

ARSON AWARENESS

“Here in West Virginia, over 3,400 arson fires were reported by fire departments from 2005-2009, with \$36 million dollars’ estimated property and contents loss.”

Arson robs communities of their most valuable assets – lives and property. Arson destroys more than buildings: it can devastate a community. This can result in the decline of the neighborhood through increased insurance premiums, loss of business revenue, and a decrease in property values.

Some tips for arson prevention projects in your neighborhood:

- Clean up the neighborhood by removing all garbage and excess vegetation that is capable of being ignited.
- Remove possible sources of ignition such as flammable liquids and unused gasoline containers.
- Remove abandoned vehicles. On average, there are over 25,000 estimated arson fires each year involving vehicles. Most car fires are started to cover up other criminal activity, or simply as an act of vandalism. Abandoned cars are targets for arson.
- Secure abandoned and vacant homes, which are potential arson targets. This might mean installing additional locks or boarding up broken windows or other openings with plywood.
- Communicate with the owners of a vacant home that authorities are concerned and why they are concerned.
- Encourage your local fire department to conduct frequent fire code inspections.
- Contact public works to disconnect all utilities at the street. This includes gas, water, and electric. If there are liquified petroleum 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.



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