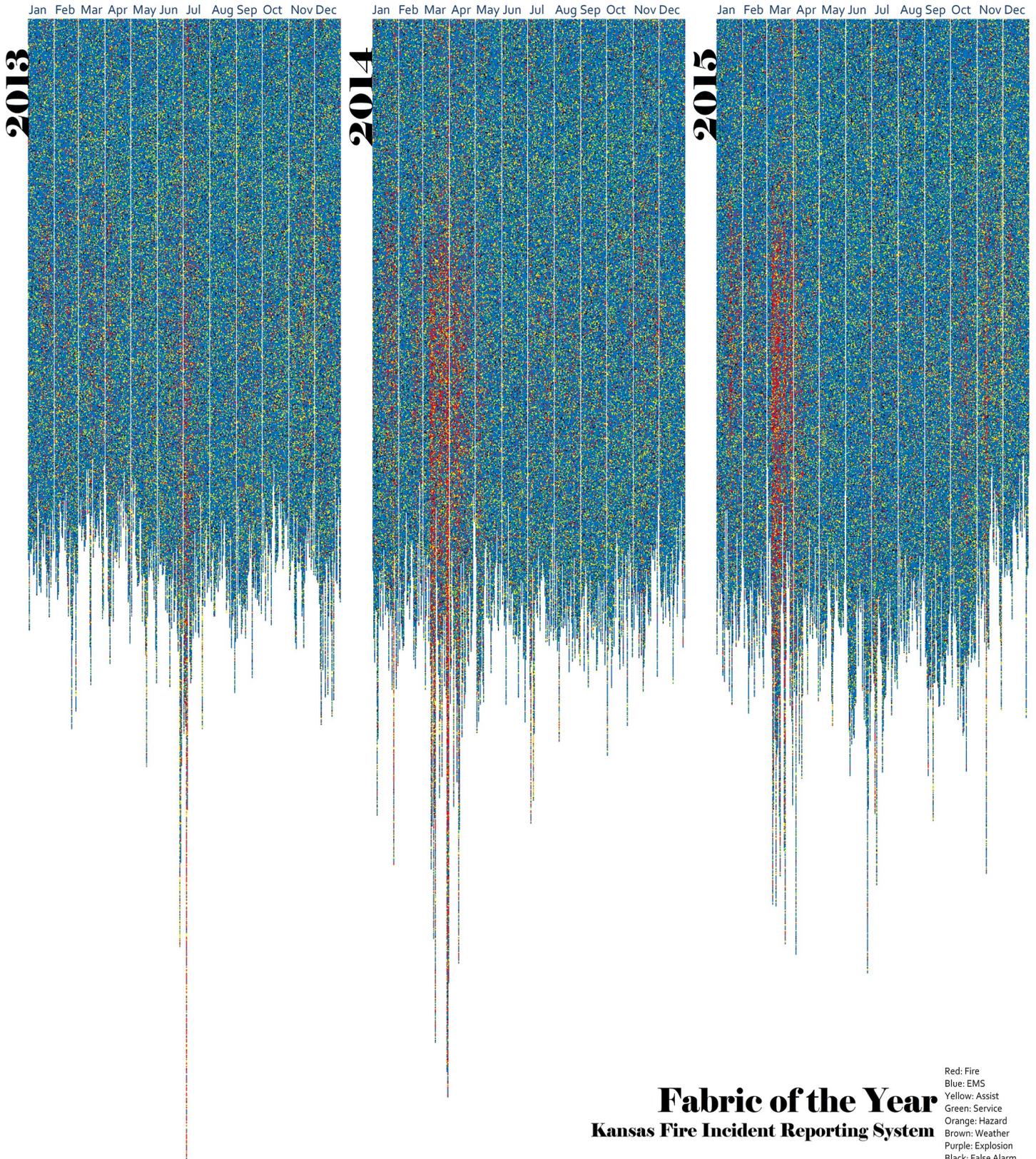
If you want to know...

Go to Page...

When do fires occur -----	4
What was the call load in 2015 -----	6
Easy measures to protect your home -----	8
Fire risks for homes with children -----	10
Preventing fires in apartments -----	12
The single largest cause of structure fires -----	14
Does Kansas have wildfires -----	16

Fabric of the Years

Fabric of the Years orders all reported fire department calls by the alarm date and time. Each day of the year is given a column. Each call is given a color code depending on type. When all the calls are viewed together, the pattern of Kansas emerges. March of 2014 was record-breaking for vegetation fires. March of 2015 was not as intense but still much larger than 2013. Lines of ice storms are visible in November of 2015 in the fire calls, mostly cooking related. On the positive, July 4th calls have dropped off the last few years.



Fabric of the Year
Kansas Fire Incident Reporting System

Red: Fire
Blue: EMS
Yellow: Assist
Green: Service
Orange: Hazard
Brown: Weather
Purple: Explosion
Black: False Alarm

When Do Fires Occur?

Seems like a simple question right?

The answer depends on what kind of fire we're discussing. It depends on location and even the weather.

By Type

When identifying the “when” of fires, the easiest way to break it down first is by type. We have defined “fire seasons” throughout the year, year after year. Grass Fire Season, heaviest in March, drops off by May. Colder weather drives unsafe fire behaviors in humans at home. Fireworks Season is well defined as the week leading up to July 4 and ends after the 5th of July. Fireworks Season is also “Outdoor Trash Fire Season,” resulting from fireworks disposal. Vehicle Fire Season doesn't exist. Vehicle fires are the most random, sporadic fire type throughout the year.

