



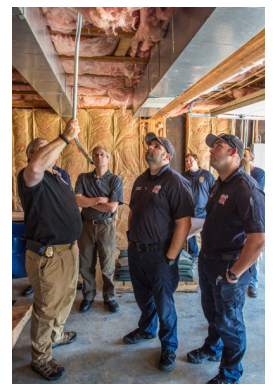
# TENNESSEE STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

*Submitted in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 68-102-133*

*Carter Lawrence, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of  
Commerce and Insurance and State Fire Marshal*

*Jennifer Peck, Chief of Staff/Chief Operating Officer, Tennessee  
Department of Commerce and Insurance*

*Gary Farley, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Fire Prevention*



---

## Table of Contents

---

Overview	1
Overview of the State	2
Fire Department and Firefighter Statistics	3
Education and Outreach	4
Codes Enforcement	4
Electrical, Residential, and Marina Inspections	5
Manufactured Housing and Modular Building	5
Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy	6
Commission on Firefighter Personnel Standards and Education	6
Administrative Services	7
SFMO Operating Costs	8
Recommended Amendments	8

---

---

## Tennessee Code Annotated § 68-102-133

---

The commissioner shall, annually, on or before February 15, transmit to the governor a full report of the commissioner's proceedings under this chapter, and such statistics as the commissioner may wish to include in the report, for the year previous. The commissioner shall also recommend any amendments to the law that, in the commissioner's judgment, are deemed advisable. The report of the commissioner shall include a full and complete report of all collections made and all expenditures and for what purposes they were made and to whom paid.

---

### Overview of State Fire Marshal's Office Operations

The mission of the Division of Fire Prevention, known as the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO), is to reduce the loss of life and property from fire. The SFMO and its seven sections are committed to protecting the safety of Tennesseans and their property. Each section of the SFMO incorporates one or more of these core functions which aligns focus and provides vision for the future.

The Education and Outreach section assists the fire service, elected officials, and the communities they serve to realize the potential economic incentives of prevention by analyzing data to identify trends and develop targeted messaging. To reduce the susceptibility of buildings to fire, the SFMO works to ensure engineered environments are designed and constructed to applicable code standards through the Codes Enforcement section, the Electrical, Residential and Marina Inspections section, and the Manufactured Housing and Modular Building section. The Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy (TFACA) and the Commission on Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education (Commission) are tasked with training and certification of firefighters which serves to promote professionalism and competency. Lastly, the Administrative Services section provides support for the SFMO overseeing the processing of over 20 types of permits, licenses, and certificates.

### Fire Prevention Division Sections

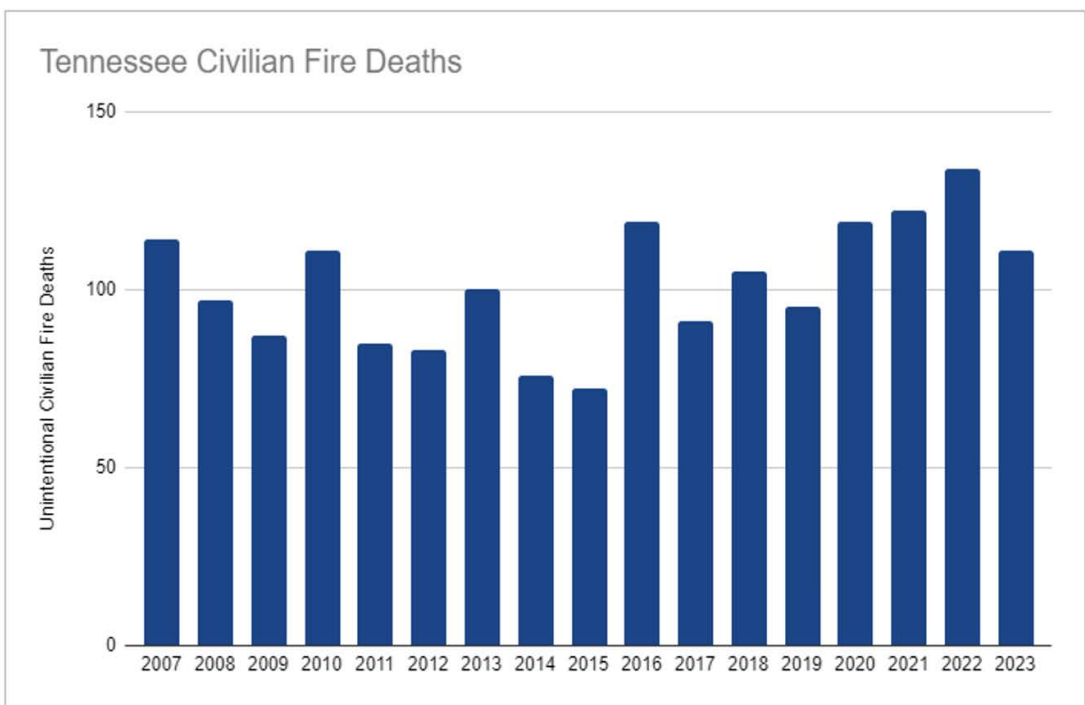
- Education and Outreach
- Codes Enforcement
- Electrical, Residential and Marina Inspections
- Manufactured Housing and Modular Building
- Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy (TFACA)
- Commission on Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education (Commission)
- Administrative Services

