



U.S. Fire Administration

Community Arson Prevention

National Arson Awareness Week Media Kit

May 2-8, 2010



FEMA



Community Arson Prevention

2010 National Arson Awareness Week

May 2-8, 2010

Photo courtesy of Lebanon Fire Department, Lebanon, New Hampshire.

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) announces this year's Arson Awareness Week (AAW) theme—Community Arson Prevention. The USFA will partner with the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), USAonWatch, National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and the Insurance Committee for Arson Control (ICAC).

The goal for this year's AAW, which takes place May 2-8, 2010, is to focus attention on the horrific crime of arson and provide communities with tools and strategies to combat arson in their neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and places of worship.

According to the USFA's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an estimated average of 316,600 intentional fires are reported to fire departments in the United States each year causing injuries to 7,825 firefighters and civilians. In 2006, 10 firefighters died as a result of arson. In addition to needless injury and death, an estimated \$1.1 billion in direct property loss occurs annually.

If people can become more informed about arson prevention, along with having intervention and treatment programs for these heinous acts of burning, strides can be made in this preventable malfeasance.

Arson robs communities of its valuable assets, lives, and property. Arson destroys more than buildings; it can devastate a community resulting in the decline of the neighborhood through increased insurance premiums, loss of business revenue, and a decrease in property values.

Communities can develop a Watch Program, partnering with their local fire department, law enforcement, insurance providers, business leaders, churches, and local community groups. Neighborhoods can reduce the likelihood of arson occurring by promoting neighborhood watches, educating people about recognizing and reporting unusual activities, and implementing improved internal and external security for homes and businesses.

A community Arson Watch Program can put the neighbor back into neighborhood by creating a sense of cooperation. It brings the fire service, law enforcement, and citizens together to reduce the crime of arson.

Establishing A Community Arson Watch Program

Arson Facts

According to the USFA's NFIRS data and the NFPA, half of all intentional structure fires are started in the home. These fires result in 85 percent of the civilian deaths, 82 percent of the civilian injuries, and 64 percent of the direct property damage from intentional structure fires.

Only 5 percent of fires in homes are intentionally started and in these fires, the bedroom is the leading area of origin. The bathroom is the leading area in public properties such as stores, offices, or schools.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) 2008 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)¹ statistics showed that 14,011 law enforcement agencies reported 62,807 arsons. Arsons involving structures (e.g., residential, storage, public, etc.) accounted for 43.4 percent of the total number of arson offenses. Mobile property (e.g., cars, motorcycles, etc.) was involved in 28.9 percent of arsons, and other types of property (such as crops, timber, fences, etc.) accounted for 27.7 percent of reported arsons.

The average dollar loss for all types of arson was \$16,015. For structures, arson damages were \$32,364 on average and \$7,890 for motor vehicles. Arsons of industrial and manufacturing structures resulted in the highest average dollar losses—an average of \$212,388 per arson.

The rate of arson was 24.1 offenses for every 100,000 inhabitants of the United States in 2007.

The breaking point for a community may be 1 fire or it may be 100.

A neighborhood's arson problem can range from youngsters setting nuisance fires to a full-blown crisis with a serial arsonist. The scope of the problem may differ, but the solution—an arson prevention program, is identical.

There is no cookie cutter approach for a community to use when setting up a Community Arson Watch program or any local coalition. Following the successful Neighborhood Watch five-step program model provides an effective foundation.

Step 1

The first step is to analyze the specific local problem and collect related data. Strategies that address the problems in a given area must be mapped out. From the outset, it is essential that neighbors work together. This effort provides an opportunity for neighbors to meet and get to know each other, something that has become less common lately. It is crucial to include neighborhood involvement for the process to be successful.

In addition to not being familiar with your neighbors, the dilemma is compounded by the fact that many adults in these neighborhoods work multiple jobs frequently with odd hours, making it extraordinarily difficult to schedule meetings and organize events. This environment also makes it challenging for neighbors to get to know and care about one another in a way that would encourage them to watch out for each other.

Step 2

Once the neighbors have a connection, the second step involves building a partnership between fire and emergency services, the police and other law enforcement agencies, and the residents. This is often the most difficult step to hurdle because there is usually angst between the residents and law enforcement for the existing crime problem that exists in their community.

Step 3

The third step is to assess the needs of a given neighborhood and in the case of arson, how the fire and police departments can work with the residents. Neighborhood Watch states, "In many cases, law enforcement and community members do not have the same focus. For instance, law enforcement may be focusing their attention on a problem that the neighborhood is not concerned about, such as attempting to address major crimes



¹ The FBI's UCR Program defines arson as any willful or malicious burning or attempting to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc.

throughout the city. On the other hand, community members may be more concerned about crimes such as bicycle thefts or graffiti, which are considered minor from a police standpoint.” An effective Neighborhood Arson Watch program will combine the needs of the fire and police departments with those of the neighborhood when determining which problems to focus on and the methods used to address them.

Step 4

The penultimate step in setting up a Neighborhood Watch program is choosing and training a dynamic group of volunteers that are led by organized and moti-

vated leaders. If the group leaders are devoid of motivation and organization, the volunteers may be uninspired to participate and quickly quit out of disappointment and frustration.

Step 5

The fifth and final step is to develop meaningful projects specific to the identified problem. Often, after a Neighborhood Watch has addressed its original issue, members lose interest. It is important for leaders to remain passionate. One way to accomplish this is to design new projects so that there is always a goal towards which the team of volunteers is aspiring.

