

Standard Classifications for Fire and Emergency Services

Incident Reporting

2021



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NFPA[®] 901

Standard Classifications for

Fire and Emergency Services Incident Reporting

2021 Edition

This edition of NFPA 901, *Standard Classifications for Fire and Emergency Services Incident Reporting*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Reporting. It was issued by the Standards Council on October 5, 2020, with an effective date of October 25, 2020, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 901 was approved as an American National Standard on October 25, 2020.

Origin and Development of NFPA 901

As the objectives of fire defense management have narrowed from the control of conflagrations early in the 20th century to the control of fires in rooms, the need for uniform information about fire incidents and an effective method of collecting and using that information has become evident.

In 1938, a fire reporting system prepared by NFPA was published by the International City Managers Association. This system served as a start toward the uniform reporting of fire incident information.

In 1951, the NFPA Committee on Fire Casualty Statistics was formed. The report of that committee was adopted as NFPA 3 in May 1953. In its introduction, that document contained the following statement: "The absence of accurate and detailed statistics on fire casualties has hindered attempts by educational and other means to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from fire."

In 1961, the NFPA Board of Directors, after two years of surveying the need, called a national conference on fire reporting. On the recommendation of that conference, an NFPA committee was formed in February 1963 to devise a uniform and useful system of fire reporting adaptable to the needs of the fire service in the United States and Canada. From 1963 to 1969, the committee strived to develop a uniform language for fire defense management and issued tentative documents as work progressed.

In 1969, the five tentative documents were combined and officially adopted as the first edition of NFPA 901, *Coding System for Fire Reporting*. The document was updated in 1971 with minor revisions. With the 1973 edition, the title was changed to *Uniform Coding for Fire Protection*, and data elements were added to report on mobile property and the details of fire casualties (deaths and injuries). By the 1976 edition, the committee was getting feedback from persons using the data elements in reporting systems and was able to make modifications to improve the understanding of the data elements. Data elements were also added to report structural fire defenses and their performance during incidents.

In 1981, data elements were added to enhance the reporting of wildland fires, firefighter casualties, and pre-hospital medical care administered. The 1986 edition introduced data elements for reporting on hazardous material. Those data elements were expanded in the 1991 edition to a comprehensive set of hazardous materials data elements. The 1995 edition reorganized the document editorially to better group the data elements in relation to each other. Discussion of how the data elements were intended to be used was added, and classifications within some of the data elements were revised to reflect changing needs when capturing or using data. Also, the title for the 1995 edition was changed to *Standard Classifications for Incident Reporting and Fire Protection Data*.

The 2001 edition added several new data elements and extensively revised others based on a detailed analysis by the US Fire Administration and the National Fire Information Council of the way that data are collected and used by fire departments. Some of the changes split the data elements so that a data element could focus on a single question or issue rather than multiple issues, as had sometimes been the case in the past. New technology available for data capture and storage no

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longer placed limitations on the record size and data manipulation, which had sometimes been obstacles in the past.

The 2006 edition was revised to comply with the Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents. Various sections were updated editorially for clarification.

The 2011 edition was a reconfirmation of the 2006 edition. There were no substantive edits or changes made to the document.

The 2016 edition featured changes to align the language and information with the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). An effort was made to tie the two more closely together, and additional tables were added to reflect changes in the NFIRS.

The 2021 edition features a complete reworking of the document. Tables have been consolidated, eliminated, and moved to the annex to make NFPA 901 more usable. New chapters were added, notably on fire investigation, to bring the standard in line with NFPA 921, *Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations*. Special attention was paid to the current uses of reporting and the structures that make the most sense.

2021 Edition

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This list represents the membership at the time the Committee was balloted on the final text of this edition.

Since that time, changes in the membership may have occurred. A key to classifications is found at the back of the document.

NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on standard methods of compiling fire experience data by the fire service. The main purposes of this Committee are to develop standard occupancy and cause classification for use by cities and states in the reporting of fires, to suggest other useful information that needs to be collected, and to develop standard forms for these purposes.

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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on

N 1.2.2 This standard defines numeric classifications for various data elements that describe fire protection and fire service information.

N 1.3 Application.

N 1.3.1 This standard applies to the preliminary reports of fire or emergency services agencies.

N 1.3.2 This standard does not apply to reports for fire or explosion investigations.

Chapter 2 Referenced Publications

2.1 General. The documents or portions thereof listed in this chapter are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document.

▲ 2.2 NFPA Publications. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471.

