

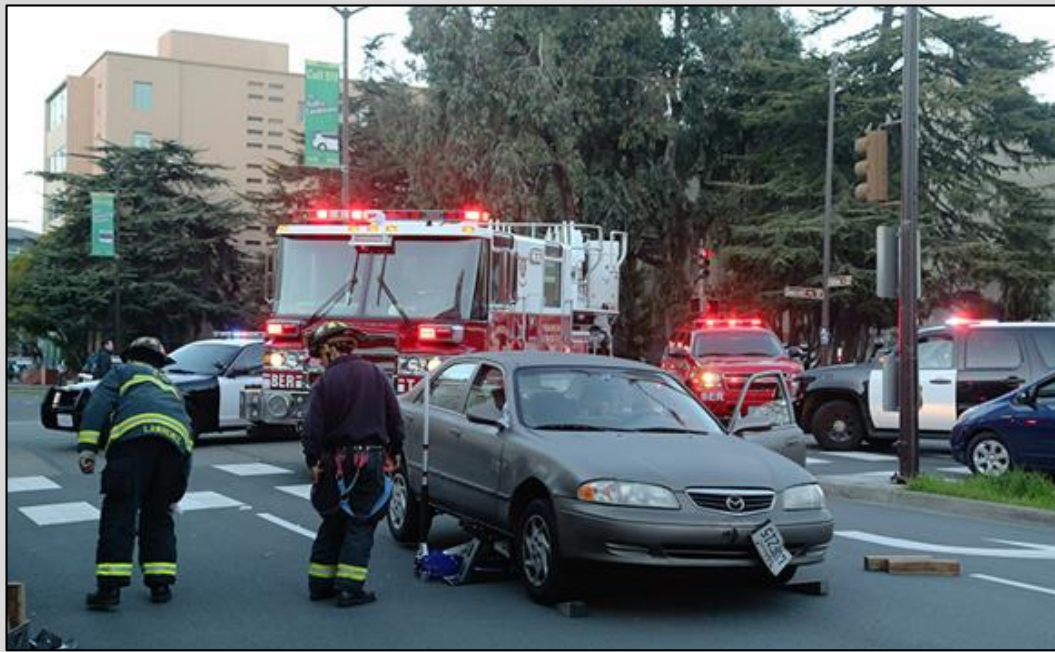


Photo: David Yee for Berkeleyside, 2/09/2016

Street Trauma Prevention: Vision Zero and the Fire Service

California Active Transportation Program Symposium
UC Davis Conference Center

Mike Wilson, PhD, MPH
mpwilson@berkeley.edu

Commissioner
Berkeley Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Oct 22, 2025



What do firefighters and paramedics do?



Pacific Palisades and Eaton Fires, January 2025



Emergency Medical Services (EMS): 70-80%
Basic and Advanced Life Support Services



Photo: David Yee for
Berkeleyside, 2/09/2016

Including street trauma response: cyclist struck and pinned.



Treat and transport patients using mobile intensive care ambulances



...where patients are treated
and hopefully stabilized



...for hand-off to a hospital or trauma center



...for definitive treatment.



How does this play out in Berkeley? Average Annual Injuries:

Vehicle occupants, cyclists
and pedestrians injured in
crashes:

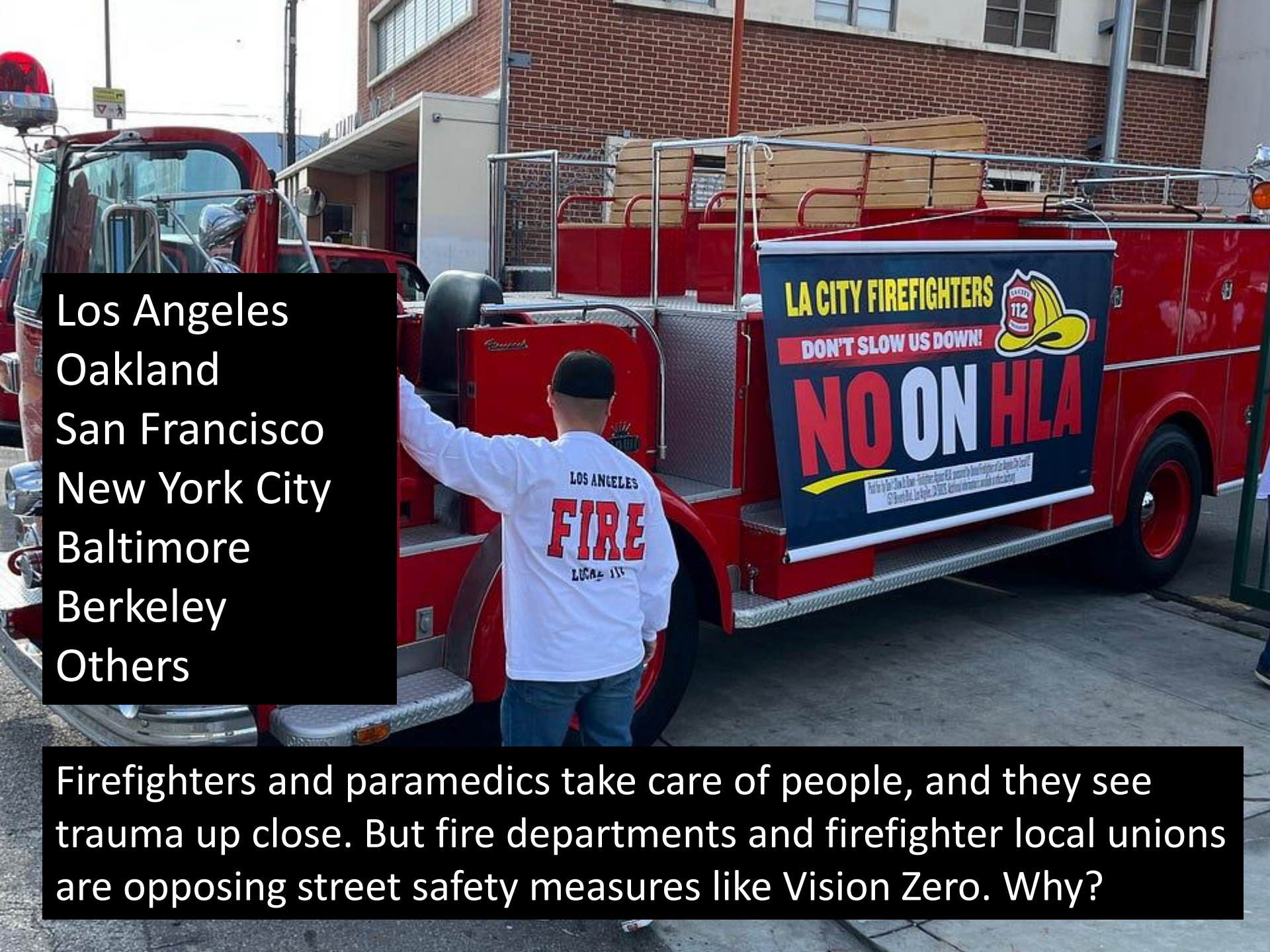
694 per year, 2017-2022

Persons injured in structure
fires:

2 per year, 2010-2022

Fire data: <https://firecares.nfors.org/departments/74866/berkeley-fire-department?page=1>

Collision data: <https://bpd-transparency-initiative-berkeleypd.hub.arcgis.com/pages/traffic-safety>