Arson Prevention Projects

Arson prevention projects should focus on identifying and removing what could burn or materials that an arsonist could use to start a fire:

- Clean up the neighborhood by removing all garbage, material, and excess vegetation that is capable of being ignited.
- Remove all possible sources of ignition such as flammable liquids and unused gas containers.
- Remove abandoned vehicles. According to the USFA’s NFIRS data and the NFPA, there is an annual estimated average of 25,328 intentional fires involving vehicles. Most car fires are started to cover up other criminal activity or simply as an act of vandalism. An abandoned car is a target for arson.
- Secure abandoned and vacant homes which are potential arson targets. This may be comprised of additional locks or the boarding up of broken windows or other openings with plywood.
- Communicate with the owner that authorities are concerned about the vacant home and explain why.
- Encourage the fire department to conduct frequent fire code inspections.
- Contact public works to disconnect all utilities at the street. This includes natural gas, water, and electricity. If there are liquefied petroleum gas tanks, they should be disconnected and removed.
- Encourage Neighborhood Watch members to patrol these areas and write down descriptions, license plates of suspicious vehicles, and potential suspect descriptions.

Arson Prevention: Businesses

Each year there are over 500 arson attacks on eating and drinking establishments, stores, mercantile properties, and office buildings. You can help prevent your business from becoming one of these statistics with a few straightforward safety measures.

Bathrooms are the leading area of origin for intentional structure fires that occurred in stores or offices. You need to identify all of the means in which someone could deliberately start a fire inside or outside your business or office. Other questions to ask are: Have there been small fires in your business previously? Have you heard about



Over 70 percent of businesses involved in a major fire either do not reopen, or subsequently fail within 3 years of fire.

other fires occurring locally? If so, small fires are all too often a warning of worse events to come. Be on the lookout for other forms of vandalism, including graffiti or damage to nearby businesses. Remind employees and staff of the arson threat and have them report any suspicious behavior.

A great place to start is with a risk assessment. Piles of trash, rubbish, or recyclables leave the business particularly vulnerable to an arsonist providing an accessible fuel for a fire. Analyze the vulnerability of your office or business by looking at the building and what goes on within it. Note possible ways in which fires could be started deliberately. Identify the susceptible points both inside and outside the buildings and in the external areas within the building perimeter. In addition, consider the area in which your business or office is located in order to assess the likelihood of an arson attack in the neighborhood. Remove all possible sources of ignition such as flammable liquids and gases, combustible materials including trash, furnishings, and other combustible elements of the structure.

Most arson fires affecting businesses start outside the property. The offenders are often youngsters whose motive is to cause trouble. These opportunistic arsonists set fires with anything readily available—usually garbage or packaging.

Limit the number of entrances in use, but never lock or block a fire exit. Surveillance cameras and visible security guards can deter a criminal before he/she strikes.

It is of vital importance to protect your business from fire. By instituting some of these simple measures, it is possible to minimize the risk of fire.

Even if it isn't required by law, equip your business or office with fire sprinklers. If a fire is set, they are the best way to save lives and protect your property.

Arson Facts: Businesses

According to the USFA's NFIRS data and the NFPA, an estimated average of 1,710 structure fires took place at **stores or other mercantile properties** annually from 2003 to 2006, with only 7 percent or 119 being intentional fires.

During the 2000-2004 period, there was an estimated annual average of 8,520 structure fires that took place at **eating and drinking establishments**, with 4 percent or 330 being intentional fires. Intentionally-set fires in eating and drinking establishments resulted in 67 percent or 75 of the civilian deaths and 11 percent of the direct property damages totaling \$12 million.

Excluding the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 3,810 structure fires in **office properties** from 2000 to 2004. Intentional fires caused 16 percent of the direct property damage, totaling \$18 million and accounting for 7 percent or 280 fires.

Arson Prevention: Places of Worship

Arson Facts: Places of Worship

According to the USFA's NFIRS data and the NFPA, an estimated average of 1,737 fires took place at religious properties annually from 2000 to 2004, with 10 percent or 173 being intentional fires. Intentionally-set fires in religious properties resulted in 19 percent of the direct property damage totaling \$18.6 million.

In 1996, a wave of church arsons received attention at the Federal level, and the National Arson Prevention Initiative (NAPI) was formed by President Clinton. NAPI was a collaboration of a myriad of Federal agencies working

in partnership to coordinate available Federal resources and materials for arson prevention and disseminate them to all States.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) USFA managed prevention activities through its Arson Prevention Clearinghouse.

Suspicious fires at places of worship were investigated by the National Church Arson Task Force (NCATF). The NCATF made the investigation of these fires a top priority of Federal law enforcement, which resulted in an arrest rate more than double the national solve rate for all arsons. The ATF still investigates many fires at churches, including the six church fires in the East Texas area since January 1, 2010.

The burning of a place of worship is a stressful event; it not only devastates the affected congregation but wounds the entire community. Whether the motivation behind the arson is hate or reckless vandalism, a congregation views it as an attack on their life and beliefs.

As with any arson prevention program, there are three factors which need to be addressed for places of worship: external security, internal security, and community awareness.

External Security

- Illuminate the exterior and entrances.
- Use motion-activated lighting near doors and windows.
- Keep shrubbery and trees trimmed so the building can be observed by passing patrols.
- If in a rural setting, ensure crops are far enough away to allow proper illumination of the area.
- Do not allow church signs to block the view of the building.
- Many buildings have basement entries that are hidden from view. These should be secured with locking, ground-level doors when the building is not in use.
- Ladders, external stairways, and fire escapes allowing access to the roof should be secured.
- Painting the building white or constructing it with light-colored brick makes a human figure more readily seen at night.
- Consider fencing the areas or sides that are not readily visible to patrols or neighbors.