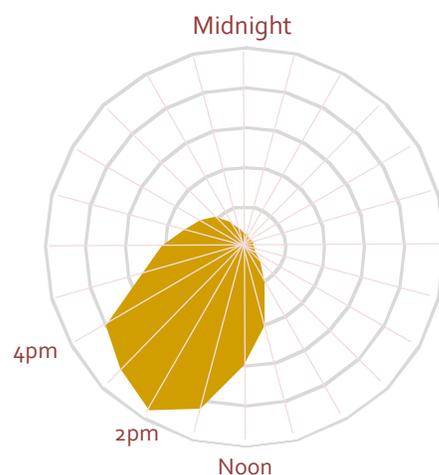
By Hour

Each type of fire occurs at different points in the day. The single largest cause of structure fires is cooking. This pushes structure fires to peak in the evenings, during dinner. The quietest time of day for structure fires is early morning, from 4am to 8am.

While vehicle fires aren't restricted to any particular month(s) like the others, they do mostly occur in the afternoon. Vehicle fires take a sharp increase right at 3pm, just as most schools are dismissing. There are fires during the 5pm rush hour, and then vehicle fires decrease for the night.

Vegetation fires, including rekindles, occur mainly in the afternoon. The heavy call load of vegetation fires, during Grass Fire Season, is worse by how condensed it is. Over 60% of vegetation fires occur between 12pm and 5pm, wearing down crews quickly. When vegetation fires die down, it's time for structure fires.

Vegetation Fires by Hour



	Other Fire	Outside Fire	Outside Trash Fire	Structure Fire	Vegetation Fire	Vehicle Fire
January	17	37	115	435	766	179
February	17	26	86	362	558	146
March	38	64	214	407	2,662	196
April	31	38	126	305	695	152
May	19	23	101	252	118	139
June	27	25	111	240	246	183
July	23	37	176	302	375	187
August	18	36	120	265	210	180
September	17	42	123	272	271	181
October	28	39	163	250	495	208
November	19	31	146	305	532	146
December	15	21	92	265	260	135

All reported fires in 2015

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				37	27	28
37	27	33	47	38	44	104
41	35	32	66	73	130	103
98	170	35	48	50	55	121
49	54	106	110	55	54	26

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
22	36	36	36	38	44	92
149	37	55	54	49	77	102
75	43	59	37	42	60	46
39	38	66	99	34	44	28

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
19	43	31	28	73	93	375
264	120	176	318	214	173	168
330	301	99	58	23	77	315
406	128	54	42	51	57	174
146	172	221				

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			109	60	83	121
60	51	83	45	47	145	123
59	33	57	40	35	32	34
24	29	49	46	51	26	21
20	43	37	44	59		

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					38	62
37	53	31	22	31	27	22
15	27	31	23	32	24	31
23	25	21	28	22	21	30
23	18	9	28	17	19	7
20						

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	21	20	17	28	28	26
31	38	31	40	27	31	14
19	24	22	21	24	30	34
30	45	48	52	49	41	49
42	58	66				

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			51	36	57	157
114	47	30	22	28	23	27
46	38	39	39	33	34	45
30	44	30	17	25	34	50
35	44	33	28	31	36	

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						45
36	31	35	28	27	28	34
24	24	27	31	38	26	52
33	35	24	26	47	34	22
60	38	29	23	33	35	27
23	27					

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		28	28	37	54	47
49	36	16	30	43	21	40
40	31	55	50	24	37	35
29	26	27	24	32	29	36
55	37	33	39			

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				49	37	33
38	25	28	28	43	32	31
44	83	71	75	70	47	60
93	153	89	50	38	28	30
54	46	39	22	37	35	30

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
41	46	24	27	39	53	75
60	65	63	224	80	70	89
48	23	20	21	34	40	26
52	69	70	34	31	24	31
26	23					

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		24	37	26	41	43
48	35	39	54	54	51	33
11	29	23	25	28	25	31
27	19	31	27	31	32	26
20	33	26	26	25		

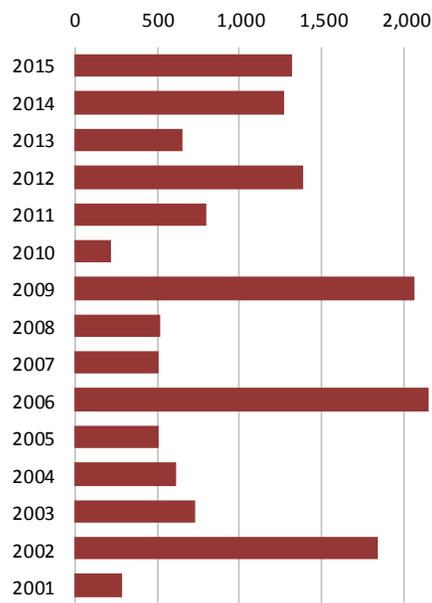
*Includes all types of fires but excludes "Aid Given" calls to avoid duplication.

How did 2015 go?

