

U.S. Fire Administration

NFIRS 5.0

Coding Questions

National Fire Incident Reporting System

April 2009



FEMA

NFIRS

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Fire
Incident
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System

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FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL FIRE DATA CENTER

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NFIRS 1: BASIC MODULE

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question: If a fire department is cancelled while en-route to an incident (Incident Type code 611), does the entire Basic Module have to be completed?

Answer: It is only necessary to complete the Basic Module up through Block G1.

Question: Should incident reports be generated for fire department training exercises?

Answer: Incident reports should not be submitted for training exercises unless there is a fire service casualty at the training exercise. The Fire Service Casualty Module is used to report all injuries, deaths, or exposures to fire service personnel even when they were not directly responding to an incident. In order to do this, however, you do need to create an EMS incident in the system and treat it as if the same department with the injuries responded to the EMS. The reason for this is that NFIRS is an incident based system and, without establishing an incident response, the injuries cannot be captured.

Question: A fire department sets up a temporary substation in a remote area because the area is cut off by a rockslide on the main road. It is staffed with apparatus on a full time basis for two months. Should this be a single incident?

Answer: This scenario should not be tracked as an incident.

Question: If a fire department provides mutual aid on a wildland fire and the fire lasts for seven days, but the department is called out each day and returns to quarters that same day, does the department need to complete an incident report for each day? It appears that the man hours would be greatly increased if they complete one report using the arrival date/time of the first day and the controlled date/time, when in actuality, they were not there the entire duration of the fire. They may have assisted for 10 hours each day, but were not on scene the entire time.

Answer: The department should complete one incident report and should not complete an incident report for each day. In the case cited, a department should rely on the Apparatus/Personnel module for an accurate account of the resources/hours used for the incident. The total amount of time (manpower) and resources spent on these long term fires could be documented since the Apparatus/Personnel module allows multiple entries per resource for the same incident. If the department does not use the Apparatus/Resource module, they will not be able to accurately account for the amount of resources and hours for these types of incidents.

Question: It was my understanding that only the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) needs be completed for small vegetation fires, but the Data Entry Tool requires the Fire Module for vegetation fires. Is the Fire Module required for these types of fires?

Answer: Yes, small vegetation fires require the Fire Module.

Question: Is there a method of capturing "number evacuated," whether mandatory or voluntary, in NFIRS?

Answer: Number evacuated can be captured in the Haz-Mat Module, in the narrative section, or through special studies (an option only when set up in advance).

Question: How should a call created in error from dispatch be coded? The calls have no address or unit to assign.

Answer: This is not a call and an incident report should not be generated.

Question: We were dispatched to a structure fire and found that two houses were actually burning. Because the addresses of the houses were different, should another incident number be created because the original fire did not start the second one?

Answer: If the "first" house fire did not cause the "second" house to ignite, then they should be coded as two separate incidents.

Question: A call was originally called in as a medical call and when we arrived on scene, we found that the person was having a medical problem. But, in the meantime, the person left food on the stove that caught on fire. We had to page out another truck to help with the fire.

Should this be reported as two incidents?

Answer: Yes, code those as different incidents. Use the narrative for the fire incident to explain what happened during the medical incident.

Question: Three volunteer fire departments were dispatched to a fire (these are small departments that are toned at the same time since they are all volunteer and to make sure they have enough coverage). The first fire department (Dept. #1) arrived and the fire was out of their normal area. The second department (Dept. #2) arrived and the fire was out of their normal area as well. The third department (Dept. #3) arrived and the fire was their area. Since Dept. #1 was first on scene and took control of the incident, are they considered the "main" department? I am assuming Dept. #1 should complete the incident report while Dept. #2 and #3 complete mutual aid reports.

Answer: No, it does not matter who arrived first. The fire occurred in Dept. #3's area. Therefore, Dept. #3 is the primary ("main") department and should complete the incident report while the other departments are providing mutual aid.

Question: A fire department apparatus was dispatched to a scene, worked at the scene, and was then released from the scene. With the incident still on going, the apparatus returned to the same incident at a later time (& possibly with a different crew). How should this be reported? It sounds similar to any large multi-day incident like brush fires out west.

Answer: The preferred option is to report this as one incident, and enter the initial date/time they were dispatched in the appropriate fields and then enter the final date and time they cleared in the appropriate clear date/time fields of the Basic Module and Apparatus and Personnel Module. If the same unit had a different crew, they should enter all of the crew members in the Apparatus and Personnel Module as well as the Basic Module.

The other option is to count this scenario as two different incidents. However, this option only works if the department assigns their own incident numbers, or their dispatch center assigns a new incident number to the second response and they are providing mutual/automatic aid to another department.

The situation is similar to wildfires out west but not exactly the same since those incidents are run with a base camp/base of operations that units tend to go back to during their "off" hours. Hence, they don't really leave the incident scene. These units typically code the incident

as one long incident (the preferred option discussed above) and enter the date/times they are dispatched and final date/time that they clear the scene.

Question: I had an EMT die yesterday while working for an ambulance company. The EMT was a member of the volunteer fire department, but was working as an EMT for the ambulance company that is separate from the fire department. Would this be considered a fire death and should a report be completed?

Answer: If the ambulance company is a third party provider with no FDID number, then he/she is not considered a fire death and no report should be completed. Only fire departments should be reporting their casualties (injuries and deaths) via NFIRS.

Question: How should a Methamphetamine lab fire in a single family home be reported?

Answer:

Basic Module

Incident Type = 111 (building fire)

Property Use = 419 (1 or 2 family dwelling)

Fire Module

On-Site Materials = 545 (illegal drugs)

On-Site Materials Use = 2 (processing or manufacturing)

Fire Suppression Factor = 222 (illegal and clandestine drug operation)

If, in addition to the above, you wanted to specifically capture that the on-site illegal drug was methamphetamine, you could create a state level 'plus one' code for code 545 (for example: 5451 Methamphetamine). The contents of the other critical cause and ignition fields would, of course, be dependent of the specifics of what happened in each individual fire.