Internal Security

- Use properly installed deadbolt locks on all exterior doors.
- Windows that can be opened should have adequate locks on them.
- Consider decorative or wrought iron protection for windows. (Windows used as emergency exits must still be able to be opened in an emergency.) Doors should have similar protection.
- Installation of a combination burglar and fire alarm with a phone dialer should be considered.



A fire at a place of worship devastates both the congregation and the surrounding community.

- If there is a private security firm in your area, consider a contract with them as they will check the building at unscheduled intervals.
- Keep a current list of all individuals that have access to keys and change locks periodically.

Community Awareness

- Keep congregation leaders informed of problems.
- Be aware of individuals who may be disgruntled or likely to cause damage to property through arson or vandalism.
- Be aware that vandalism may precede arson!
- Open avenues of communication with fire and law enforcement officials regarding the arson problem places of worship are facing.
- Appoint a person from the congregation to be a liaison with law and fire officials.
- Promote neighborhood watches and educate the neighbors with the lighting arrangements (motion lights, etc.).
- Educate neighbors on recognizing unusual activities.
- Encourage neighbors to make note of strangers spending time in the neighborhood, either on foot or in vehicles.
- Write down the license plate numbers of suspicious vehicles and inform the proper authorities.
- Do not advertise on signs or bulletins when the place of worship will not be in use.

Arson Prevention: Schools

Arson Facts: Schools

According to the USFA's NFIRS data and the NFPA, an estimated average of 4,870 structure fires took place at educational properties (preschools through grade 12) annually from 2003 to 2006, with 21 percent or 1,022 being intentional fires.

Almost one-third (31 percent) of the structure fires in buildings that house preschool through grade 12 were contained trash or rubbish fires. The NFPA reported, "Causal data are not typically collected for fires reported as contained or confined, however an analysis of contained trash or rubbish fires with cause data reported show that the leading cause of these fires was intentional."

Intentionally-set fires in schools resulted in more than half (55 percent) of the direct property damage in schools totaling \$40.8 million.

The bathroom is the leading area of origin excluding fires reported as confined fires. Eleven percent of the fires started in bathrooms, lavatories, or locker rooms.

The NFPA reported that the bathroom was the leading area for trash fires.

When a school is damaged by fire, the effects are wider reaching than the damage to the building. Arson results in distress to students and staff along with disrupted and lost class educational time affecting learning, exams, and educational advancement. Teachers lose valuable teaching tools and resources that they have built up over their career. Schools are the heart of a local community and it is crucial to make sure they are safe.



School arson results in distress to students and staff, disrupting educational and social activities.

In addition to the cost of the damaged property, there is the cost to the community for the increased resources needed to fight the problem. Fire in our schools is a serious concern to communities. In addition to fire departments, communities must involve the police department, mental health professionals, school system, children's hospitals, social services, and the media.

Fortunately, fatalities from school fires are rare; none were reported during the 2003-2006 reporting period. This is due to a high percentage of schools having automatic extinguishing systems (88 percent have sprinklers coupled with vigilant fire safety drills), well marked exits, and alarm systems.

By taking some basic precautions in working practices, it is possible to minimize the risk of fire:

- Deter unauthorized entry into the school by posting visible signs, and while the school is closed, ensure the building is well lit as most crimes occur under the cover of darkness.
- Storage facilities and sheds used to hold sports equipment should also be well lit and located at least 10 feet from the main building to avoid fire spread from these buildings involving the whole school.
- Reduce the opportunity for an arsonist to start a fire by eliminating easily combustible and flammable materials located outside the school buildings. This includes the removal or locking up of garbage bins and recyclable materials.
- Many schools have temporary classrooms or trailers. These buildings should be fit with covers or skirts at the base to prevent combustible materials being placed underneath buildings and ignited.
- Block narrow spaces or alleys between buildings which provide cover to arsonists with an immovable barrier or fence.
- Test and maintain all smoke alarms, automatic extinguishing systems, fire-rated doors, and lighting for evacuation, and continue fire drills.

See also:

Structure Fires in Educational Properties by Jennifer D. Flynn, August 2009, NFPA, Fire Analysis and Research Division.

Site: _____ Date: _____ Eval. by: _____

PREVENTION TIPS	ACTION PLAN
REDUCE FIRESETTING OPPORTUNITY	
Remove garbage cans daily during non-school hours. Garbage has been used as an ignition source for arson fires or to keep an unwelcome visitor warm.	
Cut back vegetation and clear away any debris around campus buildings to reduce fire risk and hiding places. Keep vegetation watered and green.	
Keep dumpsters at least 10 feet away from buildings and roof overhangs. Make sure all discarded materials are placed inside the containers and padlock them after school hours.	
Check lighting with a night walk through your campus. Replace all burned out bulbs. Install lighting, including motion sensor lights, in currently dark and secluded areas.	
Securely store combustibles such as paint, gasoline and oil in proper flammable storage containers in a locked location to restrict access. Minimize the quantity of combustibles in storage and dispose of materials you don't need.	
In outside hallways and quads, post all notices and paper signs in protective display cases.	
Block access to narrow spaces or gaps between portable structures with fencing or other barriers.	
Include fire safety education as part of your school's curriculum. Have your local fire department's public education officer talk to students about arson and the serious consequences of that crime.	
A construction site can be an easy target for arsonists. Fence the area and secure it with alarms or by installing cameras for video surveillance. Limit the amount of debris and clear it away from the building.	
PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED BUILDING ENTRY	
Check all windows and doors to ensure that they close and lock securely. Keep them locked when school is out.	
Remove ladders and equipment when not in use and store appropriately.	
Check your site for structures around buildings that may provide unwanted access to roof areas.	
Roof vents and skylights should be protected with grills, bars or covers. Roof access latches should be locked.	

