



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

# FIRE STATISTICS MONITOR

Covering period up to 31 December 2004

Prepared by Fire Statistics and Research Branch

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## Introduction

The statistics in this Monitor are compiled from reports submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on fires and false alarms attended by the fire and rescue service throughout the UK.

Detailed information is collected on all fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures and any fires involving casualties or rescues (i.e. “*primary*” fires). The source of these data on “primary fires” is the fire report form FDR1(94) introduced in January 1994. Less detailed aggregated information is collected on “*secondary*” and chimney fires (collected via fire report form FDR3); so subsequent analysis of them is limited.

Due to the industrial action by firefighters in November 2002 and January and February 2003, the reporting of fires for these days was disrupted. In total fifteen 24-hour periods were affected; ten of these occurred in November, three in January and two in February.

In order to present the most accurate picture of the fires, casualties and false alarms which occurred in 2002 and 2003, estimates have been incorporated in this publication to account for the missing information in November, January and February. However, actual data on fatalities was collected during these periods and is reported in this monitor.



## Key Points – Year on Year Changes

### *Fires and False Alarms*

- In 2004, Fire and Rescue Services in the United Kingdom attended over 890,000 fires or false alarms, a 19% decrease compared to the previous year, mainly due to a large decrease in secondary fires. In England, a total of nearly 712,500 fires or false alarms were attended – a 19% decrease.
- Within the total number of fires (441,200 in the UK), primary fires fell by 15% to 180,300 – the lowest figure since 1990. Secondary fires fell by 37% to 251,100 and chimney fires fell by 16% to 9,800. In England, there were 347,900 fires consisting of 149,800 primary, 192,000 secondary and 6,100 chimney fires.
- Total fires in buildings in the UK fell by 9% to 96,600. The building fires total consists of 59,300 dwelling fires (down by 7%) and 37,300 fires in other buildings (i.e. commercial premises, schools etc.) – down by 11%. The number of road vehicle fires fell to 72,300 (down 22%). In England, building fires fell by 8% to 78,900 and road vehicle fires fell 22% to 61,300.
- The total number of false alarms attended in the UK fell by 5% to 448,800. This was mainly due to a 15% fall in good intent false alarms. In England, false alarms also fell, by 6% to 364,600.

