Office of Education and Data Management

Division of Fire and Building Services
State of Connecticut Department of Construction Services

NFIRS 5.0 Coding Questions and Answers

A Reference Guide

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FORWARD

The following information details frequently asked coding questions and answers and as a combined reference guide for all NFIRS Users. It contains information from the October 2008 NFIRS Coding Issues and Problem Solving class and the November 2003 NFIRS 5.0 Coding Issues class. This information is presented to assist you in preparing your incident reports

GENERAL QUESTIONS

If a fire department is cancelled while en-route to an incident does the entire Basic Module have to be completed?

It is not necessary to complete blocks G2, H2, H3, I, or J.

Should incident reports be generated for a fire department training exercise?

Incident reports should not be submitted for training exercises unless there is a fire service casualty at the training exercise. An EMS incident report would be created in the system and the casualty would be treated as if the department responded to the EMS.

A fire department responds to a call for power lines down and upon arrival finds the wires to be telephone or cable wires. What is the Incident Code?

The department reports based on what it finds, not what it is dispatched to. Therefore, this is a good intent call and should be coded as '600 – Good intent, other'.

Should we use Incident Code '621 – Wrong location' when we are unable to find an incident scene that we were dispatched to?

Yes, Incident Code '621 – Wrong location' would be an appropriate code to use in the situation described.

Can Incident Type 300 be used for an incident where an EMS module will be used?

No, validation rules will not allow it. Some 300 series Incident Types 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 Incident Type 300.

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, causing the fire department to respond. What Incident Code should be used for this situation?

The fire was not a hostile fire. The fire was controlled and used as device to set off the sprinkler. The incident is not a fire. Incident Code is '700-Malicious false call, other' is the appropriate code to use in this situation.

A fire department responds to a motor vehicle accident with reported injuries. Upon arrival, department personnel evaluate each victim and find no injuries. How would the Incident Type and Action Taken be coded?

The Incident Type could be a '463-Vehicle accident, general cleanup' or '600-Good intent, other' depending on the situation. The Actions Taken would reflect what was done and could include '31-Checking for injuries', '45-Removing hazard', or '86-Investigation'.

A fire department is notified six weeks after the fact of the following case. It appears that an elderly woman was cooking. Her clothes catch fire and she is burned. A male companion comes to visit, finds her on the floor, badly burned, and takes her to the

hospital. She is then transferred to the burn center where she died. There was no response by fire department, police, or EMS.

Because there was no fire department response, there was no incident to report.

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?

Owner information is for the aircraft.

With a vehicle fire incident, is the owner listed on the Basic Module, Block K2, the owner of the property or the owner of the vehicle?

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 the other property is captured on an Exposure Report.

Does the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) need to be completely filled out when the fire department responds to an EMS call?

If the Incident Type is '321-EMS call', the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) must be completed. This includes all sections. Listing the name of the person involved is a local option.

Should the firefighter casualty count on the Basic Module, Block H1, include only firefighters injured during fire?

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

How are resources defined in the Basic Module (G1)?

The total number of fire department personnel and apparatus (suppression, EMS, other) that responded to the incident. This includes all fire and EMS personnel assigned to the incident whether they arrived at the scene or were cancelled before arrival.

How is the location of an incident indicated when 'Directions or Intersection' is selected in the Basic Module (B)?

When either Directions or Intersection is selected for the location of an incident, one street name should be entered on the 'Street or Highway' line, and the directions or cross-street should be entered on the 'Cross-Street or Directions' line. If this procedure isn't followed, the incident will be invalid.

What is a good definition of Actions Taken (Basic F) code '92-Standby'? Could this be used for personnel waiting in a staging area?

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

When a fire department is involved in some type of community service, parade patrol for example, and personnel/equipment are being used, what code best reflects what they are doing?

The code that bests reflects the activity in this case is '553 – Public service. Excludes service to governmental agencies (551 or 552)'.

I have departments that are overusing plus-one coding on their incidents. How can a department further define their actions taken without using a plus-one code on the actual Action Taken code? For example, a fire department responds to an EMS call. The action taken is to provide ALS. They want to capture the fact that their medic went with the ambulance to the hospital. Is it possible that they can capture this information by using the apparatus/personnel module instead of using a plus-one code?

The current system does not have a method to capture the fact that their medic went with the ambulance to the hospital.

An apparatus arrives at the scene but is cancelled before personnel exit the vehicle. How should this be coded?