NFPA 30, Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code, 2021 edition.

NFPA 72[®], National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code[®], 2019 edition.

NFPA 80A, Recommended Practice for Protection of Buildings from Exterior Fire Exposures, 2017 edition.

NFPA 220, Standard on Types of Building Construction, 2021 edition.

NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 2020 edition.

NFPA 1033, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, 2014 edition.

NFPA 5000[®], Building Construction and Safety Code[®], 2021

the paragraph can be found in Annex A.

A reference in brackets [] following a section or paragraph indicates material that has been extracted from another NFPA document. Extracted text may be edited for consistency and style and may include the revision of internal paragraph references and other references as appropriate. Requests for interpretations or revisions of extracted text shall be sent to the technical committee responsible for the source document.

Information on referenced and extracted publications can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex B.

 Δ

Chapter 1 Administration

Δ 1.1 Scope.

- **N1.1.1** This document describes and defines data elements and classifications used by fire and emergency services to report incidents, including fire, life safety, and response activity data.
- **N 1.1.2** This document does not provide guidelines for a reporting system or related forms.
- **N**1.1.3* A report completed in accordance with this document is not to be used as a fire or explosion investigation report. If a separate fire or explosion investigation report is not completed, consideration shall be given to including data elements listed in Table A.1.1.3 in the narrative of the incident report.

Δ 1.2 Purpose.

N 1.2.1 This document provides a common language for the collection of pre-incident information, fire and other emergency incident data, and post-incident damage assessments.

edition.

2.3 Other Publications.

2.3.1 ASTM Publications. ASTM International, 100 Barr Harbor Drive, P.O. Box C700, West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959.

ASTM D323, Standard Test Method for Vapor Pressure of Petroleum Products (Reid Method), 2015a edition.

2.3.2 US Government Publications. US Government Publishing Office, 732 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC 20401-0001.

Code Manual, National Crime Information Center (NCIC), US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

ERG RSPA-5800.6, Emergency Response Guidebook.

Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 173: Subpart C — Definitions, Classification and Packaging for Class 1; Subpart D — Definitions, Classification, Packing Group Assignments and Exceptions for Hazardous Materials Other Than Class 1 and Class 7; and Subpart I — Class 7 (Radioactive) Materials.

2.3.3 US Postal Service Publications. US Postal Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC 20260-6800.

Publication 65, National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory, 1999 edition.

2.3.4 Other Publications.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition, Merriam-Webster, Inc., Springfield, MA, 2003.

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Shaded text = Revisions. Δ = Text deletions and figure/table revisions. • = Section deletions. N = New material.

Δ 2.4 References for Extracts in Mandatory Sections.

NFPA 30, Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code, 2018 edition.

NFPA 53, Recommended Practice on Materials, Equipment, and Systems Used in Oxygen-Enriched Atmospheres, 2016 edition.

NFPA 68, Standard on Explosion Protection by Deflagration Venting, 2018 edition.

NFPA 101[®], Life Safety Code[®], 2018 edition.

NFPA 221, Standard for High Challenge Fire Walls, Fire Walls, and Fire Barrier Walls, 2018 edition.

NFPA 306, Standard for the Control of Gas Hazards on Vessels, 2019 edition.

NFPA 400, Hazardous Materials Code, 2019 edition.

NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2017 edition.

NFPA 1051, Standard for Wildland Firefighting Personnel Professional Qualifications, 2016 edition.

NFPA 1141, Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Wildland, Rural, and Suburban Areas, 2017 edition.

NFPA 5000[®], Building Construction and Safety Code[®], 2018 edition.

Chapter 3 Definitions

3.1 General. The definitions contained in this chapter shall apply to the terms used in this standard. Where terms are not defined in this chapter or within another chapter, they shall be defined using their ordinarily accepted meanings within the context in which they are used. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition, shall be the source for the ordinarily

3.3.10 Char. Carbonaceous material that has been burned or pyrolyzed and has a blackened appearance. **[921,** 2017]

3.3.11 Combustible. Capable of undergoing combustion. [921, 2017]

3.3.12 Combustible Liquid. Any liquid that has a closed-cup flash point at or above 100°F (37.8°C). [**306**, 2019]

3.3.13 Combustion. A chemical process of oxidation that occurs at a rate fast enough to produce heat and usually light in the form of either a glow or flame. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.14 Complex. See 3.3.48, General Property Use.