School Arson Prevention Tips Checklist and Action Plan

Site: _____ Date: _____ Eval. by: _____

PREVENTION TIPS	ACTION PLAN
PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED BUILDING ENTRY (continued)	
Secure all vents and screens to crawl space areas under campus buildings and portables. A heavy-gauge screen with flanges that bolts to the outside of the building helps prevent access.	
Skirting should be fitted at the base of portable classrooms to prevent access under the buildings.	
REDUCE POTENTIAL FOR FIRE DAMAGE	
Check that automatic sprinklers systems are fully operational. Inspect water supply sources regularly.	
Inspect fire, heat, smoke and intrusion alarm systems monthly to be sure they are working properly and that the alarm signal is audible where needed. Repair all malfunctioning elements.	
Train your staff on the use of the school's fire extinguishers. Ensure that the equipment is serviced regularly and in good working condition.	
Report all suspicious fires, no matter how small, to the local fire department. Request that they come to investigate for possible arson. Early intervention with a firesetter may avert future arson fires.	
Keep fire hydrants free of debris and vegetation for easy accessibility by the fire department.	
SECURE YOUR SCHOOL SITE	
Strongly consider installing surveillance cameras at your school.	
Add or increase nightly security patrols on campus.	
Turn on your outside sprinklers during night hours, especially in the 11 p.m. - 1 a.m. time period. Intruders don't like to get wet.	
Keep window coverings closed after school hours to hide room contents.	
Manage access to your site. Consider how responsible community members using your school after school hours may reduce your vulnerability to arson, simply by their presence.	
Discourage loiterers and intruders at your school. Be aware of possible warning signs - for example, cigarette butts, matches, graffiti, discarded bottles and garbage - indicating someone on school grounds who shouldn't be there. Vandalism and arson go hand in hand.	
Promote arson prevention at a school staff meeting. Show the video, 30 Ways To Prevent School Arson, to increase awareness about the potential for arson at your site and the significance of a loss to your school community.	
Include the video as part of your safety plan. Use the prevention tips checklist to evaluate your school's arson risk.	

School Arson Prevention Tips Checklist and Action Plan

Site: _____ Date: _____ Eval. by: _____

PREVENTION TIPS	ACTION PLAN
SECURE YOUR SCHOOL SITE (continued)	
Present the video at a parent-teacher organization meeting. Empower them to be extra eyes on campus regarding arson prevention and suggest how they can help.	
Invite your school's neighbors to be partners in your fire prevention plan. Ask them to keep an eye on your school after hours and report any suspicious activity.	

State and Local Initiatives

Massachusetts

In 1984, the USFA developed a grant program to support Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in their antiarson efforts. The program funded more than 150 nonprofit and voluntary organizations made up of community representatives helping residents deal with local problems. These local programs acted as a stabilizing influence in the community. Many of the CBOs that received grants are still engaged in a variety of antiarson activities from providing counseling for juvenile firesetters to rehabilitating housing.

Lawrence Arson Task Force

Several cities in Massachusetts received CBO grants. One of the success stories is the city of Lawrence. In 1992, an ongoing structural arson epidemic in Lawrence attracted negative, national media attention. A multiagency Arson Task Force was formed in May 1992 by investigators from the Lawrence Fire and Police Departments, Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's Office, and the ATF.

The Lawrence Arson Task Force, while in full operation between May and October 1992, cut the incidence of arson fires in Lawrence by half each month until arson fires in the city virtually stopped. The joint agency "team" approach worked so well that the city adopted the "team" approach for every serious fire or explosion investigation.

Fire Investigation Guidelines

The Massachusetts Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit (F & EIU) and an arson prosecutor developed the *Fire Investigation Guideline* which uses a witness driven and team method of fire investigation. This protocol has dramatically improved arson case prosecution results by using a coordinated, rapid response approach that analyzes arson case solvability factors early on. The National Fire Academy (NFA) adopted this technique for training Arson Prevention and Control Unit leaders nationally.

Pocket Guide to Accelerant Evidence Collection

Another success from Massachusetts was the development of the *Pocket Guide to Accelerant Evidence Collection*, which was developed by a team of local, State, Federal, and private sector fire arson investigators. This publication is listed as a reference by NFPA 921, *Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations*, and is still used nationwide.

The Massachusetts Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit

Massachusetts continues to be one of the leaders in arson investigation at the State level. Specially trained Massachusetts State Police detectives function as State Fire Marshal investigators. The Massachusetts F & EIU consists of 38 full time members who make up the Fire Investigations and Hazardous Devices (Bomb Squad) Units. The F & EIU also consists of eight bomb techs, five bomb dogs, and five accelerant detector dogs. Each Bomb Squad Unit has its own self-contained command and control structure and a specific jurisdiction to serve. Many of the investigators have been cross-trained to assist the other sections in time of need.

Fire Investigative Teams are designated as West, Central, North, and South and are deployed in those sections of the Commonwealth. By law, each fire department is responsible for determining the origin and cause of each fire or explosion in each community. The State Fire Marshal is mandated to investigate fires and explosions where local fire authorities are unable to determine the cause, where a violation of law exists, or when the fire or explosion is classified as suspicious or incendiary in nature. The F & EIU has developed a system of fire and arson investigation to work with local cities and towns when called to probe suspicious fires. Massachusetts has also been at the forefront of developing Multijurisdictional Arson Task Forces for arson investigations.