The incident should still be coded as a '611 - Dispatched and canceled 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.

A fire department responded to a reported motor vehicle accident at a specific location, did not find the accident at the location, but continued on and found the accident at a different location. Should the location be reported as the initial address or the final address?

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

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. How should this be coded?

The appropriate Incident Code in this case would be '552 – Police matter'. This includes incidents where fire department is called to a scene that should be handled by the police.

How would you code a shooting incident? If they were providing aid, they were told to complete a mutual aid report. What should their 'Actions Taken' be—standby or incident command?

If the departments responded on the call as mutual aid, then they should complete a mutual aid report for an EMS incident. If all they did was standby, then their actions taken should be standby.

How would a call created in error from dispatch be coded? The call has no address or unit to assign. The call is simply a miss-typed key that creates a skipped run number. It seems that if it is coded as a canceled call it will skew statistics. What should be done?

It's not a call and an incident report should not be generated.

What would the code for Landing Zone Helicopter be?

The Incident Code is ‘462-Aircraft standby’. This includes routine standby for takeoff and landing as well as emergency alerts at airports.

Should a fire department document dollar loss for non-fire incidents such as motor vehicle accidents or hazmat incidents?

Dollar loss should be documented for fire incidents (100 series) only. It is an estimate of the total pre-incident value for the property and property contents in terms of replacement of the damaged items and property. 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, nor does it include the cost of hazardous material removal.

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

The most appropriate Actions Taken for Incident Type 463 is code ‘50 - Fires, rescues, and hazardous conditions, other’. Unfortunately, there isn't a more descriptive code for removal of debris from roadway. If you wish to avoid the “Other” code, you could use ‘73 – Provide manpower’ as well as ‘70 – Assistance, other’.

MUTUAL AID

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

The warning is creating if the FDID number is not provided to remind fire departments to get the data if they can. When the information is not available the field may be left blank.

If an incident involved the 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?

No. Aid to a private ambulance should be coded as an Incident Type 311 with the appropriate actions taken. The assistance to the police would be coded as an Incident Type 551 or 552, again, with the appropriate actions taken.

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. For example, 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?

You cannot assign a plus one code to an FDID number. NFIRS 5.0 includes a station field, which can be used locally to distinguish between the different stations that share a common FDID. So, essentially you would be treating them as stations of the same fire department (for reporting purposes only).

When we are dispatched as mutual aid to a neighboring town and are sent directly to the scene for fire duty, as opposed to standing by at a station. Do we still code the incident as '571 – Cover assignment'? We have used this in the past with Action Taken of "provide manpower" and "provide apparatus".

You code the incident as what it was, i.e. structure fire, car accident, etc. You can still code your Actions Taken as "provide manpower" or "provide apparatus". Incident Code 571 is used when standing by at the neighboring town's fire station.

If a responding department goes on an EMS call while covering for another department, and leaves patient medical data with the receiving department so that department can complete the incident report, is there a HIPPA privacy violation?

HIPPA regulations in this case do not preclude the information from being collected, although there are requirements for how the information should be safeguarded. Fire departments should get advice from their city attorney for specific guidance on how the information should be protected.

A department gives mutual aid to another department by standing by in the receiving department's firehouse. The receiving department gets a call. As noted in NFIRS, the giving department becomes the receiving department, and must document the

incident. How should resources be documented? Are the used resources the giving department's resources or does the receiving department put their resource count because they were out on another call?

The giving department that is filling in for the receiving department should fill out the incident report using the receiving department's FDID and incident number. The number of apparatus and personnel responding should be from the giving department.

An ambulance requests that we provide an ambulance and crew to stand by for them. The call is entered into the system and the crew responds to the firehouse to stand by until released by the ambulance company. Should these call types be entered as '311-Medical assist'? What should be noted for arrival time? Should Actions Taken be '73-Provide manpower' and '74-Provide apparatus', or is there something else that should be used?

Incident Code 311 is correct. Arrival time documented should be the arrival time to the station or a time that is about 2-3 minutes after the alarm time. The Actions Taken can be a standby. Incident Code '74 - Providing apparatus' is only used if a fire truck is provided for the incident.

Same as the question above, but the crew relocates the ambulance to a location near the town line. Should Incident Code '311-Medical assist' be used here with the corresponding times for the call and arrival on the scene of the standby?

That is correct, and you would put the address of the location they are standing by.

