

WISCONSIN COUNTY MUTUAL INSURANCE CORPORATION & COMMUNITY INSURANCE CORPORATION

# THE PROTECTOR

A QUARTERLY PROPERTY LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE FIVE

Q2 2021

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## SAVE THE DATE

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MINI-SERIES

JULY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 14<sup>TH</sup>, 21<sup>ST</sup> & 28<sup>TH</sup>  
10:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

CADENCE CONSULTING



Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation



## TRENDS IN TOP WORKPLACE FIRES AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM

**A workplace fire is a devastating event. The fire can lead to potential injuries, death, and property loss, in addition to job/service interruption for your employees and the community. Unfortunately, workplace fires are an all too common occurrence. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), in 2019, there were an estimated 110,900 non-residential building fires, up from 84,900 in 2010.**

**The USFA collects data from various sources to provide information and analyses on the status and scope of the fire problem in the United States. They analyze trends in fires, deaths, injuries, and dollar loss. Among particular interest, for this article, are the top causes of non-residential building fires.**

### A TROUBLING TREND IN WORKPLACE FIRES

While modern building design and fire codes protect most workplaces from fires, the number of non-residential building fires has been trending up every year since 2010. This article will discuss the top sources of fires and multiple things employers and employees can do to prevent workplace fires, keep workers safe, protect property and prevent business interruption, and mitigate damage from a fire.

It is important to note that non-residential building fires include fires in any industry, ranging from schools to courthouses to healthcare facilities and jails. As stated above, according to the USFA, in 2019, there were an estimated 110,900 non-residential building fires. Other 2019 national estimates for non-residen-

tial building fires and losses show that there were 100 deaths, 1,125 injuries, and \$2,869,800,000 in dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building fires and losses from 2010 to 2019 show the following: a 30% increase in fires, a 50% increase in deaths, a 14% decrease in injuries, and a 3% increase in dollar loss.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and their report "U.S. Structure Fires in Office Properties" (Richard Campbell - August, 2013) fewer non-residential fires occur on the weekends since the workplaces are less likely to be fully populated. The peak times of day for these fires were between noon and 2:00 p.m. Less than one-third of the fires (31%) occurred between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., but these fires accounted for 67% of the direct property damage. Similarly, 19% of fires occurred on weekends, but these incidents caused 31% of the associated property loss. These findings highlight the need for automatic detection and extinguishing equipment to protect these properties when they aren't occupied.

### THE TOP CAUSES OF WORKPLACE FIRES - 2010 - 2019

According to the USFA, the top causes of workplace fires are cooking fires, intentionally set fires, unintentional fires caused by human error or carelessness, electrical malfunctions, and heating malfunctions.

#### 1 // COOKING FIRES

Cooking fires are the most common cause of fire

TOP TRENDS IN WORKPLACE FIRES / CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

#### ABOUT THE COUNTY MUTUAL

The Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation (County Mutual) provides public entity liability, workers' compensation, and property insurance solely to Wisconsin counties.

#### ABOUT COMMUNITY INSURANCE CORPORATION

Community Insurance Corporation (CIC) provides liability, workers' compensation, and property insurance to Wisconsin school districts and local units of government.

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THE **PROTECTOR**
**CHIEF GERALD W. KUDEK**  
**WEST BEND FIRE DEPARTMENT**


Located 30 minutes from Milwaukee and nestled in the heart of the Kettle Moraine, the City of West Bend is the seat of Washington County, with a population of about 32,000 people. The **WEST BEND FIRE DEPARTMENT (WBFD)** provides fire suppression and paramedic level Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to residents and visitors in the City of West Bend and portions of the Town of Barton to the north and portions of the Town of West Bend to the south. Forty full-time and three paid-on-call personnel provide services from three fire stations located throughout the city.

WBFD responds to over 4,000 incidents each year. Over 80% of the incidents are EMS calls, and the remaining incidents involve fires and hazardous materials. As well as fire and EMS calls, our cross-trained dual-role firefighter/paramedics provide hospital interfacility transfers, as well as paramedic intercepts to assist EMTs and Advanced EMTs with patients who require Advanced Life Support (ALS) interventions and medications. WBFD is part of the Division 111 Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) in Washington County.

Fire, injury, and illness prevention are priorities for WBFD as part of our Community Risk Reduction (CRR) efforts. Our shift personnel conduct fire prevention inspections at every industrial, commercial, and multifamily residential occupancy in our fire protection coverage area. Each year firefighters visit the elementary schools during October for Fire Prevention Week presentations to kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd-grade students. Other fire prevention and CRR efforts include fire extinguisher training, CPR instruction, and smoke alarm installations in individual residences.

