

## **ARSON – KEY FACT SHEET**

### **Scale of the problem**

- There were 121,800 deliberate fires in 2002. Over the last 10 years, deliberate fires in buildings have increased by 24% from 26,300 in 1992 to 32,400 in 2002.
- Deliberate fires in road vehicles have increased by 68% in the same period, rising from 47,800 in 1992 to 80,200 in 2002.
- Every week arson results in 2,342 deliberately started primary fires, 63 injuries, 2 deaths and a cost to society of over £42 million.
- In the last decade there have been around 2.4 million deliberate fires in the UK, resulting in 1,250 deaths and 32,000 injuries.

### **Financial Costs**

- Home Office research puts the cost of arson to the economy in England and Wales at £2.2 billion per year, with the cost of fire to the economy at £6.6 billion per year.
- British business insured fire losses are £700 million per year.
- Arson is thought to account for over half total insured fire losses – perhaps £325 million or more each year

### **Social costs**

#### **Schools and Education**

- Every week 20 schools suffer an arson attack and are now estimated to cost insurers £100 million a year.
- This means 3 schools every day suffer an arson attack.
- Up to 90% of major fires in schools are thought to be arson.
- 35% of the 849 malicious school fires in 2002 occurred in the 7 Metropolitan counties. 42% occurred in the 40 non-Met counties.

- 84% of schools that suffer an arson attack will have a history of other criminal damage.
- Related costs incurred as a result of school fires have increased by more than 170% over the last 10 years.
- The estimated average number of pupils affected by large school fires is 90,000-100,000 per year as a result of the destruction or damage of classrooms and school property.
- A third of all school fires now occur during normal school hours.
- Loss of coursework and facilities causes a considerable amount of mental stress to pupils.
- School fires cost £73,400,000 nationally in 2003.
- Despite this, only around 150 out of c.28,000 schools in the UK are fitted with sprinklers.

### Communities

- Those living on the lowest incomes are 31 times more likely to suffer an arson attack and 16 times more likely to die in a fire.
- Many businesses never entirely recover – research by Touch Ross estimates that up to 90% of businesses suffering an arson attack lose orders, contracts, key employees or actually go out of business resulting in lost jobs and services to the community.
- There are 44,000 malicious car fires per year, resulting in around 20 deaths and a further 80 injuries.
- Malicious car fires cost insurers around £77m per annum.
- Vacant properties are damaged.
- Local environment is blighted.

### Firesetters

- 40% of those prosecuted or cautioned for arson offences in 2000 were aged 10 to 17.
- Most school arson is carried out by pupils, ex-pupils or kids living close to the school.
- Nearly all juvenile firesetters are male.

- Arson attacks by children excluded from school are almost double that of those still in mainstream education.
- 45% of vehicle arson is to cover up criminal activity.
- 20% of arsonists are thought to have mental problems.
- 25% of property arson is committed for malicious reasons.

### **Key methods of prevention**

- Deter unauthorised entry onto the site or into the building.
- Coats, papers and other combustibles should not be kept in corridors or escape routes.
- Stores containing waste or chemicals in or around the building should be kept clean and locked. Bins should be stored away from buildings.
- All fires, no matter how small, should be reported to the fire brigade.
- Make sure automatic fire detection systems are fitted and are operational, including ensuring that batteries are working.
- In non-domestic premises, ensure that fire escapes are clear and there is no evidence of hidden or small fires on a daily basis.

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