If a fire department is on their own call and they are paged for mutual aid but cannot (do not) respond, what type of report do they complete? Why isn't documentation as to why they did not respond noted in the remarks section of the report for the call they are already on?

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

Fire department #2 renders mutual aid to fire department #1. During the call, a firefighter from department #2 was injured. Does department #2 complete the firefighter casualty report since that is his department?

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

We responded mutual aid with a fire investigator and accelerant K-9 to investigate a fire in another jurisdiction, giving mutual aid after a fire incident. Would the correct Incident Code be '551-Assist Police/Other Governmental Agency', or would it be a fire Incident Type?

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 his/her response to assist another agency, Incident Type 551 would be an appropriate incident type code.

FIRES

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 is the Incident Type?

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 number of buildings involved should be documented in the Fire Module, Section B2.

A vehicle catches fire on a parking ramp. Two other vehicles catch fire from the first vehicle. Are these two vehicles considered an exposure fire or, as is in the Version 5.0 manual, should you "treat similar items in a group as a single exposure", such as a fleet of cars?

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 exposure.

What Incident Type would be used for a small, single bush that burned outside? What modules need to be completed?

Section C code is Incident Type 142. Because of this, the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) and the Fire Module (NFIRS-2) will have to be completed.

How would a fire that results from material being placed or stored too close a heat source be coded in Section E of the Fire Module?

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’.

Why can’t Incident Code ’71 – Exposure’ be entered in the fire module?

If an incident is not an exposure incident (exposure number = 000), the system will not accept the entry of Incident Code ‘71-Exposure’ in the Fire Module (NFIRS-2), Factors Contributing to Ignition field.

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

When a vehicle is involved in the ignition, rather than completing the "Equipment Involved" fields, there are specific fields designed just to capture vehicle information. You can never have the Equipment Involved in Ignition and Mobile Property involved in Ignition on the same incident. Only one type of equipment can be involved in the ignition of the fire. They are mutually exclusive.

Should an uncontained trash fire in a structure that only burns the trash be coded as an Incident Code ‘118-Trash or rubbish fire in a structure, with no flame damage to

structure or its contents'? The other confined structure fire codes mention non-combustible containers but this code does not. If Incident Type 118 cannot be used, isn't Incident Type 111 the default which requires both the Fire and Structure Fire Module?

The appropriate Incident Code in this case would be '118 - Trash or rubbish fire in a structure, with no flame damage to structure or its contents.'

Should a fire confined to a toaster, microwave oven, or conventional oven be coded as an Incident Type 113, 111, or 121? Are these items considered cooking vessels or equipment involved? If coded as an Incident Type 113, the Equipment Involved in Ignition would not be captured because the Fire Module would not be completed but the cause would still be cooking.

The incident should be coded as a '111 - Structure fire' and the equipment involved should be captured.

How would an incident involving smoke from a chimney misidentified as a hostile fire be reported?

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

For an incident where an electrical transformer (pole mounted or ground mounted) is burning, what Incident Code do you recommend?

The appropriate Incident 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.'

How should Methamphetamine lab fires be coded?

Assuming that the lab fire is in a single family home:

BASIC MODULE
Incident Type = 111 (building)
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.

If a fire was started on a wooden deck by an extra long extension cord arcing, would the heat source be '13-Electrical arcing', operating equipment category?

The heat source code should be '13 – Electrical arcing'. It is also suggested that the department include a factor contributing to ignition of '54-Equipment overloaded' and/or one of the 30 series codes for Electrical Failure, Malfunction.

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. Is that an exposure to the first fire, or separate fires, separate incidents?

The additional fires should be classified as exposure fires.

When responding to a residential grass 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 a '143-Attributed a dollar value and loss'. Is this okay?

The Incident Type 143 works fine for your example. Adding a dollar loss value is okay as well, since property was damaged. This should also be documented in the narrative to give information on the dollar loss.

How do I code a pole fire?

Basic Module:
Incident Type code = 112

Fire Module:
Item First Ignited = 86 Fence, pole
Type of Material first ignited= 62, Round timber including round posts, poles

Structure Fire Module:
Structure Type = 0

By using zero in this block, there is nothing else that needs to be completed

In the Structure Fire Module, Building Height (13), should mechanical or enclosed attic spaces be counted as a separate story or as a part of the highest story?

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.

When coding a structure fire in an apartment building, do you enter the square footage, Block 14, for just the apartment involved in the fire or for the entire building?