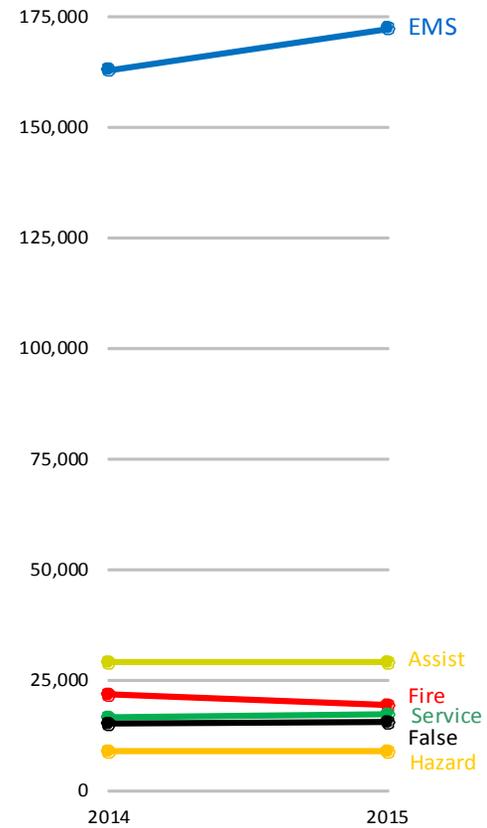
Dry Start

The New Year brought an almost-record dry start to the year in 2015. As a result, pre-Grass Fire Season fires kicked off early. Many of these fires started as controlled, planned fires. Dry conditions and warmer weather (60's) likely contributed to the fires' escapes.

Despite the dry start, 2015 did not have the most combined fires during January and February on record.

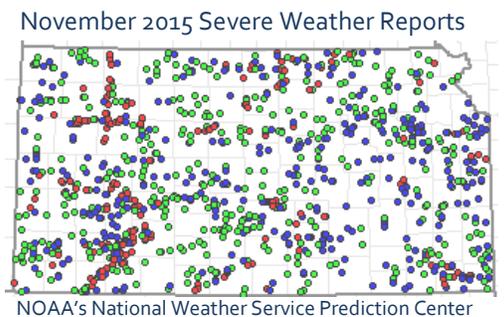


Fires may have dropped in general, but other call categories increased. EMS calls jumped by 9,372 reported calls. Assist calls, which include canceled en-route incidents, increased by 301. Service calls, which include assisting citizens in their homes or providing other non-emergency services, increased by 682 calls. False calls increased by 165. Hazardous Condition calls increased by 122 calls. Weather calls increased by 191 calls. Only Fire calls (-2,427) and Explosion calls (-54) dropped from 2014 to 2015.



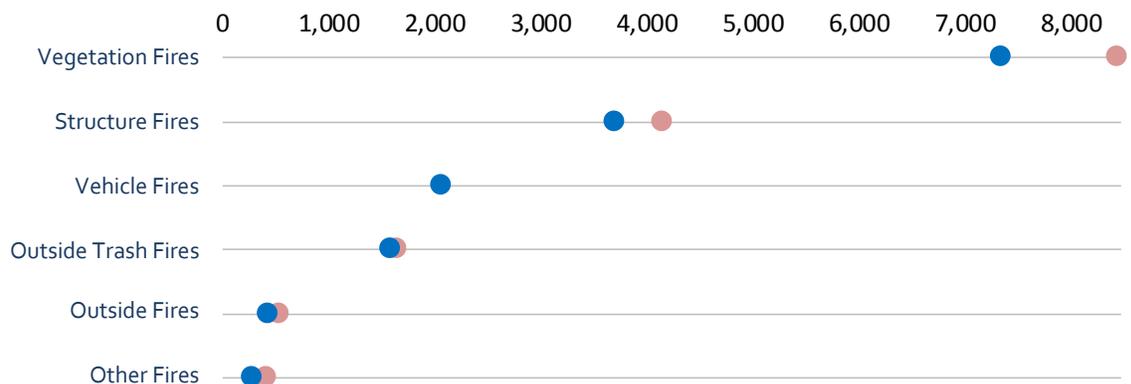
Weather

Kansas ranks 2nd in the Nation for average tornadoes a year with 92.4 avg tornadoes. Typically, May is the busiest month and November only sees 1.6 avg tornadoes. In 2015, Kansas saw its latest tornadoes of the year (red dots). In November of 2015, there were 21. Large hail locations are in green and wind damage reports are in blue.



By Type

Almost every type of fire dropped from 2014 to 2015. Vehicle fires are the only type of fire that stayed the same at 2,074 fires.