Massachusetts Department of Fire Services

In addition to their investigative work, the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services sponsors public education for their arson program with Fire Safety Days held in local shopping malls. They also hold an annual Arson Watch Reward Poster Contest, which has a very positive effect on the reward program by reaching out to students in the middle schools throughout Massachusetts. This successful contest has been held for 25 years and touches thousands of families. The winning artwork is placed on calendars and is disseminated in Massachusetts and nearby Rhode Island.

Michigan

Every fourth fire reported in the state of Michigan is an arson or suspicious blaze. Each year arson blazes cost Michigan residents over \$220 million. These loss figures do not include indirect costs such as medical care, funeral expenses, temporary shelters, business interruption, demolition, fire investigation, prosecution, court proceedings, and incarceration. Arson also has a significant impact on what Michigan residents pay for home and renters insurance.

To focus attention on this devastating crime, the Governor signs a proclamation declaring the first week in May as Arson Awareness Week. Annually, radio spots, news reports, and other media promote Arson Awareness Week and the reward program. Sponsored by **Michigan Arson Prevention Committee (MAPC)**, this week-long observation includes a public awareness campaign about the devastation caused by arson, the presentation of Prosecutor of the Year Award, Anti-Arson Achievement Award, Fire Investigator(s) of the Year award, and awarding the middle and high school poster contest winners on their antiarson posters. This program is unique as middle and high school art classes design their posters to be judged with their art work and slogans for the Anti-Arson campaign. The MAPC also prepares packets of information to be sent to police and fire agencies, newspapers, radio



2009 MAPC Arson Awareness Poster Contest Winner by Brianna Jackman, an 11th grader at Imlay City High School

and television stations, and cable/public television stations.

Since the Arson Control Reward Program was established in 1975, 781 requests have been made resulting in 663 rewards totaling \$706,000.00. The awards have led to 1,154 arrests. The MAPC Reward Program can pay up to \$5,000 per request.

MAPC Success Story

The following newspaper article is reprinted with permission from *The Daily News* (Greenville, Belding and Montcalm County, Michigan)

Investigators Lauded for Haunted Mill Arson Case

May 5, 2009

The MAPC honored several local law enforcement officials and Special Investigative Units (SIU) for their efforts in the Haunted Mill arson investigation.

The council chambers at Greenville City Hall was packed as friends and family members watched Greenville Department of Public Safety Sgt. Brian Blomstrom, Officer Mark Cole and Detective Wayne Dillon—along with two private investigators from Preferred Consulting and Investigation of Saginaw, Michigan. Investigators Jim Foley and Kevin Pike received the MAPC 2009 Investigators of the Year Award. The Montcalm Prosecutor was awarded the 2009 Prosecutor of the Year award prosecuting this incident. “I think it was a great

collaboration,” said a Greenville Public Safety Officer. “These guys spent a lot of time to keep digging and finding things. This is a perfect example of the investigative skills these guys have.”

“This was an excellent example of the public and private sectors working together to fight the crime of arson,” said Steve Thomas, Michigan Basic Property Insurance director.

The 8th judicial circuit court jury found the defendant guilty of arson of a dwelling, arson of insured property, conspiracy to commit arson of a dwelling, and conspiracy to commit arson of insured property. He is serving a sentence of 4-1/2 to 20 years in prison.

The Michigan Arson Prevention Committee is a State-wide committee which sponsors a number of educational and public information programs and maintains a tip-reward program that aids in the apprehension of arsonists. More information can be found at: www.miarsonprevention.org

Georgia

Georgia has an arson reward program that pays up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of an arsonist.

The Georgia Arson Control Program, Inc. (GAC) was formed in January of 1979 by property and casualty insurers writing business in Georgia. GAC, with the cooperation of the Commissioner, Georgia Office of Insurance and Fire Safety, and State/local law enforcement agencies, established an arson tip hotline. A reward fund was initiated from which monetary rewards are given to individuals who come forward with information that results in the arrest and conviction of arsonists.

The Georgia State Insurance Commissioner (or designee) attends reward ceremonies covered by local news groups. Routinely, the Office of Insurance and Fire Safety and local agencies publicize the arson tip hotline number for information from the public. Investigators are provided with arson reward posters in at least three languages, yard signs, brochures, and business cards to distribute to the public. The telephone calls come into a hotline center that is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Georgia Arson Control Program Hotline and Reward Program poster.

More information about the GAC can be found at:

- Georgia Arson Control, Inc.
(www.georgiaarsoncontrol.com)
- Office of Insurance and Fire Safety
(www.gainsurance.org/FireMarshal/arson.aspx)

Utah

Utah has developed an interagency cooperative where it creates and then delivers wildland fire prevention messages. The Utah campaign is titled “Stop It Before it Starts, Prevent Wildfires”.

The campaign provides specific wildland fire prevention messages about debris burning, building safe campfires, off-road safety, fireworks safety, shooting, and a section on how citizens can assist firefighters in stopping arson fires.

Fire prevention tips include building and putting out a campfire, charcoal briquettes, smoking, lanterns, stoves and heaters, spark arresters, fireworks, and target shooting.

Additional information can be found at:
www.utahfireinfo.gov/prevention



Poster from Utah's “Stop It Before It Starts, Prevent Wildfires” campaign.

