

Crime prevention advice for

Arson



One of the primary aims of the Fire and Rescue Service is to reduce the number of deliberate fires in our community. All too often these fires occur where the perpetrator has easy access to combustible materials located at the perimeter of premises or where site security is poor.



The effects of fire on business and the environment can be catastrophic. With over 2000 Arson attacks on property every week in the UK, statistics show that 80% of businesses affected by a major incident close within 18 months and 90% of businesses that lose data from a disaster are forced to shut within 2 years.

In any business premises, the owner/occupier and manager have a legal responsibility for fire safety.

Fires started inside the premises are often caused by people who may be mentally ill, by extremists or even by a member of staff who bears a grudge.

Ask yourself this – how easily could a fire be started or an incendiary device be concealed?



Most of the arson fires affecting shops are lit outside. The culprits are often vandals with little more motivation than to cause trouble. They light fires with anything readily to hand – waste, packaging, rubbish in open skips and plastic trays. How easily could it happen?

Deal with the waste and rubbish threat

- No packaging, waste or rubbish should be left to accumulate anywhere on the premises or immediately outside.
- Safe storage means metal bins with closed lids; ideally these bins would be locked away in their own compartment.
- Arrange regular/frequent collection of refuse/waste by a local authority or contractor.
- Keep rubbish bins or skips containing any combustible material at least 10 metres away from buildings or property to prevent fire spreading by radiated heat
- Keep a distance of 2 metres between bins or skips and any boundary fencing. This should prevent opportunist arsonists from accessing them outside your property.
- Keep aerosol cans, flammable liquid containers and gas cylinders separate from combustible materials
- Dispose of hazardous waste in accordance with guidelines enforced by the environment agency



Pallet management

- Store pallets outside, neatly stacked and away from buildings and the perimeter of the property
- Stack to a height where they would not collapse in a fire or strong winds
- Keep plastic pallets separate from the wooden pallets
- Make arrangements with supplier for prompt removal of pallets

Make the premises as arson proof as possible

- Have there previously been small fires in the premises? Have you heard of fires occurring locally? If so, tell the Police and be particularly vigilant. Small fires sometimes serve as a warning sign of worse to come.
- Without blocking fire exits, limit as far as possible the number of entrances in use.
- Keep an eye on what is going on. It pays in larger establishments to have a security guard on duty at main entrances. In smaller businesses, you and your staff should exercise vigilance.
- As part of staff training, remind all employees of the arson threat and advise them to report suspicious behaviour by customers (or staff!).
- Ensure that doors and windows are in good repair and that locks are working.
- Gaps under doors to the street should be as narrow as possible – this will prevent items such as lighted paper being pushed under them.
- If there is a letter-box, it should have a metal container fitted on the inside of the building (this should contain any fires from lighted rags or paper).
- Keep a list of people holding keys to the premises, and chase any that are missing.
- Special danger areas are storages and warehousing. There should be a rule that access is only available to authorised members of staff.
- Is there a system – or should there be – for leaving lights on at night

Close down routines

- Lock all external doors
- Close all internal doors
- Close and lock all windows
- Check that no unauthorised persons remain on the premises
- Check that there is no accumulation of rubbish or waste
- Make sure flammable liquids are not accessible
- Turn on intruder alarms
- Switch on security lighting