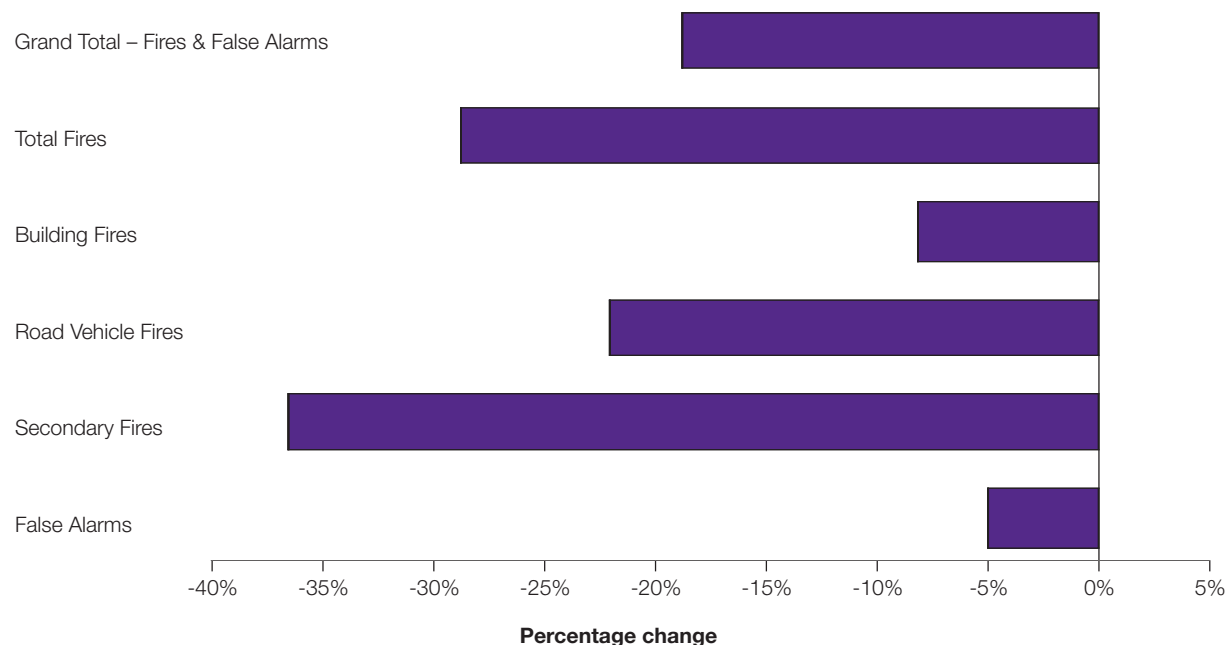
### *Deaths and injuries*

- The **provisional** (see note 6) total number of fire deaths recorded in the UK fell to 532 in 2004 from 593 in the previous year – this is the lowest since 1960. However, there was an increase in fire deaths in other buildings from 28 to 53, included 14 fatalities in a fire in a care home in January 2004. Deaths in dwelling fires fell to 375 from 447 in the previous year and deaths in road vehicle fires fell to 78 from 79. In England, 395 fire deaths were recorded. Of these, 271 were in dwelling fires and 69 in road vehicle fires.
- In 2004 the number of injuries in fires in the UK fell by 7% to 14,400 from 15,500 in the year before. Injuries in dwelling fires fell by 6% to 11,900. In England, 11,300 injuries (down by 8%) were recorded, including 9,200 in dwelling fires (down by 7%).

## Further Detail for the UK

### *Fires and False Alarms (see Table 1a and Chart 1)*

**Chart 1 Percentage change in fires and false in 2004 compared with a year earlier, UK**



England percentage change figures follow the same pattern to that of the UK.

1. In 2004 Fire and Rescue Services attended 890,100 fires or false alarms in the UK, 19% less than in the previous year, and the lowest since 1998.
2. Within this total there were 441,200 fires attended (a decrease of 29%) and 448,800 false alarms (a fall of 5%).
3. In the fourth quarter of 2004 (October to December) Fire and Rescue Services attended 211,800 fires or false alarms, a decrease of 19% compared with the corresponding quarter of 2003.

### ***Fires (see Tables 1a, 3, 4 & 5)***

4. A total of 441,200 fires were attended in the UK in 2004 – a 29% decrease compared with the previous year. Within the total number of fires, there was a 15% fall in primary fires to 180,300 (the lowest since 1990) and chimney fires fell by 16% to 9,800 (the lowest level ever recorded). Secondary fires (i.e. outdoor fires not involving property) fell to 251,100 in 2004 from 396,500 in 2003 (down 37%) – due to a return to more seasonally average weather conditions in 2004.
5. Within the primary fires category, there was a fall of 9% in the total number of building fires to the lowest level in 20 years – down to 96,600. This fall includes a 7% decrease in dwelling fires to 59,300 and a 11% decrease in other building fires (i.e. commercial premises, schools etc.) to 37,300. The number of road vehicle fires fell by 22% to 72,300, the lowest since 1997.
6. There were 47,500 accidental dwelling fires in 2004 (5% less than in the previous year). This is the lowest level recorded since the early 1970s.

7. Deliberate primary fires fell by 21% to 90,500 in 2004, the lowest since 1998 – continuing the downward trend since the peak in 2001 of 123,300. The overall fall includes a decrease in the number of deliberate road vehicle fires (down 25% to 54,700).
8. Secondary fires fell by 37% to 251,100. This fall was mainly due to a large decrease in the number of grassland fires – down 60% to 58,400. The majority of secondary fires are refuse fires – these fell by 20% to 157,900. Derelict vehicle fires fell by 42% to 9,500.
9. A total of 100,200 fires were attended in the UK in the fourth quarter of 2004 (October to December), 30% less than the corresponding fourth quarter of 2003. This fall was mainly the consequence of a large decrease in the number of secondary fires (down by 40% to 53,500 from 88,500). The number of primary fires also fell (down by 16% to 43,600) compared to the same quarter in 2003.