Building and Putting Out a Campfire:

- Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass, and leaves. Pile any extra wood away from the fires.
- Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control.
- Start with dry twigs and small sticks. Add larger sticks as the fire builds up.
- Put the largest pieces of wood on last, pointing them toward the center of the fire, and gradually push them into the flames.
- Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat. Scrape away litter, duff, and any burnable material within a 10-foot-diameter circle. This will keep a small campfire from spreading.
- Be sure your match is out. Hold it until it is cold. Break it so that you can feel the charred portion before discarding it. Make sure it is out cold.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.
- Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet. Move rocks around to check for burning embers underneath.
- Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned material has been extinguished and cooled. Use dirt if you do not have water. Mix enough soil or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.
- Feel all materials with your bare hand. Make sure that no roots are burning. Do not bury your coals because they can smolder and break out.
- Contact your local agency for fire restrictions and closures.

Charcoal Briquettes:

- After using the burning charcoal briquettes, “dunk ‘em!”—don’t sprinkle. Soak the coals with lots of water, stir them, and soak again. Be sure they are out cold! Carefully feel the coals with your bare hands to be sure.

Smoking:

- When smoking is permitted outdoors, safe practices require at least a 3-foot clearing around the smoker. Grind out your cigarette, cigar, or pipe tobacco in the dirt. Never grind it on a stump or log. Use your ashtray while in your car.

Lanterns, Stoves, and Heaters:

- Cool all lanterns, stoves, and heaters before refueling. Place them on the ground in a cleared area to fill them. If fuel spills, move the appliance to a new clearing before lighting it. Recap and store flammable liquid containers in a safe place. Never light lanterns and stoves inside a tent, trailer, or camper. If you use a lantern or stove inside a tent or trailer be sure to have adequate ventilation. Always read and follow instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Spark Arresters:

- All types of equipment and vehicles including chain saws, portable generators, cross-country vehicles, and trail bikes require spark arresters if used in or near grass, brush or a wooded area. To make sure that the spark arrester is functioning properly check with the dealer or contact your local Forest Service or State forestry office.
- Never park or drive your vehicle on dry grass.
- Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) must be used only on designated roads and trails, never cross country.

Fireworks:

- Fireworks are not permitted on public lands.

Target Shooting:

- Choose locations with little or no vegetation.
- Use soft targets, avoid shooting rocks, metal, or pressurized containers.
- Be aware of the type of ammunition you are using; certain types of ammunition may increase sparks.
- Tracers are illegal to use on public lands.

Source: www.utahfireinfo.gov

Maine

Each year, billions of dollars worth of property and hundreds of lives are lost as a result of fires set by arsonists. State Farm has been a sponsor of the Arson Canine Training Scholarship Program since 1993 and works in conjunction with Maine Specialty Dogs and the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to train 10 K-9's and handlers a year. Over 200 teams have been placed in departments and law enforcement agencies throughout the United States and Canada.

With an arson dog, investigators can quickly pinpoint the location of accelerant residue, which saves the arson investigator time at a fire scene. What once took a person hours or days to uncover, a dog can now find in a matter of minutes.

Because the K-9 has a superior ability to discriminate among scents at a fire scene, the investigator takes fewer samples to the laboratory, thus reducing the cost to the department and, ultimately, the taxpayer. The presence of a K-9 team has led to a reduction of arson fires in communities.

State or local governmental agencies responsible for arson/fire investigations may apply for participation in the program. All applications are reviewed to determine eligibility and suitability to handle arson dogs.

The training is conducted by Maine Specialty Dogs located in Gray, Maine. Maine Specialty Dogs develops the curriculum and oversees all training and instruction for the program. The highly intensive 5-week course includes classroom instruction and fire scene investigation, as well as various physically demanding training exercises. The K-9's are trained to work around physical obstacles and discriminate scents of various accelerants used to set fires during the intensive training.

At the end of the 5-week course, the teams are evaluated by the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and a chemist certifies that each K-9 is capable of discriminating a variety of scents from substances used to start fires. This certification is crucial because the evidence uncovered by the K-9 and handler may become a key point in subsequent criminal and civil trials. A 5-year commitment by the department to the program is required.

After completing the initial 5-week training, the K-9 and the handler become a team. Each team must recertify annually at one of the recertification locations. If the K-9 is not recertified yearly or the department doesn't complete the 5-year commitment, the K-9 will be returned

to the program or retired to the agency/handler. This decision will be made by Maine Specialty Dogs.



Lieutenant Dean C. Mulvihill and his K-9 partner Mae. Photo courtesy of Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue, Howard County, Maryland.

Lieutenant Dean C. Mulvihill and his K-9 partner Mae are an accelerant detection K-9 team working for Howard County (Maryland) Fire and Rescue's Office of the Fire Marshal, Fire Investigation Division. Lieutenant Mulvihill and K-9 Mae were teamed together and trained by Maine Specialty Dogs and certified by the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. The training was made possible by a scholarship program sponsored by State Farm Insurance. K-9 Mae is a 5-year old Yellow Labrador from Florida. After a career attempt as a Seeing Eye Guide Dog for the blind, Mae found a more successful fit as an accelerant detection canine. Lieutenant Mulvihill and K-9 Mae have been in service supporting fire investigators and law enforcement agencies at the local, State, and Federal level in Howard County and the surrounding Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area since September 2007.

Labrador Used in Investigation of Fatal Fire in Springfield

Nose to the floor, Ashes worked his way through the charred house at 1711 West Olive, sniffing for the subtle, faint hint of an arsonist's handiwork.

Authorities say the black Labrador retriever named Ashes found what he was looking for—traces of a liquid accelerant in the home and on the pants of David A. Williams.

Williams has been charged with setting the fire that killed the three children of his future wife. Greg Carrell, assistant State fire marshal in Jefferson City, said trained dogs like Ashes have extremely sensitive noses, “many thousand times better” at detecting scents than humans and even some scent-detection machines.

Dogs have about 220 million scent-detecting cells in their olfactory system, compared with about 5 million in humans.