Difference in reported fires from 2014 to 2015

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				-19	-5	6
-13	-11	2	0	8	20	51
19	-19	-8	16	13	22	35
10	53	-44	-2	-25	21	22
-40	-157	21	14	-45	-19	-8

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-14	-4	-7	-14	3	19	65
101	16	25	19	12	41	47
21	11	-19	-55	-30	-11	-19
-90	-20	-1	42	-35	-40	-20

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-10	5	0	-6	32	40	210
155	-27	-80	40	72	-94	-47
-40	157	21	-29	-69	-98	120
144	-104	-18	-47	-98	-13	64
-251	-253	-142				

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			-47	-17	16	49
-114	-72	0	-44	-119	20	-141
-119	-24	12	-62	-84	-25	-56
-80	-37	-8	-45	-55	-7	-25
-37	-18	-1	16	33		

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					5	-9
-54	-70	-45	-53	-49	-16	-21
-58	-12	8	-12	-7	-26	-17
-31	-10	-31	-21	-6	-5	-2
3	-10	-4	2	-21	-18	-24
-11						

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	-32	-4	0	-4	2	5
5	15	9	10	-1	3	-25
-14	5	-17	-14	-5	-3	-6
-7	-7	18	24	13	4	19
17	33	18				

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			15	-13	-11	-5
-1	5	-35	-14	-19	-4	-9
-1	-4	-5	7	-7	9	10
2	3	-7	-19	-18	1	-15
-14	-3	-13	-22	10	-4	

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
-17	-4	-24	-9	-17	6	9
-9	7	-5	-14	3	-4	8
2	-3	-22	4	4	-3	-14
-1	-3	-7	-22	7	-11	6
-16	-28					

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		0	3	4	15	19
21	-2	-12	-17	16	-7	19
-4	-14	19	16	-9	4	8
0	1	-6	-15	6	-8	-1
13	4	-7	-5			

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				14	14	9
5	-17	-4	-6	12	5	13
22	31	43	37	14	10	23
45	74	29	24	-4	9	9
12	-6	3	-11	4	-12	-8

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-15	-16	-6	1	5	17	4
9	14	-8	115	-1	24	35
0	-7	-9	-22	-3	-13	-17
23	40	32	1	-3	-24	-25
-49	-19					

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		-28	-32	-19	3	10
30	8	16	32	25	18	-1
-19	9	0	-4	-1	5	13
3	5	7	3	10	-11	-6
-6	0	-19	-6	-13		

*Includes all types of fires but excludes "Aid Given" calls to avoid duplication.

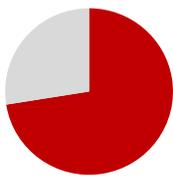


Protect Your Stuff

Human activity causes the overwhelming majority of fires. Here's what 15 years of reported home fires tells us about how we can do better.

It starts at home

Residential fires have accounted for 71-76% of structure fires the last 15 years. In 2015, 72% of structure fires were **residential fires**.



Smoking

We can avoid smoking-related fires through proper disposal methods. Use a real ash tray instead of potted plants or mulch. Be attentive to current weather and humidity conditions to avoid starting a grass fire. When inside, avoid smoking in bed.

Working Inside

Cooking may be the top fire cause, but equipment fires are #2. Equipment fires are started by appliances and electronics inside our homes. Clothes dryers are the second most common appliance involved in starting structure fires. Maintaining and cleaning clothes dryers will keep them in good working condition.

Water heaters are the third most common appliance involved in starting a fire. Test the relief valve, and watch for water often running out of the valve (when not testing). This could be a sign of pressure problems. Improper installation is a large cause of water heater fires. Leave installations to the pros.

Protect structures with simple measures. Give hot equipment space, unplug equipment, and stop using recalled products. Every outlet and switch needs a cover to keep from exposing wires. Stop using any appliance/electronic or outlet that

repeatedly trips a fuse. When in doubt, stop use and get it checked by an electrician.

From Outside In

Reducing combustible materials near a house is the easiest step to stop outside fires from coming in. Clean gutters and keep trees/branches trimmed back from the house. These steps can keep the fire from moving up the fire ladder (growing over/up).

Trash fires peak around July 4th, caused by tossing fireworks into trash cans. Soak fireworks and let them sit.

On our way

Kansas is already on the way to reducing structure fires. There was an almost 12% decrease in 2015 alone. To see another decrease, spread the word that Fire is Everyone's Fight.



Difference in reported structure fires 2014 to 2015

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				-8	-6	0
-2	-14	2	-6	0	7	4
3	-1	-2	4	-2	7	-3
0	8	-4	5	-2	-7	0
-2	-8	-9	-5	-13	-6	-1

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-6	6	-1	-9	-3	-4	8
17	-1	-1	3	-3	-2	11
5	9	0	-8	-2	0	-2
2	2	0	6	-16	-4	-7

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
0	-1	3	-2	2	-6	9
0	-5	-5	-1	9	-6	0
-3	21	-1	8	2	-10	-6
-2	-15	3	-2	-9	-9	-2
2	-16	-18				

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			3	-5	3	9
-1	2	0	-12	-8	-8	-7
-7	-7	-1	-5	-9	2	4
-8	-17	4	1	1	-5	-2
-2	-2	-4	-2	8		

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	4
-6	-4	-12	-5	-4	2	-4
-12	5	4	-4	4	-10	1
3	1	-5	1	1	2	5
-2	3	3	3	-5	-8	-9
-1						

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	-5	3	3	-1	4	2
4	-1	1	4	-5	-2	-10
-2	0	-8	-3	3	-1	2
-3	-9	2	-2	7	4	3
0	1	1				

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			-4	-9	-6	-7
-1	9	-7	-4	-3	1	-1
-2	-4	-3	5	4	-3	4
0	5	-4	2	-5	4	6
-3	2	4	-8	5	-4	

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						-2
-1	-5	-2	-3	-1	4	9
1	5	-5	-1	5	-1	7
3	-3	-6	6	-1	1	-2
8	-1	4	-9	1	-6	1
-3	-7					