## Overview of the State

Tennessee has historically ranked among the highest states in the country in its rate of unintentional civilian fire deaths. The SFMO is committed to reducing the loss of life and property due to fires by focusing on education, codes enforcement, inspection, and regulation. Like most of the United States, Tennessee has experienced a reduction in fire deaths over the past several decades due, in part, to these programs. In 2023, Tennessee recorded a fire death rate of 15.6 per million, which is an improvement over the previous 5-year average of 16.6 deaths per million.

The preliminary 2023 fire data shows a decrease of about 3.5 deaths per million in unintentional civilian fire deaths from last year, or a reduction of 17%. According to SFMO records, there were 111 fire deaths in Tennessee during 2023, which is down from the 134 fire deaths the previous year. The overall trend of fire deaths since 2007 has been generally flat.

Year	Fatalities	Fatality Rate
2007	114	18.46
2008	97	15.53
2009	87	13.80
2010	111	17.47
2011	85	13.28
2012	83	12.86
2013	100	15.39
2014	76	11.61
2015	72	10.92
2016	119	17.89
2017	91	13.55
2018	105	15.49
2019	95	13.91
2020	119	17.18
2021	122	17.51
2022	134	19.00
2023	111	15.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,721</b>	<b>15.28</b>



Most unintentional civilian fire deaths occur in residential structures, and more than three quarters of the fire deaths in 2023 occurred in single-family homes, which is slightly more than previous years. From 2018-2022, 79.8% of fire deaths occurred in single-family homes.

Structure Type	Incidents	Deaths	%
Single	75	96	86.49%
Multi-Family	6	10	9.01%
Duplex	2	3	2.70%
Other	2	2	1.80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100%</b>

Fire departments reported 8,913 structure fires which is a slight decrease from the 9,318 structure fires reported in 2022. Although, it should be noted, the number of reported fires is expected to marginally increase as fire departments continue to submit reports from the 2023 calendar year during the first part of 2024.

The table to the right represents all incidents and dollar loss as reported to the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS) for the 2023 calendar year. The data contained in the table is considered preliminary until April 2024 to ensure that all fire reports are complete.

The 29,490 total reported fires caused an estimated \$426.1 million in property loss for Tennesseans last calendar year. These loss estimates are from incident reports submitted by fire departments. As with the structure fire data, the SFMO expects this number to increase slightly as fire departments are still submitting and updating incident reports. The preliminary estimate of \$426.1 million in property loss from structure fires in 2023 is down significantly from the \$454.2 million reported in 2022.