The length times the width (in feet) of the floor where the fire occurred will give the square footage to be documented.

How would the location of moving vehicle fire be reported? Would it be the location when first reported, the location when found by the first arriving unit or the location when it stops?

The location documented should be location where the vehicle stopped.

How or what number do I use for an exposure number when completing the Basic Module?

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.

We had two people die from CO^2 due to a fire in an air handler. I'm assuming these would not be fire deaths. Is my assumption correct?

If those people died because of a direct relation to the fire in the HVAC system, then they would be considered fire deaths.

What is the proper code to use for a deck fire attached to the back of the house with no extension or damage to the house? Incident Code 111 seems suitable, but is there a better one to use?

You are correct. It is an Incident Code 111.

A fire department had a fire at a gas station. The fire was the 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. Would this be an Incident Code '112-Fire in structure, not a building' because it occurred at the pump on the island? Or would it be an Incident Code '160-Special outside fire'?

A better choice than Incident Code 160 would be Incident Code '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). Incident Code 112 also fits. However, we believe Incident Code 162 is a more accurate description of the incident.

CASUALTIES

How can I record civilian deaths due to car accidents using the NFIRS forms? This is a stat that my Chief would like to track and it would be best for us to do it through NFIRS, if possible.

The basic module is completed using Incident Code '321-MVA with injuries'. The department could then complete the EMS module (NFIRS-6) with the following information: E-Code '28-Obvious death' or '38-Trauma'. G1 could be #2. H3 Cause, Code 29.

I have an incident that includes a firefighter casualty but it is giving us an error that states you can not have a firefighter casualty on an incident that is a contained fire. The casualty actually came about due to this incident and I thought all firefighter casualties had to be reported on the incident they were related to. Is my thinking wrong or am I reporting it the wrong way?

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.

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

Yes. An incident should be created for all fire service causalities, whether or not they occur at an incident, and these injuries included in the total in Block H1. The incident type would probably be coded as '321-EMS call'.

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

No. Under the Hometown Heroes Act, the time frame for incident related deaths is 24 hours.

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

No. Only fire-related civilian casualties are listed in Basic Module Block H1 and the Civilian Casualty Module may be used for only fire related incidents.

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

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

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

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 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 Code to use? How do other departments handle this issue?

Incident Code '321-EMS call' is the correct code to use. If a firefighter is injured in the station while performing PT, apparatus checks, station maintenance, or while in training, then the Incident Code selected should be 321 because his or her injury should necessitate the evaluation of and possible treatment of the injury as well as possible transport. Even if the firefighter is not transported to the hospital or outpatient clinic for further evaluation the Incident Code should still be '321 - EMS call'.

EMS INCIDENTS

If EMS is not connected to the Fire Department, is this considered a private Ambulance Service? If so, in the case of a motor vehicle accident with the Fire Department assisting EMS, what should the code be - 311, 551, or 324 (EMS Incident)? For clarification, the EMS is sometimes called along with the Fire Department in case there are injuries.

The appropriate Incident Code in this case would be 311 - Medical Assist. This code includes incidents where medical assistance is provided to another group/agency that has primary EMS responsibility, i.e. 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.

How do we decide which Action Taken to use for Incident Code '321-EMS call. Excluding auto accident injury'?

The Actions Taken codes, any 20, 30, or 70 series codes would certainly be appropriate**.**

We have a contracted ambulance service in our city. Many times, we have dispatched incidents where the Fire Department arrives on-scene but are waved off by the ambulance service. Would it be appropriate to use Incident Code '661-EMS call, party transported by non-fire agency' for these types of calls even if we're unsure if the patient was transported? Is there another suggestion for the Incident Code to use? This is assuming fire department personnel provide no patient care.

Incident Code 661 or 311 would be acceptable codes, depending on what actions fire personnel perform upon arrival.

Personnel respond to a medical call. On scene, they have two patients with carbon monoxide poisoning. Should the call be coded a medical or a '424-Carbon monoxide incident'? HazMat Released has '0-Special hazmat actions' filled in.

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 call type should be Carbon Monoxide incident.

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

You are only reporting on your department's activities. Private ambulance services are not reported.

We are EMT-I with defibrillator certification. We contract with a paramedic service to respond to all 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 EMT-B to indicate our department and '0-Other health provider' to indicate the ambulance service. Example: On most calls we would provide the initial care and the ambulance personnel would then take over. We would enter "EMT-B" for initial care and '0-Other health provider' for highest level. Is this correct?