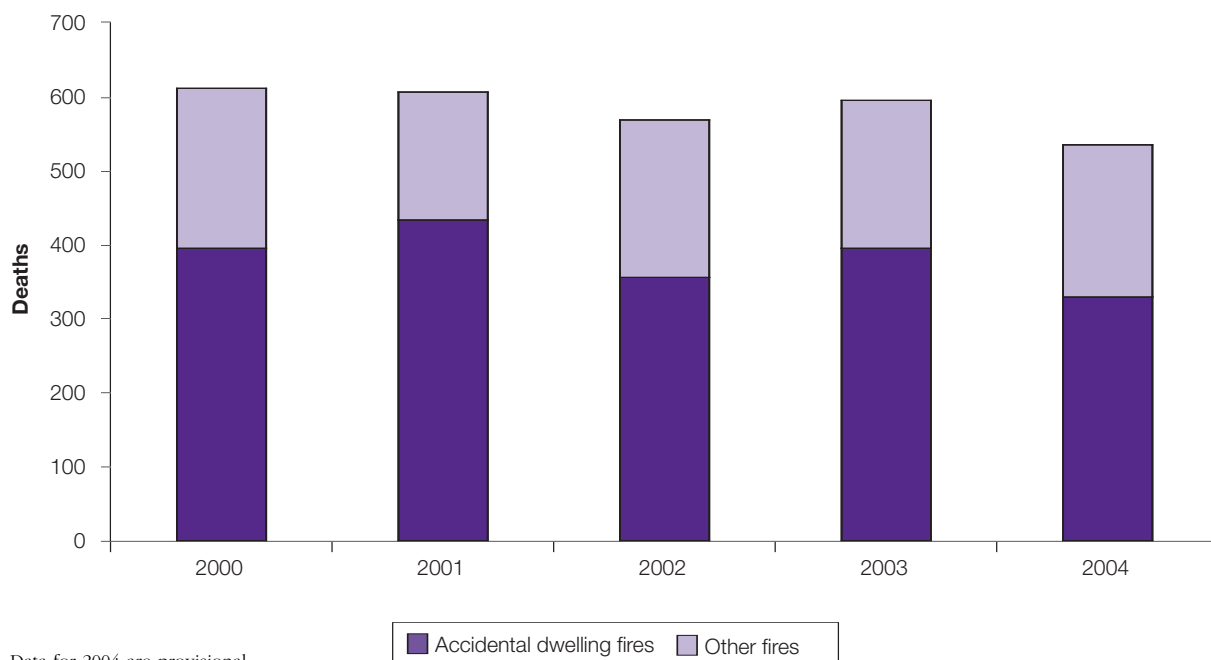
**False Alarms (see Tables 1a & 3)**

10. In 2004, the number of false alarms attended in the UK fell by 5% to 448,800 representing a third consecutive annual decline. Within this category the number of malicious false alarms fell by 16% to 49,300 which follows the general long-term trend. False alarms due to apparatus increased by 2% to 286,200; these incidents constitute over 60% of all false fire alarms.

**Fire Deaths (see Tables 2a & 4 and Chart 2)**

11. **Provisional** figures (see note 6) for 2004 show a significant fall in the total number of fire deaths in the UK, down to 532 fatalities from 593 in 2003.
12. Within the total number of deaths in 2004, 375 occurred in dwelling fires. This total compares with the 447 deaths recorded in the previous year, a fall of 16%.
13. *Deaths in accidental dwelling fires.* In 2004 there were 326 such deaths recorded, compared with 395 in the previous year, a fall of 17%.
14. The figures for fire deaths should be treated with caution, as the data for 2004 are still provisional. This is particularly the case for road vehicle fires – see note 6 for further explanation.