EXPOSURES

Question: If a single hazardous materials incident involves more than one property (for example, gasoline in ground water seeps into the basement of three homes), how do you report the address/locations of each property? Would each of the properties be treated as exposures?

Answer: Exposure reporting is limited to fire incidents only. If it is necessary to record the address/location of each property, the Person/Entity Involved fields (Block K1 of the Basic Module or Supplemental Module) can be used.

Question: Heat from a fire resulted in the melting of aluminum sliding on an adjacent house. The adjacent house sustained major dollar loss. Is this an exposure? If so, what incident type code should be used?

Answer: The use of the exposure fire is limited to situations where there is actual flame damage. If the adjacent property is damaged due to water, heat, smoke, or fire control, include the damage in the main report (Exposure 000). The owner/occupant information can be captured on NFIRS Form 1S, Supplemental Report. Multiple person and entities involved can be documented on this report. The number of buildings involved should be documented in the Fire Module, Section B2.

Question: A vehicle catches fire on a parking ramp. Two other vehicles catch fire from the first vehicle. Are these two vehicles considered exposures fire or should you treat them as one, such as a fleet of cars?

Answer: This is a situation that calls for some judgment. If the cars on the ramp are in a general parking facility and they each have separate individual owners, treat each as a separate vehicle fire exposure. If, instead, a fleet of vehicles is involved and they all have the same corporate owner, then they may all be treated as a single incident. You may also have a situation where the cars are in a parking structure and the entire structure burns first. In that case, the cars should all be treated as contents of the structure.

Question: How or what number do I use for an exposure number in Section "A" of the Basic Module?

Answer: Exposure number should always be left as 000 unless you have a fire that spreads from one building, structure, property or vehicle to another building, structure, property or vehicle. When that happens, the primary incident would have an exposure number of 000, the first exposure would have an exposure number of 001, the second 002, etc. The exposure numbers should be sequential with no gaps or skipped numbers.

Question: A fire department responds to a vehicle fire on the highway and then had a couple of other fires down the road caused

by the same vehicle as it drove further down the highway. Are these exposures to the first fire, or separate fires/separate incidents?

Answer: The additional fires should be classified as exposure fires.

Question: A fire department had a fire in a junk yard/open area where there were six junk cars that were on fire. Should they be treated all as one fire (with no exposures) such as if the fire occurred in a dealership or a private residence where all the vehicles are owned by the same person/entity?

Answer: This should be treated as one fire, similar to a dealership fire where the vehicles are just contents.

Question: We had a fire death in a house and also had six cars burn in this fire. Do I treat these car fires as exposures?

Answer: The answer depends upon the location of the cars. If the cars were in a garage of the structure that burned, they would be considered "Contents" and not exposures. If the cars were outside, owned by the same person as the structure, you could use one exposure report for all cars. If the cars were outside, owned by different people, you would use separate exposures for each car/owner.

Question: Would the following scenario be two exposures and what Incident Type code(s) should be used? The location of the call is an Outbuilding or shed. The incident was determined to be a controlled burn that ignited the roof of a small barn. The fire had been extinguished by the landowner prior to fire department arrival.

Answer: An Incident Type code from the 140 or 150 series (outside fires) should be used with one exposure to document the shed fire for which Incident Type code 111—*Building Fire* should be used.

Question: We have a lawnmower fire which melted the vinyl siding on the house. We used Incident Type code 130—*Mobile property (vehicle) fire, other* and treated the damage to the house as an exposure with Incident Type code 251—*Excessive heat, overheat scorch burns with no ignition*. Is this correct?

Answer: It is recommended that you use Incident Type code 138—*Off-road vehicle or heavy equipment fire* for this lawnmower fire. Because the vinyl siding did not sustain actual flame damage, this

should not be treated as an exposure and, instead, be captured in the narrative section.

LOCATION TYPE

Question: A department responded to a reported motor vehicle accident at a specific location. After finding nothing at the location, the department continued on and finally found the accident at a different location. Should the location be reported as the initial address or the final address?

Answer: The location documented should be the location where the vehicle was found.

INCIDENT TYPE

Question: What Incident Type code should be used for a small single bush that burned outside, and which modules need to be completed?

Answer: Incident Type code 142—*Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire* should be used and completion of the Basic Module and the Fire Module is required. The “small vegetation fire” is not allowed to be reported without a complete fire report in version 5.0.

Question: If specialized fire apparatus such as a hazardous materials vehicle or a fire investigation support unit is purchased on a regional basis, but stored and staffed by a local fire department within that region, how does the department responding with the specialized unit report the incident type and actions taken?

Answer: The incident type would be reported as the situation to which they responded. The department responding with this special unit would be giving aid even though the fire department receiving the aid may be part of the region that purchased the equipment. The persons responding with the equipment would report the actions they took which might be to provide the apparatus (Action Taken code 74)

with someone else actually using the tools and equipment, or you may document other actions which involved using the apparatus.

Question: A fire department responds to a call for power lines down and, upon arrival, finds the wires are telephone or cable wires. What Incident Type code should be used?

Answer: The department reports based on what it finds, not what it is dispatched to. Therefore, this is a good intent call and Incident Type code 600—*Good intent call, other* should be used.

Question: Fire Department A is dispatched to standby at Fire Department B's station based on an automatic aid agreement. Fire Department B's incident turned out to be related to an alarm system malfunction. How should both departments code the incident?