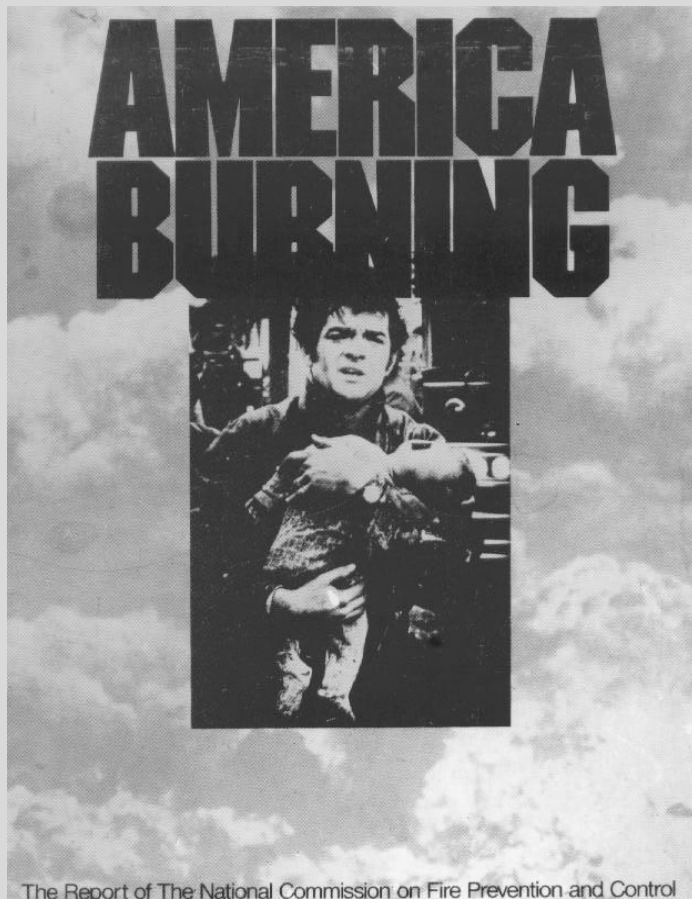
A photograph of a red Los Angeles fire truck parked on a city street. A firefighter, seen from the back, is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with 'LOS ANGELES FIRE' and 'LUCA 111' printed on it. The truck has a large blue banner on its side that reads 'LA CITY FIREFIGHTERS DON'T SLOW US DOWN! NO ON HLA'. The banner also features a fire helmet logo with 'SAFETY 112' and some smaller text at the bottom. The truck is carrying wooden planks on its back. In the background, there is a brick building and a street sign.

Los Angeles
Oakland
San Francisco
New York City
Baltimore
Berkeley
Others

Firefighters and paramedics take care of people, and they see trauma up close. But fire departments and firefighter local unions are opposing street safety measures like Vision Zero. Why?



The fire service is naturally focused on its trauma **response** function. But this is at odds with its own remarkable 50-year history of **prevention** in the area of structural fires.



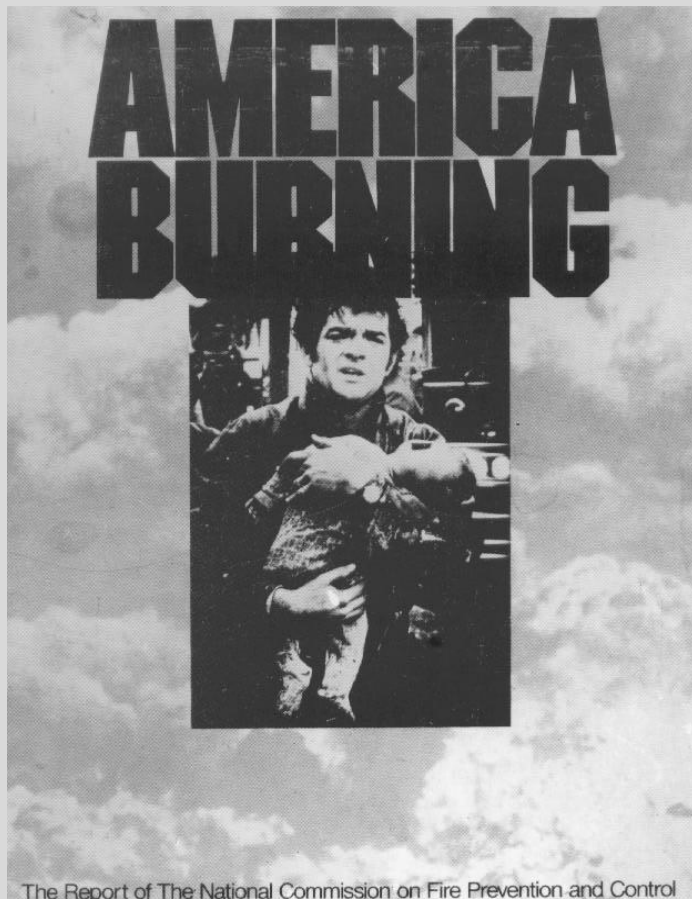
America Burning: 50 Years of Fire Safety and Prevention (1973)

May 4, 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the release of *America Burning*, the report of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control.