3.3.15* Confine a Fire. To restrict a fire within determined boundaries established either prior to the fire or during the fire. For wildland fires, the strategy employed in appropriate responses by which a fire perimeter is managed by a combination of direct and indirect actions and use of natural topographic features, fuel, and weather factors.

3.3.16 Contain a Fire. To take suppression action that is expected to stop the fire spread: for wildland fires, signifies that a control line has been completed around the fire and any associated spot fires.

3.3.17 Contents Fire. See 3.3.91, Structure Fire.

3.3.18 Emergency Medical Responder (EMR). A person who has trained to at least advanced first aid and has additional training but is not an EMT.

3.3.19 Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Organization providing patient services that might include assessment, treatment, and other prehospital procedures.

accepted meaning.

3.2 NFPA Official Definitions. (Reserved)

3.3 General Definitions.

3.3.1 Alarm. Any notification made to a fire or emergency services organization that a situation exists or could exist that requires a response.

3.3.2 Arc. A high-temperature luminous electric discharge across a gap or through a medium such as charred insulation. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.3 Area of Origin. A structure, part of a structure, or general geographic location within a fire scene, in which the "*point of origin*" of a fire or explosion is reasonably believed to be located. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.4 Automatic. Capable of performing a function without the necessity of human intervention. [*101*, 2018]

3.3.5* Backfire. A fire set along the inner edge of a fire control line to consume the fuel in the path of a wildland fire or change the direction of force of the fire's convection column.

3.3.6 Building. A structure enclosed with walls and a roof and used to enclose an occupancy.

3.3.7 Building Fire. See 3.3.91, Structure Fire.

3.3.8 Burning. See 3.3.13, Combustion.

3.3.9 Census Data. Enumeration and demographic population data available by statistical areas from a governmental agency.

3.3.20 Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). A person who has completed a certified basic life support program and holds a current certificate or license.

3.3.21 Emergency Rescue Vehicle. A vehicle that is not designed for patient transport, but that contains tools, advanced life support equipment, and personnel capable of providing extrication and emergency medical care.

3.3.22 Emergency Scene. The area encompassed by the incident and the surrounding area needed by the emergency forces to stage apparatus and mitigate the incident.

3.3.23 Explosion. The sudden conversion of potential energy (chemical or mechanical) into kinetic energy with the production and release of gases under pressure, or the release of gas under pressure. These high-pressure gases then do mechanical work such as moving, changing, or shattering nearby materials. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.24 Exposure. Any fixed or mobile property threatened by a fire or other hazard in any other fixed or mobile property.

3.3.25* Exposure Fire. A fire in a building, structure, vehicle, or outside property resulting from a fire outside that building, structure, vehicle, or outside property.

3.3.26 Fatality. An injury that is fatal or becomes fatal within one year of the incident.

3.3.27 Fire. A rapid oxidation process, which is a chemical reaction resulting in the evolution of light and heat in varying intensities. [**921**, 2017]

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- Δ 3.3.28* Fire Area. The boundary of fire effects within a scene in which the area of origin will be located.
- **N 3.3.29 Fire Barrier Wall.** A wall, other than a fire wall, having a fire resistance rating.

3.3.30 Fire Casualty. A person who is injured or dies at the scene of a fire, whether from natural causes, direct involvement with the fire, or an accident sustained while involved in fire control, a rescue attempt, or escaping from the dangers of the fire.

3.3.31 Fire Contained. That point in time when fire spread is stopped but the fire is not necessarily under control.

3.3.32 Fire Control Line. Comprehensive term for all constructed or natural barriers and treated fire edges used to control a wildland fire.

3.3.33* Fire Damage. The total damage to a building, structure, vehicle, natural vegetation cover, or outside property resulting from a fire and the act of controlling that fire.

3.3.34 Fire Extinguished. See 3.3.37, Fire Out.

3.3.35 Fire Ground. See 3.3.22, Emergency Scene.

3.3.36 Fire or Emergency Services Personnel. All employees, whether career or volunteer, of a fire or emergency services organization who are assigned or might be assigned to perform duties at emergency incidents.

3.3.37 Fire Out. The point in time when there is no longer any sign of active combustion.

3.3.38 Fire-Rated Assembly. An assembly (e.g., wall, floor, or roof) that has been tested using standard test methods and has received at least a 1-hour fire resistance rating.