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 L1 as (3) then the 3rd party ambulance (Rural Metro, AMR, etc.) arrives. Code L2 as (3) because another agency is now transporting and caring for the patient.

If the Fire Department fills out the EMS module, is the department still required to complete a patient care record?

The EMS Module is not a patient care record, but should be used in conjunction with the local requirements for patient care. The EMS Module is not intended to replace or otherwise interfere with state or local EMS patient care reporting requirements, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive EMS patient care report. Instead, the data elements in this module should be viewed as “core elements” around which a complete patient care report can be built.

If EMS is involved with a spill, leak or special hazmat action, wouldn’t the Incident Type reflect the spill, leak or hazmat action?

If there is a combination of HazMat and EMS, the incident may include both hazardous materials and EMS modules. The FD will choose the most significant incident type as either an EMS or HazMat incident. Either way, both modules can be completed.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

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

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

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?

The Incident Type would be reported as the situation they responded to. The department responding with this special apparatus would be giving aid. The persons responding with the equipment would report the actions taken, which might be to provide the apparatus while someone else actually uses the tools and equipment, or any other actions which involved using the apparatus.

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

Number evacuated can be captured in the HazMat Module, through special studies, or the information may be captured in the narrative.

What is the meaning of evacuation? If a department asks a resident to step outside of a structure while it is being investigated, is this considered an evacuation? We respond to this type of call often but do not conduct large scale evacuation and this code is causing some confusion when reporting it. An example would be a slow leak from a kitchen stove which has caused the Carbon Monoxide Detector to activate.

Yes. The definition of evacuation is the movement of persons from a dangerous place due to a dangerous situation.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

A. PLUS-ONE CODES

Plus-one codes are an additional code to allow departments to capture data more specific to their needs. However, because the USFA database is set up for three digit codes, you will receive warning errors that plus-one codes are not defined. The incident will still be processed, and if no other errors occur, will become part of both the State and National Database. Plus-one codes should not be applied to every incident. They are only used to capture information on a limited number of incidents.

B. CODING INCIDENT TYPES, ACTIONS TAKEN, ETC.

Most department personnel are not coding incidents properly. Whether you use the codes in the look-up table of computer software programs or the codes in the Complete Reference Guide, the proper code for the incident should be obtained not just the code that ends in zero i.e. 300, 400, 500. Using these types of codes instead of the actual incident does not accurately report the incident. Always remember that all NFIRS reports are legal records of the incident the fire department responds to and are subject to FOI and legal subpoena.

C. ERRORS

There are two types of errors that can be generated when submitting reports to the State. These are warning errors and critical errors. Warning errors are generated when something is missing but is not required. This type of error does not prevent the report from being processed. Critical errors show when something is missing from the report that is required by the software documentation.

D. ERROR MESSAGES

Error: Missing values for property loss, contents loss for fire incidents
In the Basic Module (Module 1) item G2 Estimated Dollar Losses and Values, the property and contents losses are to be reported for fires if known. However, when reporting dollar and contents losses, pre-incident values must also be entered or a critical error will be generated. Dollar amounts should be in whole numbers only. Remember that these dollar amounts are only estimates. You should not feel uncomfortable entering a reasonable dollar amount.

Error: Incident type cancelled en-route/incident action not cancelled en-route
If Incident Type (C) is ‘611-Cancelled en-route’, Actions Taken (F) must also be ‘cancelled en-route’. If another Action Taken code is used, the Incident Type must relate, i.e. Code ‘746-Smoke Detector Activation’, Action Taken, ‘86-Investigate’. ‘Cancelled en-route’ is only used as an Action Taken when no one from the fire department arrives at scene. Capturing the cancellation of a piece of apparatus is done on the Apparatus Module (9).

Error: Mutual aid given FDID number requested
This warning occurs when Block "D" Aid Given or Received has number 3 or 4 checked. The computer is looking for the FDID number of the department you are giving mutual aid to. By entering this number, you are detailing your mutual aid calls. This also allows the giving department short-form reporting.

Error: Number of Civilian Fire Casualties on Basic module does not equal the number of Civilian Fire Casualty modules.
When entering the number of Civilian Fire Casualties in H1 (Basic Module), you must be sure that the number you enter equals the number of Civilian Fire Casualty Modules (Module 4) completed. As a reminder, Module 4 is only completed for fire-related injuries or deaths. This module should not be completed for the person who is injured in a motor vehicle or other type of accident.