The report highlighted the importance of fire prevention as an essential role of the fire service, alongside suppression.

The report motivated Congress to pass the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974

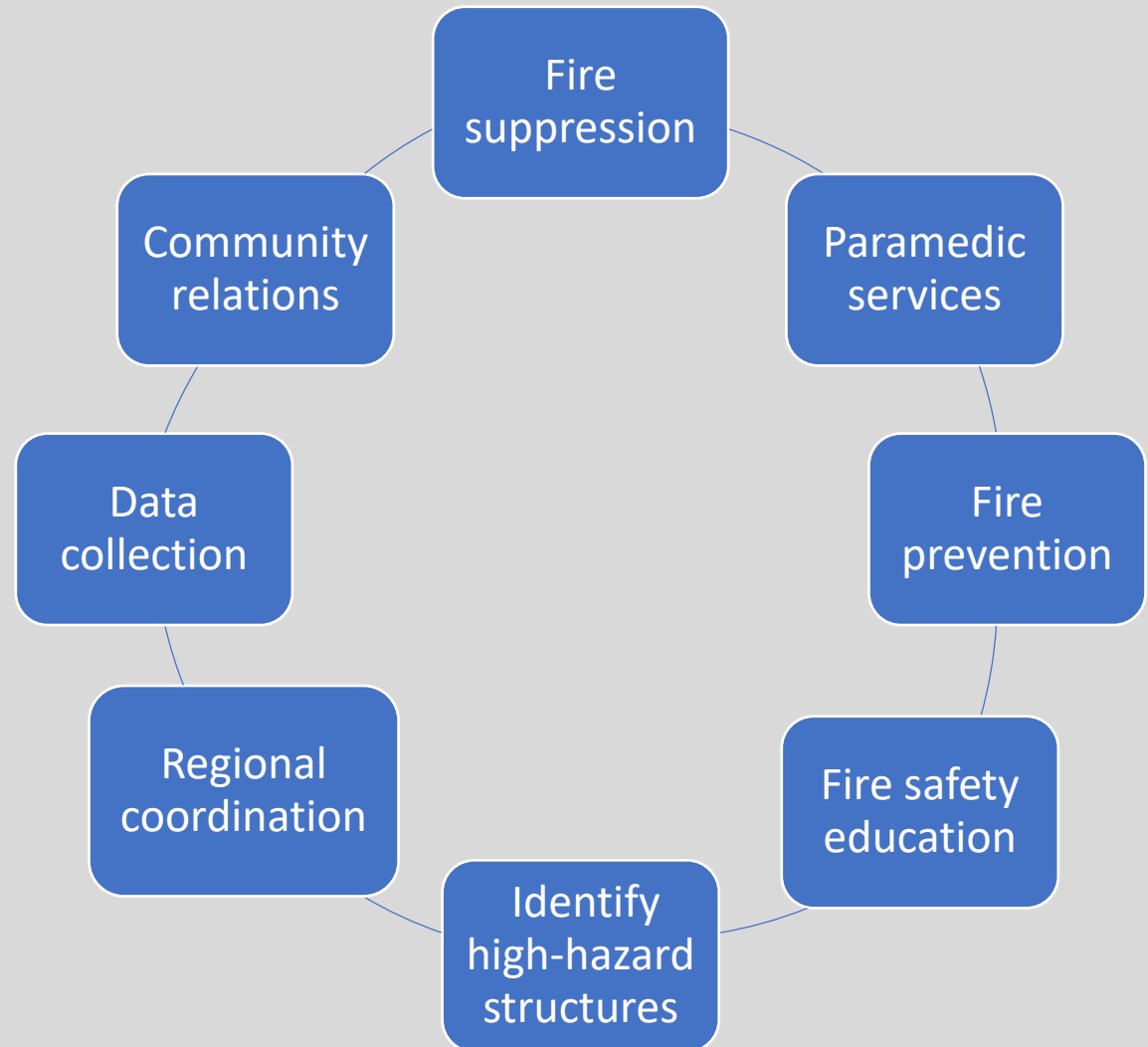
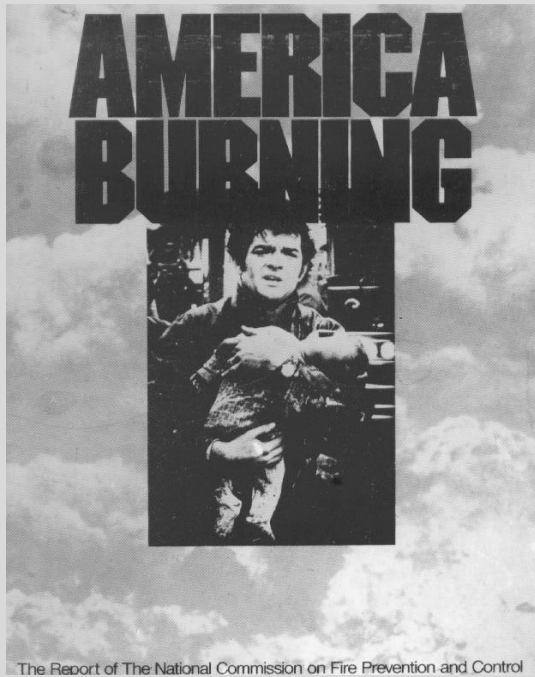
America Burning, Prevention Needs Priority. pp. 7 & 71
<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/blog/america-burning-50th-anniversary/>