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		-1	-7	-6	7	4
0	-2	-5	6	4	-4	11
1	-3	-6	1	-4	4	-3
-4	-3	-5	-1	5	1	-5
10	4	-5	-1			

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				4	-1	-3
-3	-9	-2	0	-3	-1	4
2	9	5	4	-2	2	2
6	7	5	1	-4	-2	-3
-1	-2	-6	-7	-4	-3	-4

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-7	-10	-3	-3	1	-2	-1
3	-1	-2	-3	-14	-8	3
-1	-8	-5	-4	-3	-4	-7
9	0	2	0	8	-14	-7
1	-3					

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		-7	-14	-3	-1	-3
2	0	8	-1	0	1	-3
-9	4	-1	-6	-2	-3	-1
-2	1	1	-5	-5	-1	-1
-6	5	1	-4	-6		

*Includes only structure fires and excludes "Aid Given" calls to avoid duplication.

Children at Home

Homes with children have certain fire risks

Parents and caregivers should be aware of concentrated fire risks.

Kids in the Kitchen

Young children and hot kitchens make for a bad combination.

Distractions pose a hazard when the stove is on or cooking is happening. Not only is there a risk for fires, but children underfoot often cause dropped or spilled hot items. Spilling hot items is the number one cause of reported burns to children in Kansas. It's best to keep the kitchen a "kid-free zone," which will protect them from several dangers.

As children age, helping out in the kitchen can be a great educational and bonding experience. It's important to watch when cooking. Unattended children cooking caused 98 fires in 2015. Since 2001, 1,639 cooking fires started with unattended children, resulting in 93 injuries.

Spills are also inevitable with children. Every outlet in the kitchen should be a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet. In 2015, arcing kitchen outlets caused 31 home fires. This is down from 38 in 2014. Each year, they decrease, as more kitchens have GFCI outlets.

Alarmed Bedrooms

Smoke alarms in every bedroom ensure a family sleeps close enough to hear an alarm. Interconnected smoke alarms provide even greater protection. Some research indicates children do not wake up to the sound of a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms are still essential for their bedrooms. Bedrooms are the most common place where children take an ignition source to play.

Candles are also popular for older children. Bedrooms have been the most common area of origin for candle-related fires for more than 15 years running. Working smoke

alarms in every bedroom will alert parents to a fire in the child's bedroom. A parent can receive an alarm in a different bedroom or even floor with interconnected alarms.

Electronics

Childhood seems to come with more and more electronics. Consumers can easily subscribe to product recalls with the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Notifications deliver safety information that consumers can act upon. Avoid using recalled products and follow recall instructions for refunds.

Avoiding a circuit overload can also reduce fires from failed equipment as well. Overloaded receptacles caused 22 fires last year. A multi-strip often has room for more products than a circuit should power. Double check that the circuit can handle the electronics plugged in.



Hear the
BEEP
where you
SLEEP



**EVERY BEDROOM
NEEDS A WORKING
SMOKE ALARM.**

**FIRE PREVENTION WEEK
OCTOBER 4-10, 2015**

firepreventionweek.org

Sparky® is a trademark of NFPA.



Talking Points for Fire Safety

Working smoke alarms are one step in Fire Safety. A practiced home fire escape plan will teach children what to do in the event of a fire.

Be Rabbit Ready

Walk through the house with your child and help them find two ways out of every room.

Calm the fear

Explain to children that they should never hide in closets and that firefighters are there to help. If possible, let your child see a firefighter in full gear. Explain that firefighters are helpers and children shouldn't hide from them during a fire.

Have a spot

Set a designated meeting spot that is easy to find like a mailbox, driveway, or neighbor's house.

Get low and go

Practice crawling on hands and knees.

Shut the door

Give children a backup plan. Teach them to shut the door if they can't get out. Stuff blankets and clothing around the door. Both help stop the spread of the fire, giving you precious minutes.

Practice in the Dark

Fire doesn't look like the movies or television shows. It can be totally blacked out from smoke. Even a fire during the day can create conditions dark enough that residents cannot see. Practice a home fire escape drill in the dark, too. All home fire escape drills should aim for residents to be out of the house in 2 minutes. Today's modern homes with modern furnishings create deadly fire environments in just a few minutes.

Apartment Life

Less fires, more concentrated causes



Apartment, or multi-family dwellings, bring their own twist to residential fires. When viewed on their own, the patterns are clear.

Cooking

Multi-family dwellings account for 19.4% of residential structure fires. They count for a statistically higher 32.6% of cooking fires. A full 55% of multi-family dwelling fires are cooking related: one in two fires.

Taking steps to avoid cooking fires would drastically reduce the number of overall fires.