Answer:

Fire Department A's incident:

Incident Type = 571 – (cover assignment)
Aid Given or received = 4 (automatic aid given)
Action Taken = 92 (standby)

Fire Department B's incident:

Incident Type = 735 (alarm system activation due to malfunction)
Aid Given or received = 2 (automatic aid received)
Action Taken = 86 (investigate)

Question: Under an automatic aid agreement, Fire Department A is dispatched to an out of town incident in Fire Department B's jurisdiction but was cancelled in route. The incident turned out to be related to an alarm system malfunction. How should both departments code the incident?

Answer:

Fire Department A's incident:

Incident Type = 611 (dispatched and cancelled en-route)
Aid Given or Received = 4 (automatic aid given)
Actions Taken = 93 (cancelled en route)

Fire Department B's incident:

Incident Type = 735 (alarm system activation due to malfunction)
Aid Given or Received = 2 (automatic aid received)
Action Taken = 86 (investigate)

Question: Should Incident Type code 621—*Wrong location* be used when we are unable to locate an incident scene?

Answer: Yes, use of Incident Type code 621 is appropriate.

Question: Can Incident Type code 300—*Rescue and EMS incident, other* be used for an incident where an EMS module will also be used?

Answer: No, validation rules will not allow it. Some 300 series Incident Type codes will not allow the EMS module to be used, such as 340 series. One solution is to select a specific EMS type incident rather than the generic 300 Incident Type code.

Question: An individual set fire to a paper towel in a department store and held it up to a sprinkler head. The sprinkler activated transmitting an alarm bringing the fire department. What Incident Type code should be used for this situation?

Answer: The incident type is not a fire (100 series) and the Incident Type code 710—*Malicious false call, other* should be used.

Question: As a result of recent anthrax incidents, our department has responded to numerous incidents for investigations of potential biohazards. How should these incidents be coded?

Answer: NFIRS 5.0 Incident Type codes include three codes intended to help departments code biohazard incidents more accurately. They are as follows:

Intentional Biohazard Incident

Code the incident as Incident Type code 451— *Biological hazard, confirmed or suspected*.

- The Hazardous Material Release block should be coded as 0 (*Other, special HazMat actions required*) and the HazMat module should be completed.
- On the HazMat module, code the Cause of Release as 1 (*Intentional*).
- Free-form enter the actual name of the biohazard agent in the Chemical Name field (ex. Anthrax) on the HazMat module.
- For Anthrax releases, code one of the Factors Affecting Mitigation as 21 (*Release of extremely dangerous agent*).

Unintentional Biohazard Incident

Same as above except code the Cause of Release as 2 (*Unintentional*).

Biohazard Reported But No Hazard Found

- For good intent calls, use Incident Type code 672— *Biological hazard investigation, none found*.
- For false Biohazard threats, use Incident Type code 751— *Biological hazard, malicious false report*.

Question: When a fire department is involved in some type of community service (parade patrol) and personnel/equipment are being used, what Incident Type code best reflects what they are doing?

Answer: The Incident Type code that bests reflects the activity in this case is 553—*Public service*. *Excludes service to governmental agencies (551 or 552)*.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report an apparatus that arrives at the scene but is cancelled before personnel exit the vehicle?

Answer: Use Incident Type code 611—*Dispatched and cancelled en route*. *Incident cleared or canceled prior to arrival of the responding unit. If a unit arrives on the scene, fill out the applicable code*.

Question: Should a trash fire in a structure that only burns the trash be coded as an Incident Type 118—*Trash or rubbish fire in a structure, with no flame damage to structure or its contents*?

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 118.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report an incident involving smoke from a chimney misidentified as a hostile fire? Incident Type code 653 seems too specific: *Smoke from barbecue or tar kettle (no hostile fire)*.

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 651—*Smoke scare, odor of smoke, not steam (652)*. *Excludes gas scares or odors of gas (671)*.

Question: Should a fire confined to a toaster, microwave oven, or conventional oven be coded as an Incident Type code 113 or as 111 or 121? Are these items considered cooking vessels or equipment involved?

Answer: Use Incident Type code 113—*Cooking fire involving the contents of a cooking vessel without fire extension beyond the vessel* and the equipment involved should be captured if the fire module is optionally completed.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report an accidental medical alarm?

Answer: The most appropriate Incident Type code in the case would be 740—*Unintentional transmission of alarm, other*. This incident type, however, was not specifically designed for this situation. Therefore, a fire department may want to consider using a plus one code to capture more specifics.

Question: A fire department was called to a pipe bomb in a mailbox incident. The department did not remove or disarm the explosive, but called the police. What Incident Type code should be used?

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 552—*Police matter. Includes incidents where FD is called to a scene that should be handled by the police*.

Question: An EMS service is not connected to Fire Department A. In the case of a motor vehicle accident with the Fire Department assisting the EMS, what should the Incident Type code be—a 311 or a 551 or is it 324 (EMS Incident)? For clarification—the EMS is sometimes called along with Fire Department A in case there are injuries.

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 311—*Medical assist. Includes incidents where medical assistance is provided to another group/ agency that has primary EMS responsibility. (Example, providing assistance to another agency-assisting EMS with moving a heavy patient.)* Incident Type 324 would be used if the department was responding in an EMS capacity.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report an incident where an electrical transformer (pole mounted or ground mounted) is burning?

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 112—*Fire in structure, other than in a building. Included are fires on or in piers, quays, or pilings: tunnels or underground connecting*

structures; bridges, trestles, or overhead elevated structures; transformers, power or utility vaults or equipment; fences; and tents.

Question: What is the difference between Incident Type codes 736 and 746? The clause “no carbon monoxide detected” in 746 is confusing. If none was detected, how does one know if it was a malfunction or unintentional?

Answer: Incident Type code 736 is a carbon monoxide detector activation caused by a malfunction of the detector. Incident Type code 746 is used when there is an accidental or manual activation of a detector that is not caused by a malfunctioning detector.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used for a mulch fire?

