

# Arson Prevention - for Schools

## Arson during school hours

### Education

Staff should be made aware of the potential for daytime fires to occur - few schools have risk assessments for fire that mention daytime arson as a potential risk. Head teachers should be aware that they are responsible for the legal requirement to carry out and maintain risk assessments in case of fire (Regulatory Reform [Fire Safety] Order 2005). In particular, staff should be made aware of the danger of children being unsupervised in cloakrooms and corridors.

Parents should be notified about occurrences of fires at their children's school. They should also be informed if arson is known, or suspected, to be the cause.

This should be repeated whenever an incident occurs. Fire Safety Awareness sessions, including the risks of malicious calls, provided by the local fire service should be held at regular intervals for all children, including the very young.

Regular fire drills should be undertaken as part of the Risk Assessment and records of them should be kept. Children should be told regularly that cigarette lighters and matches are not allowed in schools. Any breach should be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Children who are suspected of involvement in starting fires should be considered for referral to Fire & Rescue Service firesetting aversion schemes. (There are different names for these schemes). Consultation with parents or guardians is essential as these schemes are often conducted at home. Head teachers are asked to consider making fire issues and risks a part of everyday school life.

All fires, no matter how small should be reported to the Fire & Rescue Service. The Fire & Rescue Service



understand and can assist with possible solutions to prevent further occurrences.

### Prevention

New schools should be designed and built with arson in mind. Architects responsible for such new projects and existing alterations should consult with Fire Service and Insurance specialists.

Stores in and around the school that contain combustible materials should be kept locked. Stores that contain chemicals and hazardous materials, often adjacent to chemistry laboratories should be well managed, clean and kept locked. The Fire & Rescue Service should be advised of the location of such rooms for their records.

Waste bins and wheelie bins should be located well away from the buildings, preferably in locked compounds. Waste skips used for any purpose should be located well away from buildings but not near perimeter fences or walls. Litterbins should be emptied before / at start of lunch break and at the end of each school day.

## Detection and Protection

Automatic fire detection should be considered and include all escape routes, stores, cloakrooms and high-risk areas. Coats and other combustibles should not be kept in corridors or escape routes.

Fire doors should be maintained in good working order and closed at all times. Members of staff should be adequately trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire & Rescue Service, building evacuation and the use of fire extinguishers.

Full cost benefit analysis should be undertaken on the installation of sprinkler systems for all new building projects or substantial refits/renovations.

Automatic detection and fire alarm systems should be connected to a commercial collector station for constant monitoring and immediate transmission of a fire alarm signal to the local authority Fire & Rescue Service whenever the school is unoccupied. Unwanted calls such as malicious calls and system faults should be treated seriously and with the highest priority. Malicious calls are a criminal offence and will be reported to the police by the Fire & Rescue Service.

## Arson outside of school hours

### Deter unauthorised entry onto the site

Ensure perimeter fencing is maintained in good order and consider the use of boundary signs to deter intruders, particularly at vulnerable spots, or areas known to be used for unauthorized access to your site.

## Prevent unauthorised entry into the building

The easiest points of entry into your premises will be via the doors and windows. Skylights are also a weak point unless fitted with internal bars or grills. Ensure your burglar alarm system is maintained fully functional.

Remember – means of escape from your premises in the event of fire should never be compromised!

## Reduce the opportunity for an intruder to start a fire

Arsonists seldom bring combustible items with them but tend to use what is available on site. Do you have external combustible storage within your school grounds? If you do, can it be removed or stored elsewhere?

## Reduce the scope for potential fire damage

Closing all doors at night will help contain any fire or smoke within the room of origin, or at the very least, slow down the rate of fire growth. Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparing a disaster recovery plan.

The time and effort put into creating a plan will pay dividends in the event of a serious fire, whether started accidentally or deliberately.

For **FREE** fire safety advice, visit our website or contact your local Prevention and Protection team.

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