3.3.47 Gas. The state of matter characterized by complete molecular mobility and unlimited expansion; used synonymously with the term vapor. [68, 2018]

3.3.48 General Property Use. The actual general (overall) use of land or space under the same management or ownership, or within the same legal boundaries, including any structures, vehicles, or other appurtenances thereon. (See Section 6.3.)

3.3.49 Grade. Reference plane representing the elevation of finished ground level adjoining the building at the main entrance, used synonymously with the term ground level.

3.3.50 Ground Fault. An unintended current that flows outside the normal circuit path, such as (a) through the equipment grounding conductor; (b) through conductive material in contact with lower potential (such as earth), other than the electrical system ground (metal water or plumbing pipes, etc.); (c) or through a combination of these ground return paths. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.51 Hazardous Material. A chemical or substance that is classified as a physical hazard material or a health hazard material, whether the chemical or substance is in usable or waste condition. [400, 2019]

 Δ 3.3.52 Heat of Ignition. The heat energy that brings about ignition. [921, 2017]

3.3.53 Hostile Fire. A fire that becomes uncontrollable or breaks out of where it was intended to be.

3.3.54 Human Exposure. Potential for injury or death to humans.

3.3.39 Fire-Rated Compartment. A complete compartment surrounded on all sides by fire-rated assemblies having a 1-hour fire resistance rating or more.

 Δ 3.3.40* Fire Under Control. The point in time when a fire is suppressed and no longer threatens destruction of additional property.

3.3.41 Fire Wall. A wall separating buildings or subdividing a building to prevent the spread of fire and having a fire resistance rating and structural stability. [221, 2018]

 Δ 3.3.42 Fixed Object. An object, device, or appliance that is fastened or secured at a specific location.

3.3.43 Fixed Property Use. See 3.3.88, Specific Property Use.

3.3.44 Flames. A body or stream of gaseous material involved in the combustion process and emitting radiant energy at specific wavelength bands determined by the combustion chemistry of the fuel.

3.3.45 Flammable Liquid. Any liquid that has a closed-cup flash point below 100°F (37.8°C), as determined by the test procedures and apparatus set forth in Section 4.4 of NFPA 30, and a Reid vapor pressure that does not exceed an absolute pressure of 40 psi (276 kPa) at 100°F (37.8°C), as determined by ASTM D323, Standard Test Method for Vapor Pressure of Petroleum Products (Reid Method). Flammable liquids are classified according to Section 4.3 of NFPA 30. [30, 2018]

3.3.46 Fuel. Any material that will maintain combustion under specified environmental conditions. [53, 2016]

3.3.55 Ignitible Liquid. Any liquid or the liquid phase of any material that is capable of fueling a fire, including a flammable liquid, combustible liquid, or any other material that can be liquefied and burned.

3.3.56 Ignition. The process of initiating self-sustained combustion. [921, 2017]

3.3.57* Incident. An event, natural or human-caused, that requires organized response, mitigation, or recovery actions by a fire or emergency services organization to protect life, property, and public health and safety and to minimize any disruption of governmental, social, and economic services.

3.3.58 Incident Record. The official file on an incident.

3.3.59* Incident Report. A document prepared by fire or emergency services personnel on a particular incident.

3.3.60* Industrialized **Unit.** A factory-built structure, designed for either permanent site installation or as a portable unit, and constructed to the requirements of a model building code or other state construction regulations.

3.3.61 Injury. Physical damage to a person suffered as the result of an incident that requires (or should require) treatment by a practitioner of medicine, a registered EMT, or a paramedic within one year of the incident (regardless of whether treatment was actually received) or that results in at least one day of restricted activity immediately following the incident.

3.3.62 Lighter. Flame-producing product commonly used to light cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, although it can be used to light other materials.

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3.3.62.1 *Novelty Lighter.* Lighters that depict or resemble articles commonly recognized as appealing to or intended for use by children under 5 years of age.

3.3.63 Liquid. A material that has a vapor pressure not exceeding 40 psia (2068.6 mm Hg) at 100° F (37.8°C).

3.3.64 Manual. As applied to fire protection devices, a device or system activated by human action.

3.3.65 Manufactured Home. A structure, transportable in one or more sections, that is 8 body-ft (2.44 m) or more in width or 40 body-ft (12.2 m) or more in length in the traveling mode or, when erected on site, is 320 ft² (28 m²) or more; which is built on a chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling, with or without a permanent foundation, when connected to the required utilities, including the plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, and electrical systems contained therein. (*Also see 3.3.60, Industrial-ized Unit.*)

3.3.66* Material First Ignited. The fuel that is first set on fire by the heat of ignition.