Although the dog found traces of accelerant in the house and on the arson suspect's clothing, Carrell said dogs like Ashes can't distinguish between different kinds of flammable material.

“They are trained to detect flammable petroleum-based liquids, or the presence of it even after it has been burned,” Carrell said. “They're also trained for scent discrimination, so they aren't confused by the smell of burned carpet or plastics.”

Brian Peterman, president of the Canine Accelerant Detection Association in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, said trained dogs are “another tool in the toolbox” that investigators can use to determine the cause of a fire.

The dogs locate where an arsonist may have poured or splashed accelerants, he said.

Investigators then take samples from those locations and send them to a crime lab for detailed analysis.

It's the crime lab's job to determine what kind of accelerant was used. In the case of the Springfield fire, it's likely samples from the West Olive house and from Wil-



Chris Thompson with Ashes, an accelerant detection K-9.

liams' pants leg were sent to the Springfield Crime Lab for analysis to see if the accelerants were the same.

Crime Lab officials declined to talk about evidence they were processing. Carrell, the assistant State fire marshal, said he has used accelerant detection dogs in the past. He declined to talk specifically about the Springfield case.

Although other breeds can be used, Carrell said Labradors have proved to be ideal accelerant detection dogs.

He said most come from Labrador rescue groups as older puppies. “Labradors have a great temperament, which is helpful at a fire scene where there are lots of people, fire hoses, and noise around,” Carrell said.

Reprinted with permission from the *Springfield, Missouri News-Leader*.

Hero to Zero - Firefighter Arsonist is a program implemented by the Pennsylvania Association of Arson Investigators (PAAI).

It affords firefighters training on an array of topics that address, not only the act of firefighter arson, but how to curtail it.

Pennsylvania State Police Fire Marshal David Klitsch developed this 3-hour program that has been delivered in six States.

This program is unique and Pennsylvania State Trooper David Klitsch is a pioneer on the topic of firefighter arson training. Colorado and Louisiana have a program modeled after the Pennsylvania Hero to Zero - Firefighter Arsonist program. Trooper Klitsch has received interest from several States that want to develop partnerships with the PAAI to deliver a similar program in their State.

Trooper David Klitsch begins the session telling a story. He says, "To all who knew him, he was a hero. In addition to being a son, father, brother, or uncle, he was a firefighter. By trade, he could have been a chief executive officer or laborer. He wore many hats, until the day he became an arsonist. A stigma once met with uncertainty, shame, and avoidance, has now come to the forefront of awareness."

Firefighter arson is not an epidemic within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but now a more recognized crime than in the past. The PAAI acknowledges this as an unpleasant experience for those fire departments forced to deal with the ramifications of an arsonist's actions and is sponsoring a program with the intent of decreasing the frequency as well as offering awareness.

The Hero to Zero - Firefighter Arsonist program is a blend of PowerPoint® slides, videos, and discussion. The course discusses the following topics: 1) addressing the problem, 2) motives of firesetting firefighters, 3) effect of firefighter arson on the community and the fire service,



Headline courtesy of *The Citizen of Laconia*, March 23, 2010.

- 4) embarrassment to the family and the fire company,
- 5) understanding arson statutes,
- 6) basic profile of the firefighter arsonist,
- 7) the fire service's responsibility in preventing firefighter arsonists, and
- 8) preventive screening and background checks.

Trooper Klitsch comments on the value and success of the program: "Firefighter arson is an unpleasant reality of the fire service both here and abroad. The Hero to Zero - Firefighter Arsonist program brings this unpleasant topic to the forefront of the fire service through an attention grabbing 3-hour presentation. This training program has been credited with uncovering cases of firefighter arsonist since its inception. I suspect we will continue to see a rise in firefighters being arrested for setting fires as the fire service goes through a period of "cleansing" as a result of the information gathered through this program and the action taken by the students (firefighters) in identifying these criminal actions."

For more information about the Hero to Zero - Firefighter Arsonist program go to www.herotozero.info and www.paa.org

Coatesville, Pennsylvania

Nearly 70 arsons plagued Coatesville, Pennsylvania from February 2008 through March 2009, with more than half remaining unsolved. Coatesville is a small city of 11,600 residents located on the historic Lincoln Highway, U.S. Route 30, about 45 miles west of Philadelphia.

The fires have caused more than \$3 million in damage, leaving more than 100 people homeless and resulting in the death of an 83-year old woman. Coatesville arsons also injured seven firefighters and a member of the fire police who was directing traffic near a fire scene.

As a result of these fires the Chester County Arson Task Force was formed. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from the Coatesville City Police Department, the Chester County Detectives, the Pennsylvania State Police, ATF, and the FBI. A reward of up to \$20,000 was offered for information leading to an arrest and conviction of a suspect or suspects.

Coatesville officials rallied local volunteers to develop a

new Neighborhood Watch program. They jump started the program by distributing 800 motion-activated lights and smoke alarms and batteries to residents.

The Neighborhood Watch program and the Task Force instructed citizens to remove trash and debris from the front and back of their homes and businesses. Additional recommendations were not to leave out combustible material like wood crates and pallets, stating that arsonists use the trash and debris as kindling.

They also pleaded with city businesses and homeowners to ensure that their properties would be well lit at night. Lights and cameras that cover properties discourage arsonists and other criminals. They were also told to properly store and secure chemicals and flammable material in places of business.

Other commonsense fire safety advice was issued including installing smoke alarms, having a fire extinguisher on hand, making a fire safety plan (homes and businesses), and practicing fire escape plans at least four times a year.

Layton City, Utah



Photo courtesy of Layton City Fire Department, Layton, Utah.