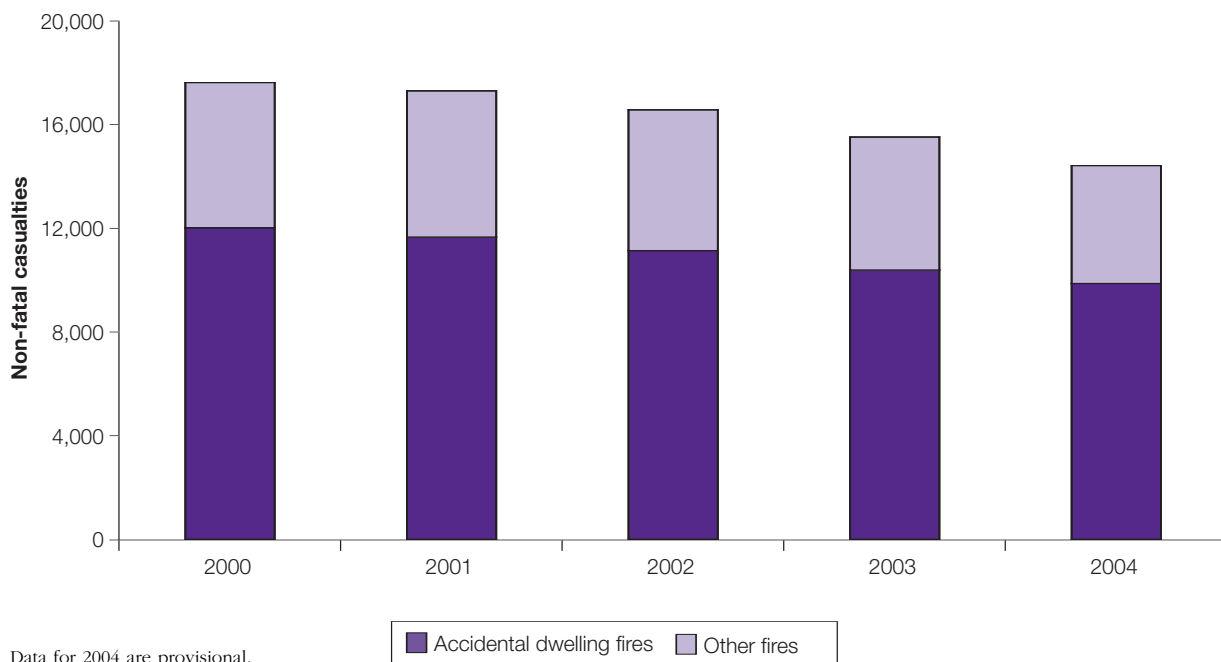
**Chart 2 Fire deaths, 2000 to 2004, UK**



**Fire Non-fatal Casualties (see Tables 2a & 4 and Chart 3)**

15. In 2004 the number of non-fatal casualties in fires in the UK fell by 7% to 14,400 from 15,500 in previous year. This decrease continues the downward trend in injuries in fires and represents the lowest figure recorded since the revised fire statistics collection was introduced in 1994.
16. There were 11,900 non-fatal casualties in dwelling fires, a fall of 6% from 12,600 in the previous year. Non-fatal casualties in *accidental* dwelling fires fell by 5% to 9,900, continuing the downward trend since 1997.

**Chart 3 Fire non-fatal casualties, 2000 to 2004, UK**



## Further Detail for England

### *Fires (see Tables 1b, 3, 4 & 5)*

17. A total of 347,900 fires were attended in England in 2004 – a 29% decrease compared with the previous year. Within the total number of fires, there was a 15% fall in primary fires to 149,800 and chimney fires fell by 13% to 6,100. Secondary fires fell to 192,000 from 308,500 (down 38%) – due to a return to more seasonally average weather conditions in 2004.
18. Within the primary fires category, there was a fall of 8% in the total number of building fires – down to 78,900. This fall includes a 7% decrease in dwelling fires to 47,700 and a 10% decrease in other building fires (i.e. commercial premises, schools etc.) to 31,200. The number of road vehicle fires fell by 22% to 61,300.
19. There were 38,400 accidental dwelling fires in 2004 (5% less than in the previous year), continuing the annual declines seen since 2000.
20. Deliberate primary fires in England totalled 75,800, down 21% from the previous year. Deliberate road vehicle fires fell by 25%– down to 46,400.
21. Secondary fires fell by 38% to 192,000. This fall was mainly due to a large decrease in the number of grassland fires – down 63% to 41,000. The majority of secondary fires are refuse fires – these fell by 22% to 121,800. Derelict vehicle fires fell by 43% to 7,500.
22. A total of 80,000 fires were attended in England in the fourth quarter of 2004 (October to December), 31% less than the corresponding fourth quarter of 2003. This fall was mainly the consequence of a large decrease in the number of secondary fires (down by 41% to 41,600 from 70,100). The number of primary fires also fell (down by 15% to 36,400) compared to the same quarter in 2003.