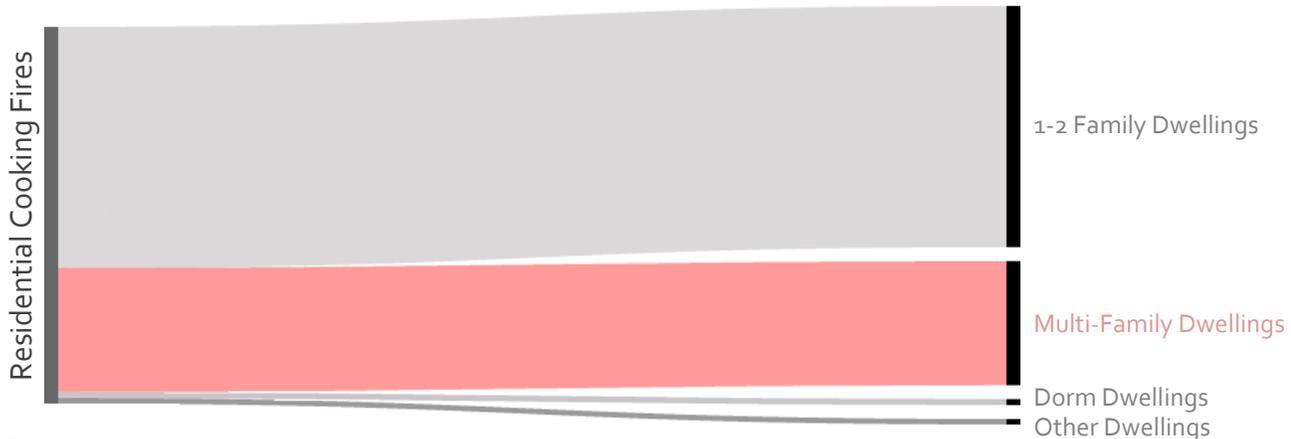
Automatic suppression units could save owners money in the long run. 2015 Cooking fires caused a reported loss of \$1,656,086*. Over \$1.3 million of the reported loss was in damages to the structure. More than 90% of the fires resulted in at least \$500 in damages.

Bedrooms

Bedrooms are the second most common room where a fire starts in multi-family dwellings.

Bedrooms are the top area of origin for arson-related fires and candle fires in multi-family dwellings. The candle fires were not associated with power outages. Likely the candles were used for ambiance. Proper placement of candles and other equipment will protect residents and structures from fires. Every bedroom should have a working smoke alarm for safety. In 65% of bedroom fires, there were no working smoke alarms in the unit.

*Reporting monetary loss on incident reports is voluntary. Only 51% of incidents included information on monetary loss from fire damage.





POTTED PLANTS ARE NOT ASH TRAYS.

Potting soil ingredients:

- Coir fiber (coconut byproduct)
- Peat moss
- Composted pine bark

Flammable potting soil ingredients:

- All of the above.

Smoking

Balconies/porches are the top area of origin for smoking fires. Multi-family dwellings have a larger problem with 37% of smoking fires happening on the balcony/porch. Often, this is caused by smoking materials discarded into potted plants or mulch. Both are flammable and cause smoldering fires.

Non-smokers are less likely to have a dedicated ash tray in their homes. Smokers visiting friends may not have an appropriate disposal method. These visitors may resort to disposal into a plant on the balcony.

Utilities

Pinterest users are likely familiar with crafts using dryer lint to create fire starters for camping. Dryer lint is extremely flammable. Failure to clean the dryer, especially of lint, is a leading reason a clothes dryer catches fire. Communal use can lead to cleaner clothes dryers. Multi-family dwellings have fewer clothes dryer fires than houses; they account for just 11% of clothes dryer fires in residences.

Fifty percent of water heater fires in residences occurred in multi-family dwellings. Often the water heater is in a dedicated utility room without a smoke alarm. Regular maintenance, inspection, and heat/smoke alarms could reduce the number of fires.

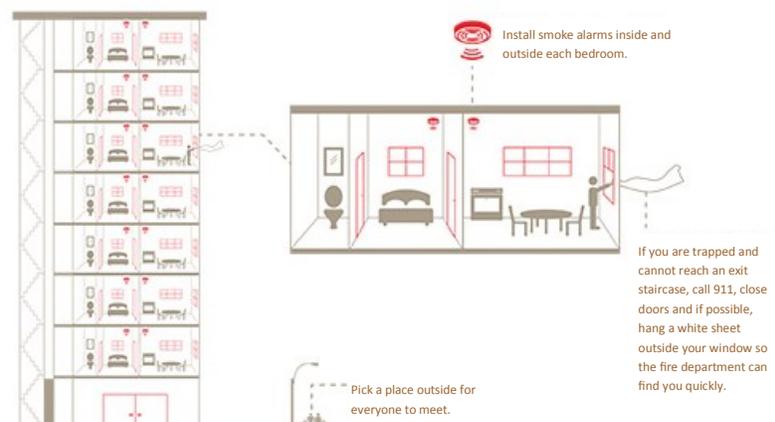
Lawful Duty

It is the legal duty of the landlord to provide working smoke alarms in all rental properties. There may be further responsibilities based on local jurisdiction and the rental agreement. Owners and tenants must understand the roles for testing and maintaining smoke alarms. Residents should input a degree of personal responsibility towards checking smoke alarms.

Multi-Story

Almost 40% of fires in multi-family dwellings occurred above the ground floor. It is imperative residents have established and practiced an escape plan with multiple exits. This is especially important for families with children.

Mapping Out Your Escape Plan: High-Rise Apartment Complex



Source: American Red Cross

One in Three



One in three home fires in Kansas is cooking-related. When one single cause accounts for so many fires it's a big problem. Most of these fires are completely preventable. There are three main causes for cooking fires.