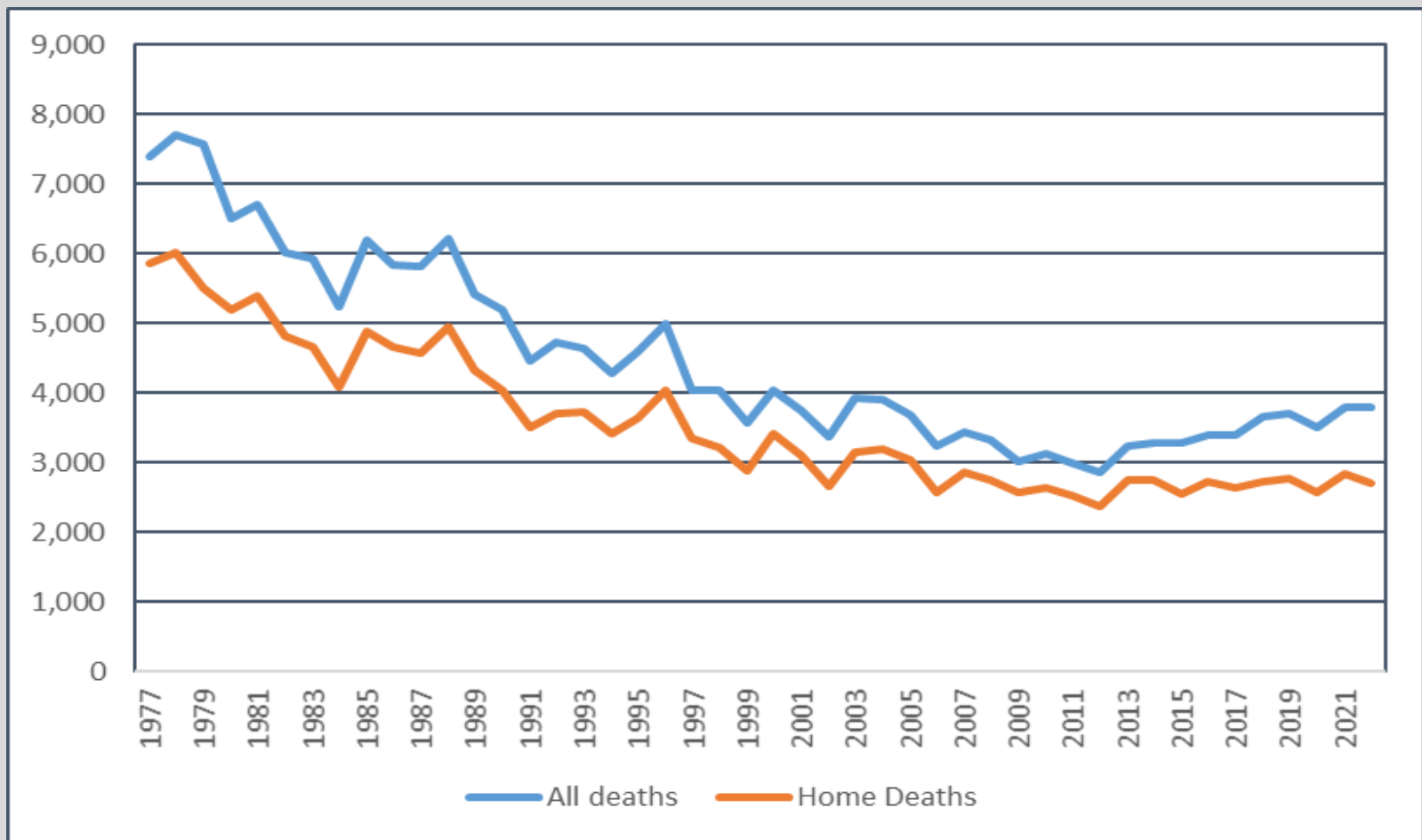
America Burning: 50 Years of Fire Safety and Prevention (1973)