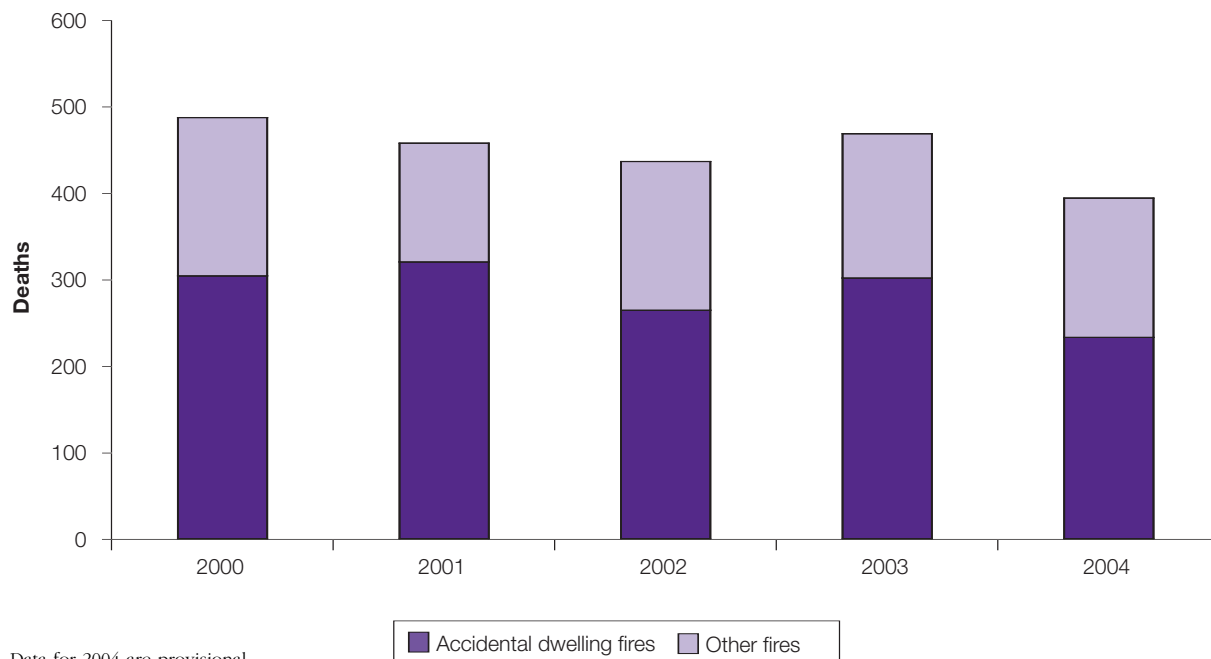
### *False Alarms (see Tables 1b & 3)*

23. In 2004, the number of false alarms attended in England fell by 6% to 364,600. Within this category the number of malicious false alarms fell by 17% to 39,200 which follows the general long-term trend. False alarms due to apparatus increased by 1% to 234,500; these incidents constitute over 60% of all false fire alarms.

### *Fire Deaths (see Tables 2b & 4 and Chart 4)*

24. **Provisional** figures (see note 6) for 2004 show a significant fall in the total number of fire deaths in England, down to 395 fatalities from 469 in the previous 12 months.
25. Within the total number of deaths, 271 occurred in dwelling fires. This total compares with the 350 deaths recorded in the previous year, a fall of 23%.
26. *Deaths in accidental dwelling fires.* In 2004 there were 232 such deaths recorded, compared with 302 in the previous year, a fall of 23%.
27. The figures for fire deaths should be treated with caution, as the data for 2004 are still provisional. This is particularly the case for road vehicle fires – see note 6 for further explanation.