Error: UN number is not equal to suggested UN number.
This warning is stating that the number that you entered is not in the lookup table of UN numbers. Please check your software to see if you can add this number to the lookup table.

Error: CAS registration is not equal to suggested CAS registration.
This warning is stating that the number that you entered is not equal to the lookup table. If you are not able to get a particular registration, it is permissible to leave it blank.

Error: Chemical name not found in lookup database.
There are many chemicals that may be encountered in hazmat incidents. If you have to add a chemical name that is not in the NFIRS database, it can be added to the lookup table so this error does not occur.

Error: Apparatus arrival time cannot precede incident arrival time
This error occurs when the Arrival Time on the Apparatus Module (9) differs from the Arrival time that is entered on E1 Dates and Times (Basic Module NFIRS-1). It is extremely important that care is taken to make sure that the times are the same. Your software may not validate the times on the Apparatus module with the times on the Basic Module. This is especially true in the use of CAD systems.

Error: Apparatus clear time cannot exceed incident last unit clear time
This error occurs when the Last Unit Cleared time on the Apparatus Module (9) differs from the Last Unit Cleared time which is entered on E1 Dates and Times (Basic Module). It is extremely important that care is taken to make sure that the times are the same. Your software may not validate the times on the Apparatus module with the times on the Basic Module. This is especially true in the use of CAD systems.

Error: Basic module required data directions
When completing Section B Location (Basic Module, NFIRS-1) using Directions as the incident location, make sure that the Directions box is checked. Entering directions as a Street Address will cause this error.

Error: If property loss and contents loss is completed, property and contents pre-incident values must be entered.
As mentioned previously under warning errors, if you complete Estimated Dollar Loss and Values (Section G2 Basic Module, NFIRS-1) and do not enter a pre-incident property and contents value a critical error is generated.

When I use plus-one codes for my local information, why do I get errors?
Plus-one codes are used as a local option for departments to specify in detail particular incident information about the call. When these incidents are processed at the state level, there is no provision for these types of codes so the computer gives a warning error that the code specified does not relate to the standard code and it will therefore not be processed as a plus-one. Some plus-one coding errors received may include:

Plus-one codes may not be defined in relation to structure type.
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Property Use".
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Incident Actions Taken".
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Provider Impression" in EMS Module (NFIRS-6)

Critical Error Messages

Critical errors should never occur at the State level. Computer software at the local level should validate all submissions before being sent to capture the critical errors and kick out the report. If critical errors are created on the State level during processing, this means that the software version the department is using may not be up to date with the current version of the software being used on the State level.

"The software that is used to operate the NFRIS system at the local level should be responsible for catching all critical errors prior to exporting the incident reports to the state. If this is not happening, the vendor from whom the software was purchased must be contacted to correct this problem."

Error: Action Taken invalid given Incident Type
This error occurs when the code entered in Incident Type (Section C Basic Module NFIRS-1) is not compatible with the Actions Taken listed in Section F. The primary Action Taken must be in agreement with the Incident Type chosen. For example, Incident Type is coded a '746-Smoke detector activation' and the first Action Taken is '11-Extinguishment'.

Error: Arrival time given prior to alarm time
This error occurs when the arrival time for the first piece of apparatus is prior to the alarm time of the incident. This type of error should be immediately picked up by the software validation as a critical error when the time is entered.

Error: Pre-incident Property Value/ Pre-incident Contents Value
Property/Contents loss values cannot exceed pre-incident property/contents values. Care must be taken to make sure that dollar loss figures entered in G2 (Basic Module-NFIRS 1) are in relation to one another. In other words, if you put a property/contents loss figure in, you must have a corresponding pre-incident value entered in as well.

Error: Mobile property involved – required data
If the Incident Type indicates a vehicle fire, then 'Mobile property involved' (Fire Module, NFIRS-2, Section H1) must be completed. This type of error should have been found on the local level during export validation.

Error: Fire contributing factors
If contributing factors equal "None", no other factors can be listed. In multiple choice fields, if a selection of "None" (N, NN, or NNN) is entered, no other code may be selected.

Error: Required Data—On-site Materials
If property use codes equal 500s, 600s, 700s, and 800s, then On-site Materials or Products (Fire Module, Section C) must be completed. These are commercial, industrial, manufacturing, or agricultural uses of the property. Otherwise do not complete this section.