Our firefighter/paramedics are often tasked with finding solutions to difficult fire and EMS situations. One such example occurred on August 23rd, 2016. At 10:45 p.m. that evening, WBFD was dispatched to a smoke detector alarm at a townhouse-style apartment building. The occupant advised no smoke or flames visible. While investigating the alarm, the crew from Engine 1 utilized the four-gas meter to determine if there were any potential reasons for the sounding of the alarm.

The crew found elevated levels of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is a colorless and odorless gas that is the product of incomplete combustion. Usual sources of carbon monoxide are gas appliances such as furnaces and water heaters or cars running in the



garage. The only gas appliance in the residence was the furnace, and no cars had been run in the garage.

Engine 1's crew checked the units on either side of the unit where the alarm sounded. They found elevated levels of carbon monoxide and located the source. The occupant in an adjoining unit had put their charcoal grill in their garage after they had finished grilling. Charcoal was still smoldering in the grill in the closed garage.

This was a great example of a firefighting crew that had to use detective skills to locate the source of the problem. There are several key takeaways from this incident:

- 👉 Never use a grill in a garage
- 👉 Never leave a grill that has burning fuel unattended
- 👉 Grills in use shall be greater than 10 feet away from a structure or overhang
- 👉 Hot coals shall be discarded into a metal bucket and placed outside
- 👉 Install carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your home

WBFD takes great pride in all of our CRR efforts to reduce property damage, injuries, and deaths. The promotion of CRR awareness campaigns through traditional media and social media is the best way to help reduce the risks to the community. Be sure to follow the West Bend Fire Department's [Facebook page](#) for more great safety tips. 🍷

# THE PROTECTOR



One of the most challenging property insurance requirements is reporting accurate, consistent, and complete data on the property you wish to insure to the insurance carrier.

## Background

In most cases, the data is tracked on a spreadsheet that originated years ago from a Facilities Manager who was tasked with developing a list of buildings and contents owned by the entity. The list included specifics on the owned property such as address, yr. built, construction class, square footage, and value.

This initial list served as the baseline Statement of Values (SOV) or declaration to the insurance provider of which property the entity intends to insure. Over time the SOV evolved with property being added or subtracted at the time of procurement or decommission with purchase price as the foundation for the monetary reported value. In other words, an informal process has been utilized to maintain this data.

The informal process is ripe for error. Not only can turnover and attrition occur with the individual responsible for maintaining the data, but an entity can feel complacent with the method of maintenance. Additionally, building renovations, department reorganizations, and the overall property footprint of the entity may change daily. Also, the public entity may not understand the importance of the data. The data acts as a catalyst to the rating or pricing determination for the insurance the entity is trying to obtain.

## Why is accurate data important?

Timely and accurate data is essential because:

- » When SOVs are inaccurate, inconsistent, or incomplete, the rating becomes less favorable to the entity as the insurance carrier does not fully understand what needs to be insured and what exposures are associated with the entity.
- » If property is overvalued, the entity risks paying too much for insurance coverage or paying for coverage it doesn't need.
- » If the property is undervalued, the entity risks being underinsured if it would need to make a property insurance claim and the insurance carrier does not collect enough premium to cover the cost of the loss.

## Industry-Leading Support and Best Practices

The industry best practice for managing your data includes a partnership with a 3rd party for electronic asset management. Realizing the need to streamline data management for our members, we have engaged AssetWorks, an asset management company.

**Accurate and timely data is essential. If your SOVs are: INACCURATE - your carrier doesn't understand your exposure; OVERVALUED - you risk paying too much for coverage; UNDERVALUED - you risk underinsuring your property.**

AssetWorks provides a dedicated cloud-based software application for members to track, maintain, and access their asset inventory in real-time. The application eliminates the go-between and ensures that the data is accurate, complete, timely, and actionable. Administrative burdens will be reduced as the time needed to replicate, interpret, and modify asset inventories through manual documentation will be eliminated. The application also provides a history of your changes which will ease any difficulties you may encounter with turnover and attrition. You'll also have the ability to generate custom reports allowing you to support business decisions through quantitative methods.

Further, we are investigating a property appraisal program to double down on data accuracy and supplement the new recordkeeping software. This continuous improvement supports why the County Mutual and Community Insurance Corporation are top-tier compared to the competition. 🏡

*This material does not amend, alter, or otherwise affect, the provisions or coverages of any insurance policy or bond issued by WCMIC or CIC, nor is it a representation of coverage that does or does not exist for any particular claim, loss or dispute under any such policy or bond. Coverage depends on the facts and circumstances involved in the claim, loss, or dispute, all applicable policy or bond provisions, and any applicable law.*

# THE PROTECTOR

## LESSONS LEARNED:

### FIRE PREVENTION: HAVE A PLAN – THE LITTLE THINGS COUNT!



#### The Incident

A fire resulted from an arc flash incident on an outlet that was powering two vending machines on the County Courthouse's second floor. After evacuation, County officials working in the attorney's office on the sixth floor reported a powerful odor. A room full of potential jurors gathered adjacent to the vending machines reported black smoke and electrical arcing from an outlet. During the evacuation, however, other courthouse officials, employees, and members of the public were unaware of the danger they faced as they were being evacuated from the building. Fortunately, the County sheriff's deputies were present and notified occupants to expedite an orderly evacuation process before the fire department could arrive, and any injuries occurred.