Physical State

Alcohol, drugs, and sleepiness cause cooking fires all year round. A timer is no good if someone is incapable of responding to the alarm. Impairments and sleeping were involved in 28% of fatal cooking fires the last 15 years.

Engineering is bringing residents more prevention tools. Affordable automatic extinguishing devices can stick to vents above stovetops using magnets. These small, can shaped products work to put out a fire without human intervention. They can be purchased for under \$50 and leave no damage from installation.

Distractions

Distraction plays a key role in cooking fires. Most occur during dinner time. Families are getting home, settling in, starting dinner, changing clothes, or doing homework. Laundry needs to start. The dogs need to go outside. A phone call comes in. Paper towels or pot holders are set too close to burners. Kids get underfoot, causing a spill. A timer never gets set. The food starts burning. The oil ignites.

Avoiding distractions can be difficult. When cooking, it must be our priority. We deserve to focus on one task when it involves the lives and safety of our families and homes. Stay in the kitchen or within sight, and use timers. Other tasks will just have to wait until after cooking. Having someone watching the kitchen could prevent almost 40% of cooking fires in Kansas.

Environment

The layout of a kitchen itself can lead to problems. Cramped counter space puts ignitable materials close to stove tops. Grease or food buildup make kitchens even more flammable. If that's not enough, outlets and kitchen appliances can malfunction to cause fires, too. Mindful setup of objects near the stove could prevent up to 30% of cooking fires in Kansas. Cleaning the stovetop could prevent another 7%.

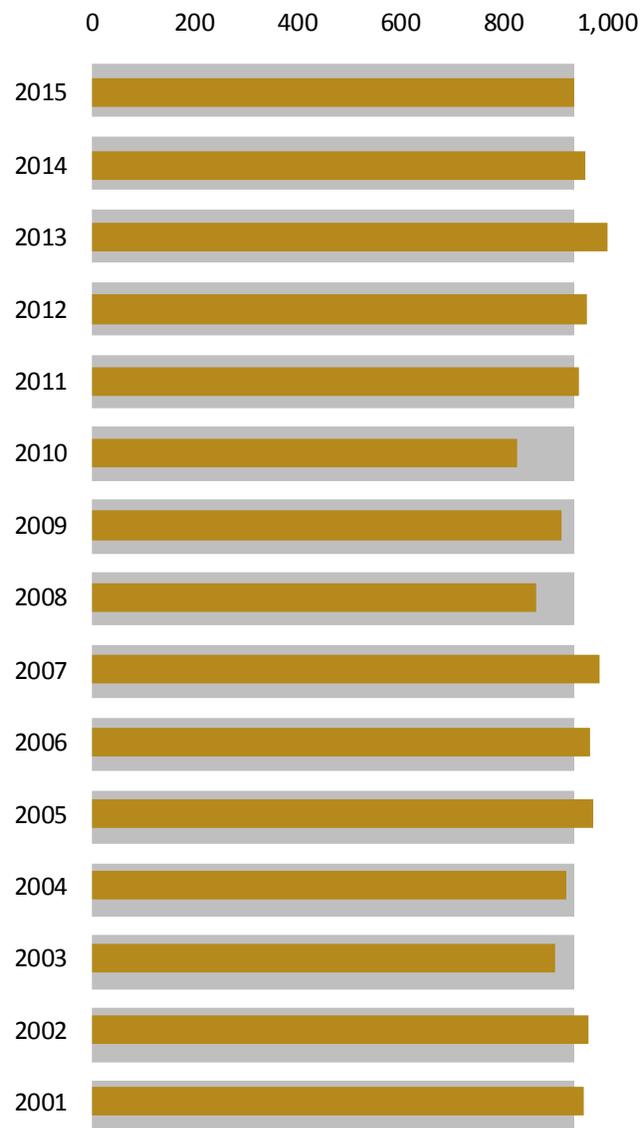
Roughly 4% of cooking fires involve electrical problems. All outlets should be GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupters). Any outlets near water should be GFCI outlets.

Be present.

Kansas could see 40% fewer cooking fires just by citizens staying in the kitchen while cooking.



The number of **cooking fires** in Kansas homes hasn't moved far from the 15 year average over the years.



The injury aspect

Aside from being the largest single cause of house fires, it's also one of the most dangerous. Injuries often occur during cooking-related fires. Some are minor burns from switching off a burner. Some are not minor and even cause death.

The good news is that injuries can be avoided. Even in the presence of fire, some precautionary steps can protect residents. Pan/pot lids can smother a flare up on the stove top. Baking soda can suppress a fire, as well. Never use water on a cooking fire. Never attempt to move a burning item, especially not to the sink or trash. Fire extinguishers are handy, but kitchen fires require a certain kind (ABC Combo or Class K). Operating a fire extinguisher on a kitchen fire improperly can also make the problem worse. A fire extinguisher can push the fire into a wall or cabinets.

Lastly, the size of a fire can quickly get out of hand. If the fire is getting large, just get out. Call the fire department. Be safe.

WILDFIRES

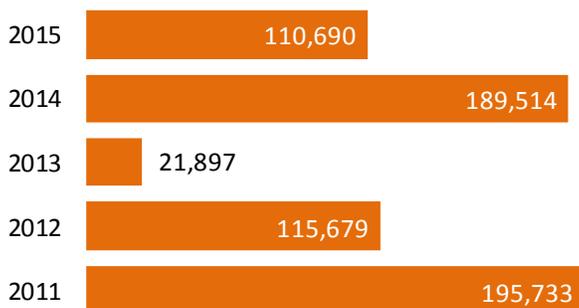
Yeah, we have those in Kansas.