“Currently, about 95 cents of every dollar spent on the fire services is used to extinguish fires; only about 5 cents is spent on efforts...to prevent fires from starting. Much more energy and funds need to be devoted to fire prevention, which could yield huge payoffs in lives and property saved.”

“The Commission recommends that all local governmental units in the United States have in force an adequate building code and fire prevention code or adopt whichever they lack.”



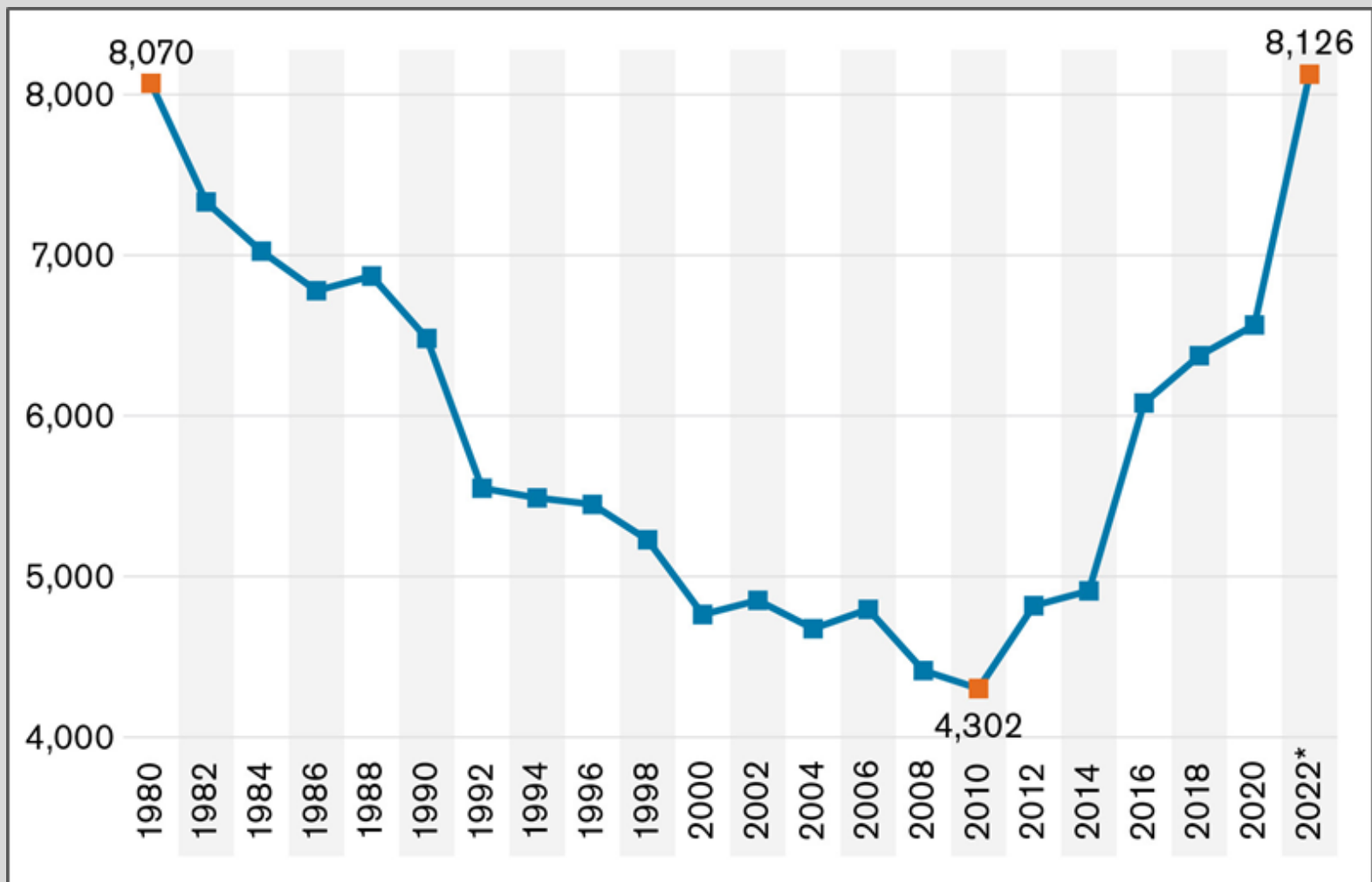
The report called on fire departments to build a comprehensive approach to fire prevention and life safety.