N 3.3.67 Mobile. The ability to move 150 ft (45 m) in 90 seconds unaided.

3.3.68 Mobile Intensive Care Unit. An ambulance-type unit with space, equipment, supplies, communications, and treatment capabilities necessary for supportive, definitive, and therapeutic emergency medical care for the ill or injured either on site or during transport.

3.3.69 Mobile Property Type. Property that was designed to be movable in relation to fixed property regardless of whether the property is currently movable, for example, vehicles, ships, and airplanes. (*See 6.5.5.*)

3.3.79 Panelized Structure. See 3.3.60, Industrialized Unit.

3.3.80 Paramedic. A medical technician who has received extensive training and is certified in advanced life support and emergency medicine.

3.3.81 Prescribed Fire (Burning). Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. **[1051, 2016]**

3.3.82* Rekindle. A return to flaming combustion after apparent but incomplete extinguishment. [**921**, 2017]

△ 3.3.83 Reportable Fire. Any hostile fire that comes to the attention of an agency keeping fire records, whether discovered in progress or discovered after extinguishment.

3.3.84 Response. The deployment of a fire or emergency service organization resource to an incident.

3.3.85* Scorch. Discoloring (browning or blackening) of a material, a characteristic of the overheat condition.

3.3.86 Short Circuit. An abnormal connection of low resistance between normal circuit conductors where the resistance is normally much greater. This is an overcurrent situation but it is not an overload.

3.3.87 Smoldering. Combustion without flame, usually with incandescence and smoke. [**921**, 2017]

3.3.88 Specific Property Use. The purpose for which a specific space, structure, or portion of a structure is used by the owner, tenant, or occupant of the space.

3.3.89 Story. The portion of a building located between the upper surface of a floor and the upper surface of the floor or roof next above. [**5000**, **2018**]

3.3.70 Modular Structure. See 3.3.60, Industrialized Unit.

3.3.71 Mop-up. The act of making a wildland fire scene safer after the fire has been controlled, such as extinguishing or removing burning material along or near the control line, felling snags, and trenching logs to prevent rolling. (*For structure fires, see 3.3.77, Overhaul.*)

3.3.72 Non-Fire Service Personnel. All persons, including police, utility company employees, non-fire service medical personnel, and civilians, who are involved with an incident but who are not fire service personnel.

3.3.73 Not Occupied. An area with no persons present, though contents or equipment might be present, which indicate that the structure is not vacant.

3.3.74* Occupancy. The purpose for which a building or other structure, or part thereof, is used or intended to be used. [5000, 2018]

3.3.75* Occupied. An area with persons present.

3.3.76 Open Fire. Any fire other than a structure or mobile property fire that freely interacts with the external environment.

3.3.77 Overhaul. A firefighting term involving the process of final extinguishment of all traces of fire after the main body of the fire has been knocked down. (*For wildland fires, see 3.3.71, Mop-up.*)

3.3.78* Overheat. Destruction of material by heat without self-sustained combustion.

3.3.90* Structure. That which is built or constructed and limited to buildings and nonbuilding structures as defined herein. [**5000**, 2018]

3.3.91* Structure Fire. Any fire inside, on, under, or touching a structure.

3.3.92 Toxic Material. A material that produces a lethal dose or a lethal concentration within any of the following categories: (1) a chemical or substance that has a median lethal dose (LD50) of more than 50 mg/kg but not more than 500 mg/kg of body weight when administered orally to albino rats weighing between 200 g and 300 g each; (2) a chemical or substance that has a median lethal dose (LD50) of more than 200 mg/kg but not more than 1000 mg/kg of body weight when administered by continuous contact for 24 hours, or less if death occurs within 24 hours, with the bare skin of albino rabbits weighing between 2 kg and 3 kg each, or albino rats weighing 200 g to 300 g each; (3) a chemical or substance that has a median lethal concentration (LC50) in air of more than 200 parts per million but not more than 2000 parts per million by volume of gas or vapor, or more than 2 mg/L but not more than 20 mg/L, of mist, fume, or dust when administered by continuous inhalation for 1 hour, or less if death occurs within 1 hour, to albino rats weighing between 200 g and 300 g each. [**5000**, 2018]

3.3.93 Vacant. A space having no persons, furnishings, or equipment present.

3.3.94 Wildland. Land in an uncultivated, more or less natural state and covered by timber, woodland, brush, and/or grass.

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