Error: Total square feet or building height and width is required
Section 14, Main Floor Size, Structure Fire Module (NFIRS-3) is a required field. You can either enter the total square feet or length or width, but you must complete this section. The software used to operate the NFIRS system should also catch this.

Error: Fire Spread Invalid (given # of stories damaged)
Fire spread is how far the flame damage extended. The number of stories damaged relates to flame damage only. It does not include damage caused by heat, smoke or water. The numbers entered in both these fields Sections J2 and J3, Structure Fire Module (NFIRS-3) must be consistent or this error will occur.

Error: Alarm time can't precede injury time on fire service casualty module
When completing the Fire Service Casualty Module (NFIRS-5), please be careful in recording times of injury. Again when times are entered in the Basic Module, Section E1, these should be checked against the time you are entering in Module 5.

Error: Hazardous Material Module (NFIRS-7) Not Allowed (given incident type)
Hazardous Materials Module (NFIRS-7) is only allowed for incident type codes of: 100-243; 400-431; and 900.

Error: Fire Service Casualty Module—Story of Injury: Can't be zero when injury occurred =2
If an injury occurred in a structure, the story where the injury occurred cannot be zero. In this case, the injury occurred at the fire station (2). Therefore, there must be an associated floor or story with that code. If it was at the fire station, but outside, then where the injury occurred must reflect that.

Error: Detector Alerted Occupants required for confined fires
Information regarding the presence of detectors in the general area of the fire's origin and their operation is necessary in structure fire situations. This becomes a required field when the incident type codes in Section C, Basic Module (NFIRS-1) indicate confined fire codes 113-118.

Error: If the procedures code used is "None", no other procedures may be listed
Care must be taken when completing EMS Module (NFIRS-6). Procedures are what are done for the patient. If you do nothing for the patient, then check off none. This more than likely will occur when there is a refusal or no patient at all. In that case, it may not even be necessary to complete the EMS Module (NFIRS-6).

Error: If human factors contributing to ignition are "None", then no other factors may be listed.
In Section E3 of the Fire Module (NFIRS-2) when there are no human factors that contributed to the ignition of the fire, you must leave the entire section alone.

Error: Detector Type, Detector Power Supply and Detector Operation are required data.
When Section L1 in the Structure Fire Module (NIFRS-3) indicates that there were detectors present, L2 Detector Type, L3 Detector Power Supply, and L4 Detector Operation must be completed. Each one is contingent upon the other.

Error: Type of right of way only valid when right of way is specified
Section M, Right of Way, Wildland Module (NFIRS-8) looks for information when there is a right of way on the property of the fire. This information is required if the row is less than 100 feet. You cannot indicate type of right of way if you have not indicated there was a right of way.

Error: Required Data # of Acres Burned
When Section C, Incident Type Basic Module (NFIRS-1) indicates a brush, grass or forest fire, the number of acres burned becomes a required field.

USFA WEB BASED REPORT ACCESS PROCEDURES

1. Go to www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/

2. Complete the registration form.

3 Notify Norma Ruiz, Office of Education and Data Management, by email at Norma.Ruiz@po.state.ct.us or by phone at 860-685-8372. Upon notification, Norma will activate your fire department account. She will notify you that the account is active and will give you the permissions that have been assigned to the account.

4. Go to www.nfirs.fema.gov and click on the web-based tools tab. Click on Summary Output Reports Tool in the left box. You will see two links: **Summary Output Reports Tool, Login** and **Summary Output Reports Tool, User Documentation**.

5. If you click on **Summary Output Reports Tool, User Documentation**, you reach an informational link that will give you all the information you need regarding the web-based reports. This site includes downloadable user's manual and report descriptions to assist you in determining what reports you may what to use.

6. If you click on **Summary Output Reports Tool, Login**, you will then be directed to the Summary Output Reports Tool. Click on Reports Login in the left box. This will allow you to access and run various types of reports. **MAKE SURE YOU PUT CT IN THE STATE FIELD.**

After a successful log on, it is suggested that you run a Detailed Selected Statistics Report to obtain an overall picture of all Fire Department Incidents. After doing so, you can run more detailed reports.

NFIRS INCIDENT FIELD NOTES ACCESS PROCEDURE

1. Go to www.nfic.org
2. Click on arrow in **Quick Pick Box**
3. Highlight NFIC Documents
4. Highlight NFIRS Incident Field Notes
5. The NFIRS Incident Field Notes form comes up and can be printed.