Wildfires and Kansas aren't a well known combination. In reality, vegetation fires account for an average of 40% of fire calls in Kansas. During 2015, vegetation fires accounted for nearly 48% of all fires. A total of 7,188 vegetation fires occurred in 2015.

Across the land

Kansas vegetation fires are mostly small. In fact, 80% of vegetation fires in 2015 burned 10 acres or less. Fire departments reported a loss of 110,690 **burned acres** in 2015, a significant drop from 2014.



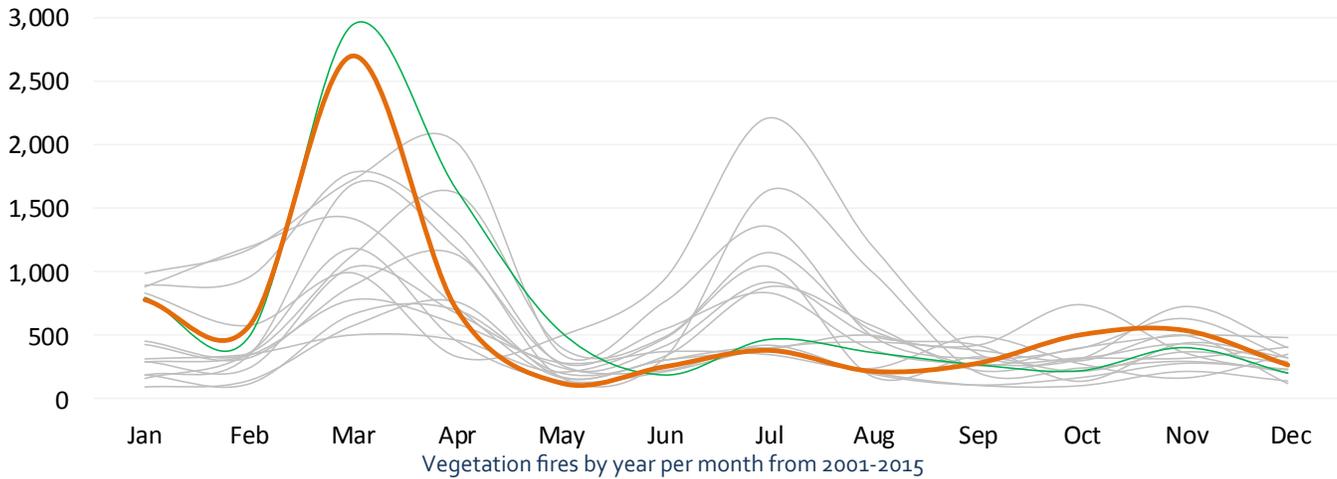
Human Intervention

Fire plays a key role for land owners, but it also spirals out of control. One in five vegetation fires are caused by a controlled burn (1,382 in 2015). Most of these occur during Spring, with 812 in March 2015 alone. The condensed call load relates to land owners/managers trying to finish controlled burns before green-up.

Environment

Much of the Grass Fire Season occurs before “green up.” The grass, vegetation, and air are dry, rains are low, and winds sweep the state. It’s the perfect mixture for pasture fires to flare out of control. Kansas is covered in 1-hr fuels. These are light plants: grasses, brushes, leaves. Even after rain, 1-hr fuels dry quickly if the air itself is dry. Low humidity is a determining factor in issuing Red Flag Warnings for a reason: its effect on fire.

Vegetation fires continued to spike in March during 2015, although not as high as 2014.



Equipment

Kansas has more than tornadoes. It is home to the windiest city in America. Those strong winds knock over power lines, sparking wildfires. If it's not the wind damaging electrical distribution, it's ice, low limbs, or vehicles that take down lines and start fires all year.

Other equipment in our lives brings wildfires. Hay processing equipment powers up and fuels crop fires, mainly during the summer months. The risk of equipment fires increases further into harvest, as the equipment gets dustier.

Cutting and welding accounted for 66 fires in 2015. Trends for cutting and welding are more sporadic. All involve an operator working on a project that resulted in sparks or heat igniting nearby vegetation. Even chainsaws join the fray. If the saw is missing a spark arrestor or is in poor maintenance it's a fire hazard. There are less chainsaw fires because of vegetation density.

Chainsaws aren't used for grass, and trees take longer to dry out. Underbrush, dried leaves, or even old sawdust in wood cutting areas catch fire before a standing tree will. This is likely why chainsaw fires aren't more common.

The Painful Truth

The overwhelming majority of wildfires in Kansas are caused by humans. Few are started from natural causes. Only about 3% of vegetation-related fires are attributed to fully natural causes.

Lightning on the plains is not the Hollywood-sized problem we think.

Poorly maintained vehicles/equipment start fires. Heat sources being used in a flammable place or unsafe manner start fires. Controlled fires get out of hand in bad weather or without plans.

The good news is that 53% of vegetation fires in Kansas burn less than one acre. This doesn't detract from the wear and tear on the Fire Service and its equipment. Even small fires come with a price tag: tired fire crews with increased stress and worn out equipment.