Answer: The appropriate Incident Type code in this case would be 160—*Special outside fire, other*.

Question: Someone threw fireworks into a house that self extinguished and, as a result, the fire department had only light smoke to deal with. There were four to five burn marks on the floor of the kitchen. On the investigation end, this will be considered arson. But what Incident Type code should be used?

Answer: This should be coded as a non-fire. Specifically, Incident Type code 481—*Attempt to burn* should be used.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report a fire that started in a sofa and stayed contained to that sofa?

Answer: If the sofa was inside the house, Incident Type code 111—*Structure Fire* should be used.

Question: A captain responded to a call for an alarm at the hospital and reported that it was a faulty smoke detector that malfunctioned and caused the alarm. He returned all responding units to service prior to arrival. The captain recorded the Incident Type code as 733—*Smoke detector activation due to malfunction*. He also reported the Primary Action Taken as 93—*Cancelled en route*. Is this correct?

Answer: In your example, the Captain arrived on the scene. So, that means there has to be some sort of “Incident Type” and the use of Incident Type code 733 is correct. In addition, it was determined

that the detector was “faulty.” Therefore, use of Actions Taken code 86—*Investigate* should be used.

Question: When responding to a residential grass/lawn fire, the grass burned. There was plastic sheeting underneath, small landscape concrete borders, and decorative fencing that sustained damage and will need to be replaced. Operations personnel coded this as an Incident Type code 143—*Grass fire* and attributed a dollar value and loss. Is this correct?

Answer: Use of Incident Type code 143 is appropriate. Since property was damaged, adding a dollar loss value is also appropriate.

Question: A fire department had a fire in a junk yard/open area where there were six junk cars that were on fire. What Incident Type code should be used to report this?

Answer: Use Incident Type codes 160 or 151, depending on whether or not the owner of the junkyard is selling parts from the junk cars. If he is, Incident Type code 161—*Outside storage fire on residential or commercial/industrial property, not rubbish* would be appropriate. If he is not, Incident Type code 151—*Outside rubbish, trash, or waste fire not included in 152-155* would be appropriate.

Question: Is there a definition of “extrication” to distinguish it from victim removal from a motor vehicle accident? If a department arrives on the scene of a vehicle accident and special equipment is not needed to remove the patient, would Incident Type code 322 or 352 be appropriate?

Answer: The removal of a victim by mechanical means is by definition extrication. If a department arrives on scene to find a Motor Vehicle Collision where the patients may be removed from the vehicle without the use of cutting or spreading tools, then Incident Type code 322—*Motor vehicle accident with injuries. Includes collision with other vehicle, fixed objects, or loss of control resulting in leaving the roadway* should be used. If they arrive and find that they must use specialized rescue tools to gain access to or remove the patient from the vehicle, then Incident Type code 352—*Extrication of victim(s) from vehicle. Includes rescues from vehicles hanging off a bridge or cliff* should be used.

Question: If you respond to pull stations at a facility where the occupants do not understand what they are doing, what Incident Type code should be used?

Answer: Incident Type code 745—*Alarm System Activation (no fire), unintentional* should be used if the occupant that activated the system was not aware of what he/she was doing (such as in an adult daycare facility). It could then be noted more specifically in the narrative for local records.

Question: Personnel respond to a medical call and find two patients with carbon monoxide poisoning. Should a medical Incident Type code in the 300 series or Incident Type code 424—*Carbon monoxide incident* be used?

Answer: Incident type is always what the units find upon arrival. If you are dispatched to a sick person call but, upon arrival, find out that it is due to carbon monoxide poisoning, the Incident Type code should be 424—*Carbon monoxide incident*.

Question: We have a contracted ambulance service in our city. Many times, we have dispatched incidents where the Fire Department arrives on-scene but are waived off by the ambulance service. Would it be appropriate to use Incident Type code 661—*EMS call, party transported by non-fire agency* for these types of calls even if we are unsure if the patient was transported?

Answer: Incident Type codes 661 or 311—*Medical assist* would be acceptable, depending on what the fire personnel do upon arrival.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report a deck fire attached to the back of the house with no extension or damage to the house?

Answer: Use Incident Type code 111—*Building fire*.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report a hot tub fire in the back yard? The tub has a gazebo around it, which did not burn (only the tub burned).

Answer: If the gazebo was not involved, Incident Type code 162—*Outside Equipment Fire* should be used.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report an incident where an occupant was using the self-cleaning function of their oven that caused only a small fire in the oven? There was only smoke when the fire department arrived.

Answer: Incident Type code 113—*Cooking fire involving the contents of a cooking vessel without fire extension beyond the cooking vessel.*

Question: If we respond to a mutual aid structure fire, do we use Incident Type code 111—*Building Fire* or 571—*Fill-in, Cover assignment, Stand-by*? This is non-automatic.

Answer: If you responded to the incident and it was a building fire, Incident Type code 111 would be appropriate. You would then select “Mutual Aid Given” and enter their department information as required. Only if you moved-up (transferred) to their station would you use Incident Type code 571.

Question: What Incident Type code should be used to report a response to a group home where they pulled the alarm due to the smell of something burning? The investigation determined that a piece of plastic had fallen onto the heating element in the dishwasher. There was no fire, just melting.

Answer: Use either Incident Type code 400—*Hazardous condition (no fire), other* or 251—*Excessive heat, overheat scorch burns with no ignition.*

Question: A fire department had a fire at a gas station that was as a result of someone pulling away from the gas pump on the island with the nozzle still in the car. The free flowing gasoline then ignited. Should Incident Type code 112—*Fire in structure, not a building* be used because it occurred at the pump on the island? Or should Incident Type code 160—*Special outside fire* be used?