**Chart 4 Fire deaths, 2000 to 2004, England**

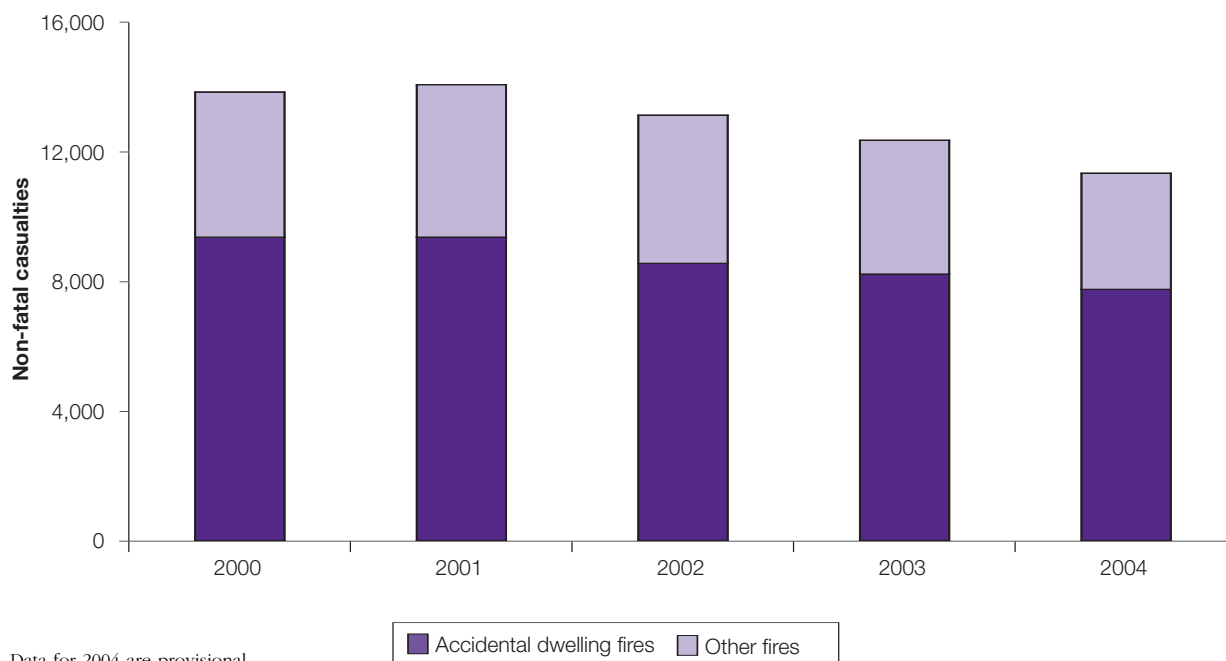


**Fire Non-fatal Casualties (see Tables 2b & 4 and Chart 5)**

**28.** In 2004 the number of non-fatal casualties in fires in England fell by 8% to 11,300 from 12,400 in previous year. This decrease continues the downward trend in injuries in fires and represents the lowest figure recorded since the revised fire statistics collection was introduced in 1994.

**29.** There were 9,200 non-fatal casualties in dwelling fires, a fall of 7% from 9,900 in the previous year. Non-fatal casualties in *accidental* dwelling fires fell by 6% to 7,700, maintaining the decline evident since 1999.

**Chart 5 Fire non-fatal casualties, 2000 to 2004, England**



## Notes

1. **Primary** fires include all fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures or any fires involving casualties or rescues or fires attended by five or more appliances.
2. **Secondary** fires are the majority of outdoor fires including grassland and refuse fires unless they involve casualties or rescues, property loss or five or more appliances attend. They include fires in derelict buildings.
3. The figures quoted in this monitor for 2004 are provisional, and although quarterly data are shown in the tables, very little comment has been included, as there can be considerable variation (both random and seasonal) in the number of fires, which makes interpretation difficult. The effects of the 2003 hot dry summer are an obvious example.

### *Estimates*

4. Data for 2002 and 2003 include estimates for November 2002 and January and February 2003 to account for the lack of information recorded during fifteen days of national industrial action. These estimates have been produced using comparable data for the same month of the previous year – a daily rate is calculated then multiplied by the number of strike days. Information on the actual number of fatal casualties which occurred during the strike periods has been obtained from the MOD and media and is included in this monitor.
5. Following the changes in responsibility of Government departments (June 2002); the policy responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service and hence publication of fire statistics and research has now moved to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Formerly, responsibility lay with Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR).

### *Fatalities*

6. A person whose death is attributed to a fire is counted as a fatality even if the death occurred weeks or months later. However, it is not always the case that fire was the cause of death. The figures for fatalities are thus subject to revision, as information supplied by the fire and rescue service needs to be cross-checked against the cause of death that appears on the death certificate. The main area of uncertainty is whether fire was the cause of death in road accident fatalities. This monitor contains finalised death figures for all years to 2003 and provisional figures for 2004.
7. **The figures for 2004 should not be quoted without first consulting the Fire Statistics & Research Branch.**

### *Revisions*

8. Please note that this monitor contains revised data and will differ from data published prior to April 2000. The revisions correct a small distortion in the number of accidental and malicious fires recorded for the years 1996 to 1998 and reflect a very minor change in the definition of a dwelling. This brings caravans, boats and other non-building structures (used solely as a permanent dwelling) into the definition (representing only 200 fires a year or 0.3% of the total number of dwelling fires).
9. Since publication of 'Fire Statistics Monitor – Q4 2002' on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2003, further validation of the 2001 and 2002 data has been undertaken, as is the usual practice. This Monitor contains the revised figures for these years which will therefore differ from those previously published.

**10.** Further information on fire statistics can be obtained from:

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