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ARSON AWARENESS WEEK
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EMMITSBURG, MD – The United States Fire Administration (USFA) announces the theme for the 2009 Arson Awareness Week: *Arson for Profit*. USFA and its partners will use the week of May 3rd to the 9th to focus public attention on the alarming statistics about Arson for Profit and hopes to expand the resources and support necessary to reduce this crime.

Arson for Profit, or economic arson, is when businesses or individuals set fires to reduce financial loss, recoup initial investments, or dispose of depreciated assets usually for a payout from insurance companies. The USFA is partnering with the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI).

"Each year firefighters and innocent civilians are needlessly put in danger, injured and killed as a result of arson fires," said Glenn A. Gaines, Acting United States Fire Administrator. "We are pleased to partner with the law enforcement community on efforts to reduce the crime of arson."

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2005 an estimated 323,900 intentional fires reported to U.S. fire departments resulted in 490 civilian fire deaths, 3 firefighter on-duty deaths, 1,500 civilian fire injuries, 7,600 firefighter on-duty injuries and \$1.102 billion in direct property damage.

"Arson is a costly crime that's being fanned by the flames of recession. Firefighters and innocent families are endangered when desperate people illegally torch their homes, businesses and cars for insurance bailouts," according to Dennis Jay, Executive Director, Coalition Against Insurance Fraud. "Arson also is raising insurance premiums at a time of great stress on honest people's pocketbooks. All Americans are victims of arson, and we all must work to ensure fewer arson matches are ever lit."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2007 Uniform Crime Reporting statistics showed the average dollar loss for all types of arson was \$17,289. 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 \$114,699 per arson.

"Arson is one of the most heinous crimes imaginable. When the arsonist unleashes fire, he does so with a callous disregard for what the outcome will be. He cares not a whit about the firefighters that will risk their lives responding to the fire, the innocent victims that may be disfigured or killed, the neighboring residents or businesses that may suffer damage or destruction, the blight his deeds will leave on a community or the financial costs that burned property imposes on society," said Ken Finley, IAAI-CFI, President, International Association of Arson Investigators. "Please join us in our never ending fight against those who use fire as a vicious tool for their own gain."

The USFA's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) states the two leading causes of civilian deaths are arson, at 28 percent, and smoking, at 18 percent. Arson is, by far, the leading cause of property loss, at 26 percent. Arson is an enormous problem in the United States, especially to outside and nonresidential structure properties.

David M. Wulf, Chief of the ATF's National Center for Explosives Training and Research adds, "In view of the economy and uncertainty within the housing market, arson for profit presents an increased concern to both fire service and law-enforcement agencies."

For more information, including a media kit for the 2009 Arson Awareness Week campaign, go to <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/aaw/>

The United States Fire Administration recommends everyone should have a comprehensive fire protection plan that includes smoke alarms, residential sprinklers, and practicing a home fire escape plan.