Answer: A better choice than Incident Type 160 would be Incident Type 162—*Outside equipment fire. This includes outside trash compactors, outside HVAC units, and irrigation pumps. It excludes special structures (110 series) and mobile construction equipment (130 series).* While Incident Type code 112 also fits, we believe Incident Type 162 is a more accurate description of the incident.

Question: Under a mutual aid agreement, we responded with a fire investigator and an accelerant K9 to investigate a fire in another jurisdiction giving mutual aid after a fire incident. Should Incident Type code 551—*assist police or other governmental agency* be used?

Answer: While NFIRS is an all hazards reporting program, it was not intended to capture this type of activity, especially given the fact that a fire investigator typically completes their own separate incident/investigative/criminal report utilizing a separate reporting system. Having said that, if you insist upon capturing this type of response, use of Incident Type code 551 would be appropriate. Further direction on reporting this type of activity within your State can be obtained by contacting your State NFIRS Program Manager.

Question: NFIRS requires us to report firefighter casualties that are not connected with an incident by creating an EMS incident report and filling out the firefighter casualty module. What is the correct Incident Type code to use?

Answer: If a firefighter is injured on an incident, then the incident type is always going to be the incident type of the original incident. However, if a firefighter is injured in the station performing PT, while doing apparatus checks or station maintenance or while in training, then the incident type code selected should be 321—*EMS call* since his/her injury should necessitate (at a minimum) the evaluation of and possibly the treatment of the injury and possible transport. Even if the firefighter is not transported to the hospital or outpatient clinic for further evaluation, the incident type code should still be 321.

AID GIVEN OR RECEIVED

Question: The only fire apparatus from Fire Department A is responding to an incident when it is involved in an accident. Fire Department B is then dispatched to the incident Fire Department A was originally responding to and also sends a fire apparatus to the scene of the accident. How would both Fire Departments code their responses?

Answer: Fire Department A would be responsible for the report on the original incident they were responding to as it is in their responsible area whether they arrived or not. The Incident Type would show what the incident was and the fact they “received aid.” The actual data might be collected by Department B which handled the incident. Department A would also report an incident with an incident type of “canceled in route” to cover the accident. This report would also show “aid received” from Fire Dept. B.

Fire Department B would complete two incident reports. Fire department B would complete one for the original incident, and one for the apparatus accident. They would report "Aid Given" for each incident.

Question: If the FDID number of the receiving fire department on an "Aid Given" response is not a required field, why is a warning error created if it is left blank?

Answer: The warning is created to remind fire departments to get the data if they can. When the information is not available, the field may be left blank. There are a number of reasons why the field might have to be left blank. These include:

1. The fire department giving the aid did not know the FDID of the receiving department and could not get it for some reason.
2. The fire department receiving the aid did not have an FDID because it does not participate in NFIRS or, it is in a state that has not assigned FDIDs to its fire departments.

Question: If an incident involved a fire department giving aid to a private ambulance service or police department, should that be reported as "Aid Given" in Block D of the Basic Module?

Answer: No. The intent of reporting "Aid Given" is to report aid given to other fire departments or to geographic areas where there is an agreement for coverage (coded as "other aid given"). Aid to a private ambulance should most likely be coded as an Incident Type code 311—*Medical assist* with the appropriate actions taken. The assistance to the police should most likely be coded as Incident Type code 551—*Assist police or other governmental agency* or 552—*Police matter*, again, with the appropriate actions taken.

Question: We have a number of jurisdictions that have contracted with other fire departments or districts to provide fire protection services. The problem we are having is identifying where the incidents actually took place. An example of this would be: Westport Fire District #1 provides fire protection services to the City of Westport. The fire district is also submitting NFIRS 5.0 data for both jurisdictions. What FDID number should be used in this instance? Is it possible to issue FDID numbers with a +1 code, or letter delineator that would identify "contract departments," or is it required that the contracted agency enter data using the contractor's FDID?

Answer: You cannot assign a plus one code to a FDID. NFIRS 5.0 includes a "station" field, which can be used locally to distinguish between the different stations that share a common FDID. Assign a unique station ID for each of these contract departments. That way,

when you see the incident report you can tell who did what by looking at the station number, even though one is reporting for both jurisdictions and they all have the same FDID. So, essentially you would be treating them as "stations" of the same fire department (for reporting purposes only).

Question: How are the mutual aids given and/or received tracked if the FDID number or Incident Number is not a required field for the department receiving the mutual aid? Shouldn't it be required that the department receiving the mutual aid get the FDID number and Incident number of the department giving them the aid? Is the incident counted twice?

Answer: It is not required because there are some cases where it may be very difficult for the department to obtain the information. An example of that might be if the Aid Given was to a non-NFIRS department without an assigned FDID in the system. The NFIRS on-line reports do not count the Aid Given incidents, only the Aid Received incidents. The Fire Service casualties and resources are all that are picked up and used from the Aid Given reports. Resources are only picked up when the receiving department did not check the "check box if resource counts include aid received resources" box.

Question: A department (Dept A) gives mutual aid to another department (Dept B) by standing by in the receiving department's firehouse. While standing by, the receiving department (Dept B) gets a call. As a result, the giving department (Dept A) becomes the receiving department and must document everything regarding the incident to which they responded. How do they document resources?

Answer: The "giving" department (Dept A) who is filling in for the department who "received" the call (Dept B) should fill out the incident report using the "receiving" department's (Dept B) FDID and incident number and the information on the personnel of the "giving" department (Dept A) should be in the report.

Question: If a fire department is on their own call and they are paged for mutual aid and cannot (do not) respond, what type of report they do?

Answer: If the department does not respond to a request for mutual aide, then there is no call for which to complete a report.

Question: If Fire Department A provides mutual aid to Fire Department B for a building fire, would Fire Department A report an

Incident Type code 111—*Building Fire* or 571—*Cover assignment, standby, move up*?