The Layton City Fire Department has developed an arson prevention program in its schools using peer-to-peer training. Layton is located 30 minutes north of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Dean Hunt, the Fire Marshal in the Layton City Fire Department, describes the genesis of the program. “Due to increasing call volumes and an increasing number of schools in our area, we were not able to keep up with the arson prevention education needs of our community.

We began a Fire Corps Program utilizing students from the drama clubs from the two high schools in our area.”

The drama club advisors work with the high school students to write the scripts, make the props, and rehearse. The program has reached over 8,500 elementary school students.

In order to assure credibility and keep the firefighters involved, Layton City Fire Department companies participate in the last 15 minutes of each presentation to reinforce what the Fire Corps team has taught them.

This program of students teaching students not only taught the elementary-aged students in their community, but the high school students involved in the presentations also learned by being the mentors for the elementary school kids.

Hunt talks about the success of this endeavor. “We even received positive feedback from parents throughout our community. Their elementary aged children were coming home from school and teaching them about arson prevention. We have never received such a positive response from the parents with our earlier programs.”

2010 National Arson Awareness Week Sample Resolution

National Arson Awareness Week 2010

WHEREAS, The theme for 2010 Arson Awareness Week is Community Arson Prevention; and

WHEREAS, In 2006 (most recent year for statistics), 316,600 intentionally-set fires occurred, injuring 7,825 firefighters and civilians; and

WHEREAS, Arson has one of the lowest clearance rates of any major crime. The national rate for arson in 2007 according to the FBI was 18 percent. An estimated 5 to 7 percent of arson offenses resulted in convictions; and

WHEREAS, The price that America pays for arson is extreme. In 2006, 10 firefighters died as a result of arson. In addition to needless injury and death, an estimated \$1.1 billion in direct property loss occurs annually; and

WHEREAS, Public awareness is one of the specific responsibilities of the U.S. Fire Administration; and

WHEREAS, A community Arson Watch Program can put the neighbor back into neighborhood by creating a sense of cooperation. It brings the fire service, law enforcement, and the citizens together to reduce the crime of arson; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [Governor's or Mayor's name], [Governor or Mayor] of [City or State], on behalf of its citizens do hereby proclaim May 2-8, 2010, to be Arson Awareness Week.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Governor or Mayor] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] pay special tribute to all fire and law enforcement investigative agencies for their dedicated and tireless service.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, the [insert Governor or Mayor] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] of the [insert City or State] have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the [insert City and County or State] to be hereunto affixed in the

[City or State] of _____ on this _____ day of _____ 2010.

[Signature]

2010 National Arson Awareness Week Sample Proclamation

National Arson Awareness Week 2010

WHEREAS, The theme for 2010 Arson Awareness Week is Community Arson Prevention; and

WHEREAS, In 2006 (most recent year for statistics), 316,600 intentionally-set fires occurred, injuring 7,825 firefighters and civilians; and

WHEREAS, Arson has one of the lowest clearance rates of any major crime. The national rate for arson in 2007 according to the FBI was 18 percent. An estimated 5 to 7 percent of arson offenses resulted in convictions; and

WHEREAS, The price that America pays for arson is extreme. In 2006, 10 firefighters died as a result of arson. In addition to needless injury and death, an estimated \$1.1 billion in direct property loss occurs annually; and

WHEREAS, Public awareness is one of the specific responsibilities of the U.S. Fire Administration; and

WHEREAS, A community Arson Watch Program can put the neighbor back into neighborhood by creating a sense of cooperation. It brings the fire service, law enforcement, and the citizens together to reduce the crime of arson; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that The International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc., Board of Directors meeting in Executive Session on November 1, 1985, in Atlanta, Georgia, hereby proclaims the week, beginning on May 4, 1986, as National Arson Awareness Week, and the first full week of May shall be so designated each year thereafter.

Links of Interest

U.S. Fire Administration Arson Awareness Week

http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/subjects/arson/arson_awareness.shtm

National Fire Protection Association

<http://www.nfpa.org>

U.S. Fire Administration

National Fire Incident Reporting System

<http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/nfirs>

Federal Bureau of Investigation

2008 Uniform Crime Reporting

<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/index.html>

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

<http://www.atf.gov/explosives/enforcement>

International Association of Arson Investigators

<http://www.firearson.com>

National Association of State Fire Marshals

<http://www.firemarshals.org>

USAonWatch

<http://www.usaonwatch.org>

Neighborhood Watch

<http://www.usaonwatch.org/register/default.aspx>

National Volunteer Fire Council

<http://www.nvfc.org>

Insurance Committee for Arson Control

<http://www.arsoncontrol.org>

**Redwood Empire School Insurance Group,
School Arson Prevention Checklist**

www.resig.org/forms/Arson_List.pdf

Massachusetts Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit

<http://www.mass.gov>

NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations

<http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=921>

Michigan Arson Prevention Committee

<http://www.mi arsonprevention.org>

Georgia Arson Control

www.georgiaarsoncontrol.com

Office of Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner

www.gainsurance.org/FireMarshal/arson.aspx

Hero to Zero – Firefighter Arsonist

www.herotozero.info

Pennsylvania Association of Arson Investigators

www.paai.org

Utah “Stop It Before it Starts, Prevent Wildfires”

www.utahfireinfo.gov/prevention

**State Farm Arson Canine Training
Scholarship Program**

http://www.statefarm.com/about/part_spos/community/arson_dog/arson_dog.asp

Kentucky State Arson Task Force

<http://www.ksatf.org>



U.S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727
800-238-3358
www.usfa.fema.gov

April 2010