

## How Many Firefighters Have Died in the Line of Duty, Ever?

11/13/15 629 W, 1 I - + 7 - 4

That question came to mind a couple months ago. How many firefighters have died in the line of duty, nationally, since the earliest days (or records of earliest days)?

The answer is... **over 13,000** since 1838. Though that's just a partial answer.

WY	50	1920	<a href="#">WFA</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civilian Conservation Corps - 11</li> <li>• US Forest Service - 5</li> <li>• Bureau of Land Management - 3</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,072</b>			

### Methodology

Had to research this one on a state-by-state basis. The obvious go-to source, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), wasn't created until 1981. And their listings don't yet include fatalities from before that year.

Instead started with the NFFF's listing of [state firefighter memorials](#). They have information and links to fallen firefighter memorials in nearly all of the fifty states. The associated web sites, however, didn't always list the names on their state's memorial. Turned to Google, and found comprehensive data in a few other places. Such as an excellent [fallen firefighter database](#) from the Illinois Fire Service Institute.

Data on these sites was varied in format. Some were already in a tabular form and easily copied. Other times, it required hand-parsing or hand-counting. Such as the Michigan memorial web site, which displays pictures of the names on the memorial. Printed on paper and tallied using magic markers for highlighting.

Couldn't find any information for Hawaii, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. In those cases, used the "since 1981" data from the NFFF site. (Also hand-counted, as there's no "flat listing" available on the national memorial's web site.)

Found only totals for Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Mississippi, but no comprehensive data. That is, names, departments, death dates or years, etcetera.

Added all those ingredients into the pot and cooked a total of 13,072. See the results on this temporary web site:

[www.legeros.com/temp/lodd](http://www.legeros.com/temp/lodd)

(See earlier posting that provided a peek at this data, [Firefighter Line of Duty Deaths Before 1900](#).)

(Also, my data includes "highest counts by department", some of which were found via Google via individual department information.)

### Observations

There's more this story and my methodology.

Military firefighter fatalities are not necessarily included in those per-state totals. They might even be outright omitted. [This site](#) memorializes those members. They've recorded 101 since 1941.

Wildland firefighter fatalities are recorded in this [Always Remember database](#), with over 700 entries dating to the Peshtigo Fire of 1871. These are likely represented in the above per-state totals. And may be duplicated in places. For example, a flight crew from one state killed in another state may be recognized by both.

Fallen firefighter databases are also maintained by other organizations, such as the IAFF and the Hall of Flame fire museum. (The former has 7,490 entries since 1900. But they included cancer deaths, a cause not typically represented in state or national memorials.) The USFA and the NIOSH also produce fallen firefighter data, from 1981 and 1994, respective.

The criteria for recognizing a "fallen firefighter" is potentially (and probably) different between NFFF and organizations that maintain the state memorials. (See [this blog post from 2014](#), which links to this excellent [Backstep Firefighter posting from 2013](#).) Heck, even the definition of "firefighter" can be debated, depending upon the organization delving into the data.

## Conclusions

But back to the grand total, and the per-state counts, be they complete or partial. What's the value of that data and this project? Good question. I've been looking at simple numbers. Simple totals. Just an exercise in counting (and comparing information sources).

Deeper-diving researchers are best-served by recent data, as presented by the NFFF, USFA, NIOSH. There are also a couple of the state memorials that provide narrative information on their web sites, such as Illinois and Maryland.

At the highest-level, what conclusion can we or should we draw from this data? Will ponder.

---

Name: (real name  
preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Comment:

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

/ [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

**Small print:** All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.