Answer: Fire Department A would report Incident Type code 111 and show through the selection of Mutual Aid Given on Fire Department A's report that they provided aid. On their report, Fire Department B would indicate Mutual Aid received to show that they received assistance from another jurisdiction.

DATES AND TIMES

Question: If an incident does not have an arrival time or a controlled time, what should be reported?

Answer: If the unit is cancelled en-route, then the Arrival Time should be set to the time that the unit, or fire department, cleared. Also, in the Apparatus/Personnel Module, the arrival time for an individual unit would be the same as the cleared time if they were cancelled en-route. This is typical when the first unit arrives at the scene and can handle the situation without the need for the additional units which are cancelled en-route.

Question: I have a fire department that is using the landline call for Alarm Time instead of the actual toned time. Is this correct?

Answer: Alarm Time is the time the actual units are alerted that they have a call. If the department uses an Emergency Communications Center (ECC) to triage calls and dispatch units, the Alarm Time is the time that the ECC alerts the individual units that they have a call. If the department receives the phone call directly from the public in their station, then this is the Alarm Time. In other words, Alarm Time is the time that the fire department units are notified that they are needed.

Question: The specifications say that the fields Incident Controlled Date & Time are required if a Wildland Module is completed. Are the controlled date and time still needed if a Fire Module is completed instead of a Wildland Module?

Answer: Controlled Date/Time is only required for the Wildland Module. These are not required fields for the Fire Module.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Question: A fire department responds to a motor vehicle accident with reported injuries. Upon arrival, department personnel evaluate each victim and find no injuries. What Incident Type and Actions Taken codes should be used?

Answer: Depending on the situation, Incident Type code 463—*Vehicle accident, general cleanup* or 600—*Good intent call, other* should be used. The Actions Taken codes used could include 31—*Provide first aid and check for injuries*, 45—*Remove hazard* or 86—*Investigate*.

Question: What is a good definition of the Actions Taken code 92—*Standby*? Could this be used for personnel waiting in a staging area?

Answer: This is any time department personnel have been dispatched but, instead of responding, are standing by for deployment. Yes, it can be used for personnel waiting in a staging area.

Question: What would be an appropriate Actions Taken code for removing debris from an auto accident such as broken glass or car parts?

Answer: For Incident Type code 463—*Vehicle accident, general cleanup*, the most appropriate Actions Taken code is 50—*Fires, rescues, and hazardous conditions, other*. You could also Actions Taken code 73—*Provide manpower* or 70—*Assistance, other*. Regardless of which Actions Taken code you use, we suggest that you consistently use the same actions taken code with this incident type. That way, it will have some meaning to you in your analysis of incident data.

ESTIMATED DOLLAR LOSSES AND VALUES

Question: Should a fire department add in extraneous costs for dollar loss figures in non-fire incidents? For example, in a tanker roll over, should the clean up costs be included?

Answer: Dollar loss should be collected for fire incidents (100 series) only. Dollar loss is an estimate of the total property and contents dollar loss and the pre-incident value of the property and contents and is a rough estimation of the total loss to the structure and contents, in terms of the cost of replacement in like kind and quantity. This estimation of the fire loss includes contents damaged by fire, smoke, water, and overhaul. This does not include indirect loss, such as business interruption. Including the cost of hazardous material removal in dollar loss is not an appropriate use of the fields.

CASUALTIES

Question: Should the firefighter casualty count on the Basic Module, Block H1, include only firefighters injured during fires? The definition in handbook seems to imply that only casualties associated with fires are reported.

Answer: No. All firefighter injuries are to be reported regardless of what type of incident at which they occurred. Remember to also complete a firefighter casualty form (NFIRS-5) for each firefighter casualty.

Question: If a firefighter is injured on the job but not at an incident, e.g. at a training exercise, would the total injuries shown under Fire Service Casualty in Basic Module, Block H1, include this injury?

Answer: Yes. A report should be created for all fire service casualties, whether or not they occur at an incident, and these injuries should be included in the total in Block H1. The incident type most likely would be coded as 321—*EMS call*.

Question: In the Basic Module, Block H1, Casualties, who should be included in the total casualty count?

Answer: The total listed in the Fire Service Casualty fields includes all injuries or deaths related to any type of incident. There may be more Fire Service Casualty reports completed than the total listed in Block H1 because Fire Service Casualty Reports can also be used to record the exposure of firefighters to hazardous materials or infectious diseases at the incident. Recording a code 1 in Block G3 of the Fire Service Casualty Module indicates such exposures that do not immediately cause an injury or death. The total civilian casualties

includes fire related injuries and deaths only, and does not include injuries or deaths due to EMS, hazardous materials incidents or other incident types.

Question: I have an incident that includes a firefighter casualty, but it is giving us an error that states you cannot have a firefighter casualty on an incident that is a contained fire. The casualty came about due to this incident and I thought all firefighter casualties had to be reported on the incident to which they were related. Am I reporting it wrong?

Answer: You are correct that all injuries must be reported to the incident upon which they occurred. However, you cannot code an incident as a confined fire if you have any injuries or fatalities OR a dollar loss greater than \$5,000. When the firefighter was injured, the incident automatically became a full structure fire or similar incident.

Question: We had an Incident Type of 352—*Extrication of victim(s) from vehicle* where the victim died. Do I put down a civilian casualty (H1 in the Basic Module) for this even if we do not fill out an EMS report and this was not a fire?

Answer: No. Block H1 in the Basic module is only used to record civilian casualties that occurred as a result of a fire. Other casualties should be counted using the EMS Module or, as an alternative, you can capture their information in the narrative section.

Question: Can hazardous materials incident related civilian casualties be entered in Block H1 of the Basic Module?

