

# Good news in home fire safety: deaths at lowest ever reported

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The number of people who died in home fires in the U.S. dropped an exceptional 14.1 percent last year compared to 2001, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

The NFPA found that 2,670 people died in home fires in 2002, the lowest number that NFPA has ever recorded.

The latest results continue a decades-long trend toward safer homes. The home fire death toll in 2002 was 54 percent lower than in 1977 when comparable statistics were first developed. The reduction is especially significant because home is where one is most likely to die in a fire: Four out of five fire deaths occur in the home.

The NFPA found that 1.69 million fires were reported to America's 30,000+ fire departments in 2002, a decrease of 2.7 percent from 2001. About half the fires occurred outside, 30 percent in structures and 20 percent in vehicles.

Among the structure fires, three out of four happened in homes. Home fires were also responsible for 79 percent of total civilian fire deaths. Overall, there were 3,380 civilian fire deaths in 2002, a decrease of 9.8 percent from the previous year, exclusive of fires connected to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Nationwide in 2002, a fire department responded to a fire every 19 seconds. □