All U.S. Civilian Fire Deaths and Home Fire Deaths, 1977-2022*
 ~5,000 fewer deaths between 1979 and 2012 = 64% decline over 33 years.

*2,451 deaths on 9/11/2001
 not included in "All deaths."

Hall, S. (November 2023). Fire loss in the United States during 2022. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association. <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/fire-related-fatalities-and-injuries/>



U.S. Pedestrian Fatalities, 1980-2022

An 89% increase between 2010 and 2022, after a 40% reduction, 1980-2010

*2022 is projected based on 6 months of data.

Governor's Highway Safety Association (2023). Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State—2022 Preliminary Data [Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2022 Preliminary Data | GHSA](#).



Starting now, fire agencies can and should apply the lessons of fire prevention to **street trauma prevention.**

Principle 1.
Quick **response**
and hospital
return times are
essential to
save lives.





Photo: Mike Wilson

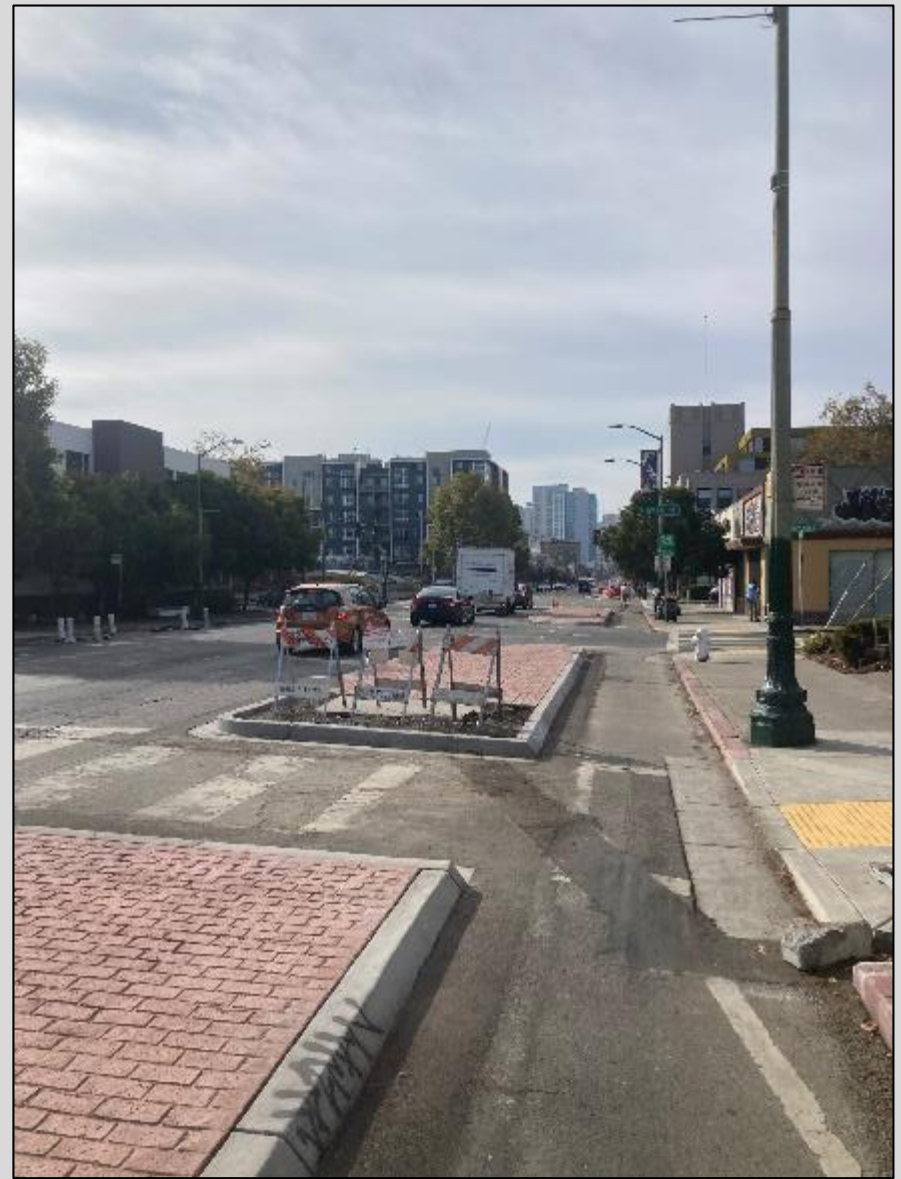


Photo: Mike Wilson

Principle 2: Street trauma can be **prevented** through well-recognized engineering controls and other design strategies.



In 2024, the City of Berkeley funded a Street Trauma Prevention (STP) program at Berkeley Fire to:

- (1) Engage consistently and constructively in the City's Vision Zero planning and implementation processes;
- (2) Collaborate with other City departments, as well as the Fire Marshal, to advance Vision Zero and other policies; and