Answer: No. Only fire-related civilian casualties are listed in Basic Module Block H1. In addition, the Civilian Fire Casualty Module may be used for only fire related incidents. Civilian HazMat casualties are captured on the HazMat module's Block P.

Question: A fire department is notified six weeks after the fact of the following case: While an elderly woman was cooking, her clothes caught fire and she was burned. A male companion came to visit, found her on the floor, badly burned, and took her to the hospital. She was then transferred to the burn center where she died. There was no response by fire department, police, or EMS. How should this be reported?

Answer: Since there was no fire department response, there was no incident and a report should not be generated.

MIXED USE PROPERTY AND PROPERTY USE

Question: Our ski resort classification seems to always be by default "other." Vacation and/or second, part time use, homes and condos do not seem to have a straight forward section either. Do you have any suggestions?

Answer: If the ski resort is a hotel, it should be coded as such. The same is true for a single family home whether it is used for a year-round residence or a vacation home.

Question: We have five summer youth camps and one year round mixed camp. Each of the camps has multiple buildings. Some buildings are for sleeping, dining, craft building, etc. What Mixed Use Property code should be used? And what Property Use code should be used?

Answer: Designate this as a Mixed Use Property code 10—*Assembly* and use Property Use Code 110—*Fixed use recreation places, other*.

Question: A request came for a fire department to go to a helicopter landing zone for EMS ambulance transfer. The location of the landing was at an outdoor practice field at a high school. Is the Mixed Use Property code 20—*Educational use*? Is the Property Use code 938—*Graded/cared for plots of land*?

Answer: Yes, use of Mixed Use Property code 20 and Property Use code 938 would be the most accurate property use description. Property Use code 215—*High School* which would also be acceptable. However, Property Use code 938 is the most accurate since the department responded to the football field and not just the high school.

Question: An incident with the Incident Type code 154—*Dumpster or other outside trash receptacle fire* occurs in a backyard or driveway of a home but does not involve the home at all. Should the Property Use code be 419—*1- or 2-family dwelling, detached, manufactured*

home, mobile home not in transit, duplex or one of the codes from the 900 (outside or special property) series?

Answer: If it occurs in the backyard, you could use Property Use code 938—*Graded and Cared for Plots of Land*. If it occurs on a driveway, use Property Use code 962—*residential street, road, or residential driveway*. It is suggested that Property Code code 419 not be considered unless the dumpster fire was under the roof of the structure.

Question: What Property Use code should be used for a Junkyard?

Answer: The best choice is Property Use code 919—*Dump, sanitary landfill*.

PERSON/ENTITY INVOLVED

Question: On an airplane fire incident, is the owner information supposed to reflect the owner of the vehicle (airplane) or the property where the airplane sits?

Answer: Owner information is for the aircraft.

Question: On a vehicle fire, is the owner listed on the Basic Module, Block K2, the owner of the property or the vehicle?

Answer: The owner listed is the owner of the vehicle. If a non-owner is driving the vehicle, then that person is entered in the Person/Entity Involved field. If the vehicle fire extends to other property, then information on the owner of that property is captured on an exposure report.

NFIRS 2: FIRE MODULE

HEAT SOURCE

Question: If a fire was started on a wooden deck by an extra long extension cord arcing, would the Heat Source code be 13—*Electrical arcing*?

Answer: Yes. We also suggest that the department include a Factor Contributing to Ignition code of either 54—*Equipment Overloaded* and/or one of the 30 series codes for Electrical Failure, Malfunction.

IGNITION

Question: On the Fire Module, how would a fire be coded in Block E that results from material accidentally being placed or stored too close to the heat source?

Answer: The Cause of Ignition would be 2—*unintentional*, the Factor Contributing to Ignition would be 12—*heat source too close to combustibles*, and Human Factors Contributing to Ignition would be coded as *none*.

MOBILE PROPERTY/EQUIPMENT INVOLVED

Question: I got an error because I had both equipment involved in ignition and mobile property involved in ignition. The incident involved a car running into an air conditioner.

Answer: The way mobile property is treated in the NFIRS system is as a special type of equipment. When a vehicle is involved in the ignition, rather than completing the "Equipment Involved" fields, specific mobile property fields designed just to capture vehicle

information are completed instead. So, you can never have Equipment Involved in Ignition and Mobile Property Involved in Ignition on the same incident. Since only one type of equipment can be involved in the ignition of the fire, they are mutually exclusive. However, if you have a vehicle that burned but was not involved in ignition, you can have Equipment Involved in Ignition (Block F1) and Mobile Property not involved in ignition, but burned (Block H1, code #1).

NFIRS 3: STRUCTURE FIRE MODULE

BUILDING HEIGHT

Question: On the Structure Fire Module, Building Height (Block I3), should mechanical or enclosed attic spaces be counted as a separate story or as a part of the highest story?

Answer: Mechanical spaces and enclosed attics should be counted as a separate story only if they have normal access (stairs or doors) and are of at least standing height. Inaccessible attics, attics with less than standing height, inaccessible mechanical spaces or the roof would normally be part of the highest story.

MAIN FLOOR SIZE

Question: When coding a structure fire in an apartment building, do you enter the square footage (Block I4) for just the apartment involved in the fire or for the entire building (two story building)?

Answer: Enter the length times the width (in feet) of the entire floor where the fire occurred (square feet) in the apartment building.

AUTOMATIC EXTINGUISHING SYSTEM

Question: How do you code a situation where it is unknown if there is an automatic extinguishing system (Block M1)?

Answer: Select U—*Undetermined*.

NFIRS 4: CIVILIAN FIRE CASUALTY MODULE

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question: A truck was hauling asphalt when it blew a front tire, hit the guard rail, overturned on driver's side, caught on fire & burned. The driver was trapped inside & died. Is this considered a fire death?