Reported Incident Type	Reported Incidents	% of Total
Fire: Structure	8,913	1.19 %
Fire: Vehicle	5,513	0.74 %
Fire: Other	15,064	2.01 %
<b>Fire Subtotal</b>	<b>29,490</b>	<b>3.94 %</b>
Rescue: Medical Treatment	470,835	62.91 %
Rescue: Others	4,498	0.60 %
<b>Rescue Subtotal</b>	<b>475,333</b>	<b>63.51 %</b>
False Call: Malicious	1,713	0.23 %
False Call: Other	61,836	8.26 %
<b>False Call Subtotal</b>	<b>63,549</b>	<b>8.49 %</b>
Hazardous Condition	19,441	2.60 %
Explosions	792	0.11 %
Service Calls	47,983	6.41 %
Good Intent Calls	108,684	14.52 %
Severe Weather or Natural Disaster	1,562	0.21 %
Special Incident	1593	0.21 %
Unknown Incident Type	11	0.00 %
<b>2023 Total Reported Calls</b>	<b>748,438</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Total Structure Fire Dollar Loss</b>	<b>\$426,151,486</b>	
<b>Total Fire Dollar Loss</b>	<b>\$433,216,523</b>	

### Fire Department and Firefighter Statistics

The SFMO recognizes a total of 696 fire departments. Of these fire departments, 682 fire departments protect public property and 14 fire departments solely protect private property, such as an industrial or military facilities, and airports.

Most recognized fire departments provided staffing information and after a complete review, 73.9% of the fire departments in Tennessee are staffed entirely by volunteers. Only 8.7% are career fire departments, where all firefighters receive financial compensation for their services. The remaining 17.4% of the fire departments are staffed by a combination of volunteer and career firefighters. Most firefighters in Tennessee are volunteers who receive either no compensation or a nominal fee for their services.

Based on information from fire departments, the SFMO estimates there are about 21,075 active firefighters in Tennessee. Fire departments reported 8,615 career firefighters, which comprises about 40.9% of all firefighters in the state. Determining the number of volunteer firefighters is more complicated because department rosters are subject to change and firefighters may volunteer for multiple departments.

The SFMO estimates there are currently 12,460 volunteer firefighters, which is 59.1% of the fire service in Tennessee. Of these volunteer firefighters, an estimated 2,377 receive a small payment or stipend for responding to emergency calls.

## **Education and Outreach Section**

The Education and Outreach section provides fire safety education materials, resources to the citizens, and fire departments of Tennessee. The section's programs include fire data analysis, fire department recognition, public education, and community risk reduction. The section works with partners at both national and local levels to share the latest information in fire prevention.

A highlight of this area is the "Get Alarmed Tennessee!" program, which this year celebrated 12 years of providing free smoke alarms to fire departments and volunteer organizations for installation in Tennessee homes. Since "Get Alarmed Tennessee!" started in 2012, at least 469 residents have been alerted to fires in their homes and escaped without serious injury due to smoke alarms installed through the program. In 2023, the program worked through partners across the state to distribute 14,741 free smoke alarms.

In 2023, the section delivered custom community risk assessments and community risk reduction workshops for fire departments. In 2023, twenty-three fire departments received personalized community risk reduction workshops developing plans with the guidance of the SFMO based on the risk assessments conducted. SFMO continues to assist fire departments in strategically preventing and mitigating risks to life safety and property in their communities.

In the year 2023, the SFMO conducted meetings with 173 volunteer fire departments spread across 61 counties. Notably, 15 of these fire departments were situated in distressed counties. Among the various programs, "Get Alarmed, Tennessee!" and "Fire Loss Consultants" emerged as the most popular, contributing 42% and 25% of the total visits, respectively.

## **Codes Enforcement Section**

The Codes Enforcement section enforces statewide adopted fire and building construction safety codes to afford a reasonable degree of safety to life and property from fire. This section oversees the design, construction, alteration, and repair of buildings or structures across the state. These types of buildings or structures include state buildings, commercial residential structures, high hazard occupancies, jails and prisons, covered malls, assembly spaces with 300 or greater occupants, schools, and daycares. The section also conducts annual inspections for schools, daycares, and other buildings requiring an inspection from the SFMO to receive an initial license from the Administrative Services section and other state agencies.