#### A Telling Inspection

A month before this incident transpired, the courthouse underwent its annual scheduled fire inspection wherein many crucial hazards were identified, including:

- 💡 Some crucial evacuation warning systems didn't work,
- 💡 Past due inspections of fire extinguishers,
- 💡 Ground-floor fire door with holes in it did not close tightly,
- 💡 Ceiling electrical junction box was not covered,
- 💡 A bad circuit board that needed replacing,
- 💡 Unmarked fire extinguisher cabinets,
- 💡 Minimal pre-planning with the local fire department,
- 💡 Evacuation drills were not regularly conducted; and
- 💡 Fire response plans did not reflect recent building renovations.

Furthermore, many more hazards may have been identified in the assessment if the courthouse was more prepared to facilitate the regularly scheduled assessment for the inspectors. The report noted that the work was incomplete because inspection officials did not have keys to access various parts of the building. For example, inspection officials could not access the DA's office suite or the parking garage area because they did not have the keys. Additionally, according to the County Director of Facility Maintenance and Operations Department, the inspection officials did not send the report to the county until after the incident occurred.

#### Lessons Learned

Ensuring that you have the correct fire safety/protection strategies and evacuation plans in place is crucial to help ensure the safety of your employees and the protection of your buildings. A fire risk assessment should be conducted externally, as seen in this scenario, and internally. In this incident, an external assessment would not have identified that the vending machines were connected to an electrical plug joining to one extension cord that finally ran to a single outlet to serve the power of both vending machines. To carry out a fire assessment, consider the following steps:

- 👉 **Identify the potential fire hazards** – during the assessment, make note of anything that could start a fire or easily burn,
- 👉 **Identify the people at risk** – evaluate if the risk could be greater for some people,
- 👉 **Act on the findings** – Evaluate, reduce or remove the potential risks,
- 👉 **Record** – Keep a record of the findings, prepare an emergency plan and provide fire safety training; and
- 👉 **Review** – A fire risk assessment must be carried out regularly, with all findings updated and recorded.

#### Resources

Depending on the type of property and operations, there are a number of different resources and risk management standards which apply to each:

- 👉 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- 👉 Wisconsin Department of Safety & Professional Services (DSPS) & Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)
- 👉 Your local fire protection agency
- 👉 Your County Mutual/Community Insurance Corporation Risk Management Consultant

Making sure that you have the correct fire protection strategies in place requires a collaborative approach and is crucial to help minimize the risk of a fire. 🇺🇸

# THE PROTECTOR

## TOP TRENDS IN WORKPLACE FIRES

CONTINUED

damage in the U.S., totaling nearly 30% of non-residential building fires or 33,200 fires in 2019. Those fires resulted in \$59,600,000 in dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building cooking fires and loss from 2010 to 2019 show a 39% increase in fires. This increase may be due to an NFIRS coding edit implemented in 2012 and a 16% increase in dollar loss.

### PREVENT COOKING FIRES

- 🔗 Never leave food unattended while cooking
- 🔗 Set a timer
- 🔗 Keep flammables away from heat sources
- 🔗 Avoid grease build-up

### 2 // UNINTENTIONAL/CARELESS FIRES

The second most common cause of fire damage in the U.S., making up nearly 12% of non-residential building fires in 2019, was unintentional fires or carelessness. The data shows there were 12,800 fires and \$433,000,000 in dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building unintentional or careless fires and loss from 2010 to 2019 show a 59% increase in fires and a 26% increase in dollar loss. A \$100,000,000 West Texas fertilizer plant fire and a \$40,000,000 Burlington, Wisconsin, manufacturing plant fire contributed to the 2013 dollar-loss peak.

Workplaces are filled with fire hazards and flammable material. Walls covered with art projects, open flames from candles, papers piled sky high, overloaded outlets, open electrical boxes, dirty or blocked ventilation systems, a collection of oily rags, and unsupervised students contribute to fires in this category.