Answer: A fire casualty is a person who is injured or killed as a result of a fire, including injuries or deaths from natural or accidental causes sustained while involved in the activities of fire control, attempting rescue, or escaping from the dangers of the fire. Therefore, if the driver died as a result of the fire, it is considered a fire death. But, if he was killed as a result of the impact, this is not considered a fire death. Often, this may only be able to be determined by an autopsy.

Question: If there is a non-fatal civilian fire casualty and that person dies subsequent to leaving the scene, what is the criteria for reporting this casualty as a death?

Answer: If the person was injured as a result of the fire and died up to one year after the fire, they should be reported as a fatality. The civilian casualty report will need to be updated.

Question: Incident Type code 240—*Explosion (no fire)*, other will not accept a casualty report for a civilian that suffered thermal burns due to the gas leak explosion. Do we not want to track this type of injury or is this incident type wrong?

Answer: The NFIRS 5.0 system will only allow Civilian Fire Casualty forms to be completed for fire incidents. Therefore, the civilian fire casualty module may only be completed when the Incident Type is in the 100 series.

Question: We had two people die from carbon monoxide due to a fire in an air handler. Are these fire deaths?

Answer: Yes. Deaths caused by carbon monoxide emitted by fires are considered fire deaths.

NFIRS 5: FIRE SERVICE CASUALTY MODULE

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question: Is the Fire Service Casualty Module only used to report injuries, deaths, or exposures to fire service personnel when responding to an incident? Or is it also used whenever a firefighter is injured, dies, etc. (for example, if she/he is hurt at the station, but it didn't involve a response to an incident, or if the injury occurs during training)?

Answer: The Fire Service Casualty Module is used to all report injuries, deaths, or exposures to fire service personnel even when they were not directly responding to an incident. In order to do this, however, you need to create an EMS incident in the system and treat it as if the same department with the injuries responded to the EMS. The reason for this is that NFIRS is an incident based system and without establishing an incident response of some sort, these injuries cannot be captured. So, the way we do it is by creating an EMS incident. This is an exception of a sort in how we treat incidents so be careful when counting fire service casualties not to include these counts in with the those that got injured when actually responding to an incident. The only real way to tell the difference is to look at the Activity at Time of Injury codes ≥ 80 (*Station Activity and Other Activity*) when performing the analysis. Those incidents should be excluded when counting firefighters casualties on the incident scene.

Question: Is the death of a firefighter from a heart attack that was suffered 48 hours after responding to an incident considered to be related to that incident?

Answer: No. The limit under the Hometown Heroes Act, which is the guideline used by USFA, is 24 hours.

Question: We recently had two injuries during one training session. One of the injuries was severe enough to require medical attention and the other was some minor cuts that did not require any time off. How should these be reported?

Answer: Both of these injuries require a Fire Service Casualty Module form and can be attached to the same NFIRS (EMS) Report.

To accomplish this, create an incident report for a Medical Call and add a Fire Service Casualty Report for each firefighter that was injured.

Question: Fire Department #2 rendered mutual aid to Fire Department #1. During the call, a firefighter from Fire Department #2 was injured. Does Fire Department #2 complete the firefighter casualty report?

Answer: Yes, firefighter casualties are reported by the department to which the firefighter belongs.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FAILURE

Question: In the Fire Service Casualty Module, Block K1, how should multiple injuries to a firefighter be reported? Which injury is the one to track relative to equipment failure?

Answer: If a single accident at an incident results in multiple injuries to the same firefighter, the most significant injury should be reported. If equipment failure was a contributing factor to any of the injuries in a single accident, that equipment failure should be reported. Please note that because only one injury can be reported, the equipment failures noted may not always correlate to the injury reported.

NFIRS 6: EMS MODULE

INITIAL LEVEL OF PROVIDER

Question: On the EMS Module, Initial Level of Provider (Block L1), is it the intent to report fire department personnel only or private ambulance services as well?

Answer: You are only reporting on your department's activities so private ambulance services are not reported.

LEVEL OF CARE PROVIDED ON SCENE

Question: We are EMT-I with defibrillator certification. We contract with a paramedic ambulance service to respond to all of our EMS calls. What codes should we use in the Initial Level of FD Provider at Scene and Highest Level of FD Provider at Scene? Currently, we are using 2-EMT-B to indicate our department and 0-Other provider to indicate the ambulance service. Example: On most calls, we provide the initial care and the ambulance personnel then take over. We enter 2-EMT-B for initial care and 0-Other provider for highest level. Is this correct?

Answer: You would code your EMS runs exactly as you indicated for initial level of provider but would only indicate the highest level of care provided by your personnel. For instance, a first responder unit equipped with an EMT-B and an EMT-I arrives on scene for a patient with chest pain. Code Block L1 as 3—EMT-I. Then the 3rd party ambulance (Rural Metro, AMR, etc.) arrives and transports and cares for the patient. Code L2 as 3—EMT-I also, since another Agency is now transporting and caring for the patient.

EMS DISPOSITION

Question: A firefighter is injured at the scene and is transported by mutual aid EMS unit. In NFIRS-6, section N, EMS Disposition, would “*FD transport to ECF (1)*” or “*non- FD transport (2)*” be used?

Answer: If the transporting EMS unit was a Fire Department EMS unit, use 1. If it was a non-Fire Department EMS, use 2.

NFIRS 7: HAZMAT MODULE

Question: Can a hazardous materials incident be coded where the chemical listed is unknown?

Answer: For incidents where the chemical is unknown, it is recommended that you do not complete the HazMat Module. Instead, complete the Basic Module with an Incident Type code from the 400 series and check 0—*Other* in Block H3 (Hazardous Materials Release).

NFIRS 8: WILDLAND FIRE MODULE

NFIRS 9: ARSON MODULE

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