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Trends in Fire Incidence in Monsterrado, Liberia 2013- 2018

Lucia Bawo, Caromadu Sillah

lucia.m.bawo@gmail.com

**Introduction:**

Fire is an often overlooked contributor to death and disability globally. It causes 1% of the global burden of disease-300,000 death per year. The increasing number of fires in Liberia has become overwhelming concerning. Newspapers in and around Liberia have reported at least one incident of fire weekly from January to March 2019, especially in the Nation’s capital city of Monrovia. We conducted research to asserting the major causes of these incidents and the appropriate interventions needed for control.

Method

A retrospective study was conducted to review documents from the Liberia Fire Service Agency on fire incidents between 2013- 2018 in Monsterrado County. For each incident, information was extracted on the following variables: causes, communities affected, types . Trends in incidence over time were evaluated.

Results

A total of 852 reported fire incidents occurred between 2013-2018 in Monsterrado. We found that the major cause of fire was electrical shock (n=460 incidents, 54%). The areas most often affected were Central Monrovia and Paynesville which accounted for 30% and 27% of all fire incidents, respectively, followed by Sinkor (19%) and Gardnerville (13%). Annual fire incidence was lowest in 2014 (n=119 incidents, 14%) and highest in 2017 (n=179 incidents, 21%), with a steady increasing trend during that time period. A decrease in incidence was observed in 2018.

Conclusion

Fire is a major cause of destruction of infrastructure and also a contributor to morbidity and mortality in Liberia. Community development and unregulated practices are associated with increasing incidence.  The occurrence of fire due to electrical shock is likely due to the common misuse of electricity and other causes could be the increasingly high usage of paraffin in communities with mishits structures.