### PREVENT UNINTENTIONAL/CARELESS FIRES

- 🔗 Good housekeeping
- 🔗 Fire-related training, including the use of extinguishers
- 🔗 Preventative and regular maintenance

### 3 // INTENTIONAL FIRES

The third most common cause of fire damage in the U.S., making up nearly 11% of non-residential building fires in 2019, are intentional fires. According to USFA national estimates, 12,000 intentional fires and \$177,800,000 in dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building intentional fires and loss from 2010 to 2019 show a 31% increase in fires and a 50% decrease in dollar loss. According to the NFPA, intentional fires most often occur in the overnight hours, sometimes by vandals, sometimes by people connected to the workplace.

### PREVENT INTENTIONAL FIRES

A good security program including cameras, lighting, and motion sensors, and a fully functioning sprinkler system are your best lines of defense when it comes to preventing intentional fires.

### 4 // ELECTRICAL FIRES

The fourth most common cause of fire damage in the U.S., making up over seven percent of non-residential building fires and resulting in 8,200 fires in 2019, are electrical fires. These 8,200 electrical fires resulted in a \$410,700,000 dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building electrical malfunction fires and loss from 2010 to 2019 show a 10% increase in fires and a 10% increase in dollar loss.

### PREVENT ELECTRICAL FIRES

Ensure equipment is functioning properly and your facilities are in compliance with state and local codes to minimize the potential for electrical fires. It is also essential to hire qualified electricians and contractors to perform service and installation work.

### 5 // HEATING FIRES

Finally, heating fires are the fifth most common cause of fire damage in the U.S., making up nearly seven percent of non-residential building fires and resulting in 7,400 fires and \$78,700,000 in dollar loss. Overall trends for non-residential building heating fires and loss from 2010 to 2019 show a 6% increase in fires and a 25% increase in dollar loss.

### PREVENT ELECTRICAL FIRES

Properly maintained heating systems and eliminating space heaters are your best bets for preventing heating fires.

**In addition to education, training, housekeeping, preventative maintenance, etc., another great way to stay prepared for fires in the workplace is by working with a disaster recovery company. A restoration company can help restore your property if a fire does occur, and they can work with you initially to identify and address areas of risk or concern. Please do not hesitate to contact your dedicated risk management consultant for more information on restoration companies or to schedule a fire inspection or training.**

Want to receive *The Protector* and other important risk management notifications? **Contact Josh Dirkse at [josh@aegis-wi.com](mailto:josh@aegis-wi.com) or 800.236.6885**



# PROPERTY SCHOOL

**SAVE THE DATE**

## DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION BUDGET LEADERSHIP A PROPERTY SCHOOL MINI-SERIES

JULY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 14<sup>TH</sup>, 21<sup>ST</sup>, & 28<sup>TH</sup>  
10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.



CADENCE CONSULTING

The Property School's **Design & Construction Budget Leadership Mini-Series** will benefit community leaders who aim to develop an increased knowledge and understanding of today's complex preconstruction budgeting process. These customized sessions are ideal to increase the capacity and preparedness of administrative leaders ahead of capital investment projects. Utilizing a consistent model project, each session will have a unique focus while building consecutively on one another. Key seminar topics include project phasing, budget management, industry terminology, partner roles and responsibilities, owner responsibilities, and much more.

<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Wednesday, July 7, 2021</b>	<b>// Budgeting 101</b>
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Wednesday, July 14, 2021</b>	<b>// Hard Costs &amp; Soft Costs</b>
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Wednesday, July 21, 2021</b>	<b>// Risk Management</b>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Wednesday, July 28, 2021</b>	<b>// Budget Leadership</b>

All times 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Registration information and detailed Session descriptions forthcoming. There is NO COST to attend the Property School events.**

### ABOUT MICHAEL A. HACKER

Michael A. Hacker is a licensed Architect in the state of Wisconsin, dedicated educator and trusted advising consultant within the architectural design and construction industry. His 15 years of professional experience includes extensive leadership within educational, civic, and nonprofit project types. Areas of expertise are foundationally rooted in the belief that strategically developed and thoughtfully executed processes lead to the most successful projects. As an educator and professional advisor, Mike's passion lies in helping communities define and solve the problems worth solving.

### ABOUT CADENCE CONSULTING

Cadence Consulting is a design and construction advising services firm focusing almost exclusively in support of educational and civic clients throughout Wisconsin. Through guidance, education and collaboration, Cadence supports clients in clearly defining their need, building the right team and crafting the right combination of processes needed to successfully complete a building project. Cadence provides a wide range of facilitation services focused on developing project strategies, clearly defining needs, developing/managing budgets and times, and building the right design and construction team to execute important projects.

The Property School is an ongoing program to support Facilities/Building Management personnel and provide education aimed at preventing and mitigating losses. Topics such as programmed maintenance, emerging building techniques/materials, inspection tools and procedures, and guidelines for repair and general maintenance. The Property School is administered in association with our strategic partners.