This section investigates complaints relating to buildings, licensees, or entities licensed by the Administrative Services section. The section conducts safety inspections at annual and seasonal fireworks locations as well as the review of all public fireworks displays to ensure a reasonable degree of safety.

### **Plans Review and Inspections in 2023**

- Plans Submittal Received: 1049
- Total Inspections Performed: 18,980 (Includes firework inspections)
- Schools Inspected: 1,493 (59 Schools Inspected in current 8 Distressed Counties)
- Annual Fireworks Retailers Inspections: 17
- Seasonal Fireworks Retailers Inspections: 329
- Public Fireworks Displays Reviewed: 503

## **Electrical, Residential and Marina Inspections Section**

The Electrical, Residential and Marina Inspections section is responsible for critical safety inspections in Tennessee. This section issues permits and performs inspections to enforce the provisions of the adopted electrical code, residential building code, and energy conservation code.

This section investigates complaints received by the SFMO, which often requires immediate attention due to the severity of the life safety concern. The work of this section plays a critical role in fulfilling the mission of the SFMO as the safety of residential structures and all electrically engineered environments are a cornerstone to fire prevention.

In 2022, this section celebrated the two-year milestone for the launch of the online permitting system that modernized the electrical and residential permit purchasing and inspection process. Mobile inspections and online permitting have drastically reduced the amount of time in permit issuance and receipt, making it virtually instantaneous. Since the launch of the system, an average of 79% of all electrical permits have been sold through the online permitting system which saves consumers in fees collected by physical selling locations. This year the online permitting system has saved customers \$770,770 in fees and to date has saved \$2,560,820.

### **Permits and Inspections in 2023**

- Total Residential Building Permits Issued: 1,506
- Total Residential Building Inspections Performed: 6,246
- Total Electrical Permits Issued: 195,349
- Total Electrical Inspections Performed: 320,483
- Total Marinas Inspected: 108

## **Manufactured Housing and Modular Building Section**

The Manufactured Housing and Modular Building section administers portions of the Uniform Standards Code for Manufactured Homes Act related to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Labeled Manufactured Homes and the Tennessee Manufactured Home Installation Act. The section assists with consumer complaints and dispute resolution which are two processes designed to provide direct assistance to any consumer that has safety concerns or feels they have been provided a defective product. This section is responsible for licensing functions and oversees the inspection of installing new and used manufactured homes.

Statutorily, this section, is required to ensure at least 5% of the manufactured homes installed in the state are inspected each year. Manufactured housing continues to be an affordable means of housing nationwide, especially in Tennessee. Installation programs place an emphasis on distressed counties with a goal to inspect 70% of installations inside these counties. With this goal, the program ensures adequate coverage in these counties to deter the possibility of unsafe installations and consumer scams. Of the 302 reported installations in distressed counties, 268 (89%) were inspected by the section which exceeds the inspection goal.

### **Inspections and Activities in 2023**

- Floors Inspected in Plant: 20,972
- Consumer Complaints Resolved: 31
- Installations: 4,705 (302 Installations in Distressed Counties)
- Installations Inspected: 2,302 (268 Installations Inspected in Distressed Counties)
- Modular Labels Sold: 4,900
- Modular Plans Reviewed: 768

## **Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy**

The Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy (TFACA) plans, develops, and facilitates educational training programs to promote the professionalism and competency of fire service and codes enforcement personnel through a standardized statewide program. These programs enhance the individual and collective ability of those in the fire service to protect the life and property of Tennesseans. TFACA's focus on both fire service and codes enforcement establishes it as a regional center for the training and testing of codes enforcement officials, firefighters, and other homeland security first responders.

TFACA continues to serve as the premiere training grounds for fire and codes events. Recent upgrades to the campus will provide a more realistic environment for students to train so they are better prepared to respond to incidents or conduct inspections.