- (3) Build an evidence-based approach to balancing street trauma response and prevention.



Photos: Mike Wilson



- The fire service is naturally focused on response times.
- But quick response times alone are not enough.
- The fire service should be involved in trauma prevention.
- This is consistent with its remarkable legacy of fire prevention.
- Street trauma response and prevention are complementary.
- The fire service and Vision Zero are (should be) natural allies.

ARTICLES

It's Time for the Fire Service to Join Communities in Preventing Street Trauma (Sept 30 2025). *Medium: Vision Zero Cities Journal*

<https://medium.com/vision-zero-cities-journal/its-time-for-the-fire-service-to-join-communities-in-preventing-street-trauma-67f4a36a45c9>.

Building an Alliance Between Firefighters and Street Safety Advocates (April 17, 2025). *California Bicycle Coalition*

<https://www.calbike.org/building-an-alliance-between-firefighters-and-street-safety-advocates/>.

A Near-fatal Bike Crash May Shift How Berkeley Does Street Design (August 6, 2024) *The Berkeley Scanner*

<https://www.berkeleyscanner.com/2024/08/06/traffic-safety/berkeley-street-trauma-prevention-program-mike-wilson-meg-schwarzman/>

Berkeley Fire 'Street Trauma Prevention' Position Closer to Reality (May 8, 2024). *Berkeleyside*

<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2024/05/08/berkeley-fire-department-road-safety-emergency-response>