

FIRE SAFETY

In spite of the widespread use of masonry construction, Mexico has a serious fire problem, partly as a consequence of a dilapidated system of gas distribution.

Fire is a major concern for most Mexicans. In fact, this is one reason why wood is not used for structural components of buildings. Detailed fire statistics are not available, but the United States Department of Commerce has estimated annual fire casualties at 6,500, where approximately 20 percent are fatal.

FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICES IN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1995

Category	Number of Incidents
Control of gas leaks	9,685
Control and extinguishing of fires	6,022
Fire prevention services	2,351
Cutting of trees	1,738
Attention to vehicle collisions	972
Attention to short circuits	852
Flood control	385
Removal of fluid spills	112
Recovery work	76
Attention to landslides and collapses	73
Attention to explosions	45
Water supply services	35
Recovery and exhumation of corpses	32
False alarms	6,779
Total	29,157

Source: *Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal (SSP)*, Secretariat of Public Safety for the Federal District.

Government purchases of fire-fighting equipment and fire-prevention systems for public buildings account for about two-thirds of the fire-safety market. Industrial and commercial enterprises are also major customers because they are forced to take strong preventive measures by insurance companies. Sprinklers, detectors and alarm systems are all in demand. The home fire-abatement market is limited mainly to smoke detectors and small fire extinguishers.