### **Training and Activities in 2023**

- Total Students Enrolled: 17,453
- Total Classes Conducted: 1,296

## **Commission on Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education**

The Commission on Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education (Commission) is responsible for the certification of career and volunteer firefighters in Tennessee. The certification program is designed to incentivize firefighters to further develop skills through education and demonstration of the knowledge through certification levels offered by the Commission.

The Commission manages and administers the daily operations for the Educational Incentive Pay (EIP) program which provides an \$800 supplement to career firefighters who complete a minimum 40 hours of annual training at an accredited program. Passed by the General Assembly in 2021, the Commission now administers the volunteer firefighter Educational Incentive Pay (VEIP) program for volunteer firefighters which provides a \$600 supplement to volunteer firefighters who complete a minimum of 30 hours of annual training. The first year of supplements were paid to volunteer firefighters in 2023 with 974 volunteer firefighters qualifying for payment.

### **Testing and Activities in 2023**

- Total Exams Administered: 9,224
- Total Number of Test Events: 440
- EIP Total Number of Qualifying Firefighters: 7,145 (\$800 each; totaling \$5,716,000)
- VEIP Total Number of Qualifying Volunteer Firefighters: 974 (\$600 each; totaling \$584,400)



## **Administrative Services Section**

The Administrative Services section provides administrative support for the SFMO in the areas of budgeting, purchasing, and personnel management. The section ensures that qualified applications are properly processed and issues over 4,600 professional permits, licenses, and certificates of registration.

The section specifically processes regulatory permits, licenses, and certificates of registration for the certified inspector program, explosives, fireworks, fire extinguisher, fire sprinkler, and liquefied petroleum (LP) gas industries. Additionally, the section processes complaints for related licenses and refers violations to the Legal Division for potential disciplinary action.

### **Permits, Licenses, and Certification Programs in 2023**

Below are the number of regulatory applications processed and individuals/entities licensed during the year 2023.

#### **Portable and Fixed Fire Extinguisher Systems**

Firms/Branches: 187

Specialists/Technicians: 649

#### **Liquefied Petroleum (LP) Gas**

Dealers: 535

Managers/RME's: 42

#### **Fireworks**

Annual Retailers: 102

Seasonal Retailers: 545

Operators: 124

Exhibitors: 18

Display Permits Issued: 503

#### **Fire Protection Sprinkler Systems**

Contractors: 238

Responsible Managing Employee: 304

#### **Certified Inspectors (Fire, Building, Mechanical, and Plumbing Inspectors; Electrical Inspectors)**

Inspectors: 736

Certified Electrical Inspectors: 88

#### **Explosives**

Firm: 42

Handlers: 355

Blasters: 160

Limited Blasters: 14

#### **Fire Safe Cigarettes**

Manufacturers: 26

#### **Mobile Food Units**

Mobile Food Units: 12

## SFMO/Division of Fire Prevention Operating Cost

### Entire Division of Fire Prevention: FY 2023

	Budget	Actual
Expenditures	\$35,726,100	\$28,740,474
Revenues	\$35,726,100	\$48,296,764

Revenues collected include funding from the Fire Insurance Premium Tax, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-102-142, and penalties, fees for services, or forfeitures collected under Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 68-102-101 through 68-102-143, 68-102-147, and 68-102-148.

Expenditures associated with the Fire Premium Tax are included in Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 56-4-208, 56-4-205(c), 56-22-114, 68-102-142, and 68-102-203.

### Recommended Amendments

There are no recommended amendments or suggested statutory changes as current law provides the Division of Fire Prevention the authority to carry out its mission of saving lives, reducing property loss, and preventing injuries.



Department of Commerce and Insurance Authorization No.335201 | February 2024 This public document is electronic only and was promulgated at a cost of \$0.00 per copy.



# Thank You!

The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office sincerely expresses its support for the men and women currently serving in the Tennessee fire service. We remain dedicated to protecting the safety of Tennesseans and their property.

**TN** Department of Commerce & Insurance | State Fire Marshal's Office

500 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243  
[www.tn.gov/fire](http://www.tn.gov/fire)