One-Stop Data Shop
Fire Analysis and Research Division
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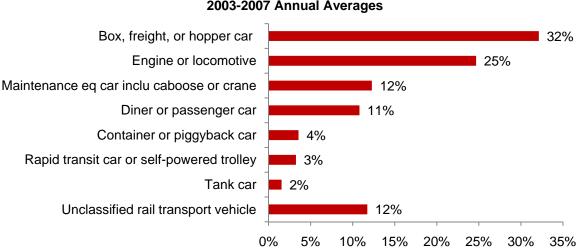Email: osds@nfpa.org
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Rail Vehicle Fires in the U.S. in 2003-2007

Fire departments responded to an average of 1,290 rail vehicle fires per year in 2003-2007. These fires caused an average of six civilian injuries and $28 million in direct property damage annually. Deaths averaged less than one per year.

Almost one-third of the rail vehicles involved in fires were box, freight or hopper cars.

Some type of mechanical failure or malfunction was a factor in 44% of the fires and an electrical failure or malfunction played a role in 19%.

Types of Rail Vehicles Involved in Reported Fires
2003-2007 Annual Averages

Type	Percentage
Box, freight, or hopper car	32%
Engine or locomotive	25%
Maintenance eq car inclu caboose or crane	12%
Diner or passenger car	11%
Container or piggyback car	4%
Rapid transit car or self-powered trolley	3%
Tank car	2%
Unclassified rail transport vehicle	12%

Fires on Railroad Properties

Almost half (44%) of rail vehicle fires occurred on railroad properties. While other non-rail vehicles also burned on these properties, the most common types of fires were outside fires, particularly brush or grass fires.

Fires in or on Railroad Properties
2003-2007 Annual Averages

Incident Type	Railroad Right of Way		Railroad Yard	
Structure fire	310	(3%)	50	(6%)
Vehicle fire	790	(7%)	320	(34%)
Outside or unclassified fire	9,540	(90%)	550	(60%)
Total	10,650	(100%)	930	(100%)