

Combating Arson

In the past year alone, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service has responded to over 2,000 arson attacks. Local people have lost their livelihoods, important facilities closed and vital services withdrawn. Arson hurts everybody, needlessly risking the lives of fire fighters and the law abiding public, costing millions of pounds in damage to property and ruining the environment. The majority of arson attacks can be prevented by improving safety and security, which need not cost a lot and should be part of good housekeeping and premises management practice. It can be something as simple as regularly removing rubbish to prevent it building up. In comparison, failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if you do suffer an arson attack.

What is an Arson Risk Assessment?

It's a careful examination of potential fire targets and gaps in security to determine whether there are enough

precautions in place or whether more should be done. The aim of the exercise is to identify ways to deter or limit the activities of a potential arsonist. This guide and the accompanying checklist for your premises will assist you in taking a structured approach to assessing arson risk by identifying the type of people who might start fires and the targets most likely to be chosen.

Who Starts Fires?

Arson attacks occur for a variety of reasons but generally fall within four broad headings: fireplay, revenge, emotional and criminal. The most common reason is fireplay and the majority of people cautioned or found guilty of committing arson are male and aged under 18. Arson attacks involving this group are more likely to be opportunistic in nature and target areas with inadequate security measures and/or poor housekeeping practices.

WHO STARTS FIRES?

- Fireplay is a result of young people playing with fire either out of curiosity, boredom or with the intention to cause damage to property
- Revenge attacks after an argument with friends, family or employees where the intention is to harm or injure a person
- Emotional firesetting is associated with arsonists who may have mental health problems and set fires as a means of expressing themselves
- Criminal firesetting is where arson is committed to destroy evidence of another criminal activity such as the theft of a vehicle or to fraudulently claim on insurance payments



COMBUSTIBLE MATERIAL

- Wood, paper, card, plastics, rubber, textiles and foam such as polystyrene and polyurethane which is the foam used in upholstered furniture
- Waste materials, in particular finely divided materials such as wood shavings, offcuts, dust, paper and textiles



Identifying Fire Targets

Inspect your premises thoroughly, including outdoor and rarely used locations and boundaries for combustible and highly flammable material. The construction of a building and its design, in some cases, can be a target, such as large open barns made from a timber frame. Consider how easily fire could spread from the target to the rest of your premises, it should be at least ten metres away.

Identifying Security Gaps

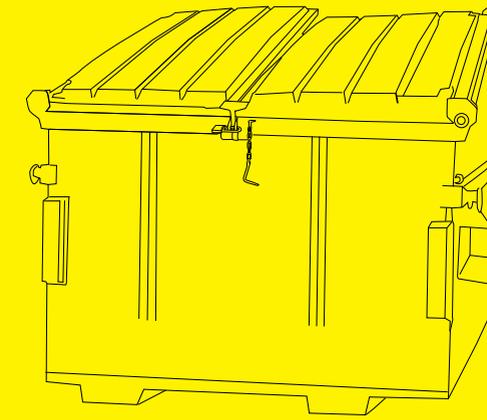
Focus on vulnerable locations around your premises such as areas prone to vandalism, insecure openings like letter boxes and areas that are hidden from view. Pay attention for scorch marks; check incident logs for any unexplained fires and run through housekeeping procedures for securing the premises at close down. When looking for security gaps, consider whether existing measures are effective in deterring arsonists and are sufficiently robust to limit fire spread. A history of trespassing on your premises is a sure indicator that

existing measures are not preventing unauthorised access. Increasing security can mean improving surveillance, restricting access or fortifying entry points onto the premises.



SECURITY MEASURES

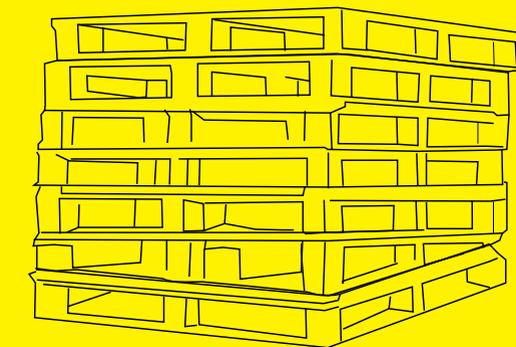
- Perimeter fencing, thorny bushes, gates, lighting, CCTV, locks and bolts, metal containers, lockable lids and fire retardant material



DO ensure rubbish containers are not overfilled and locked when not in use.



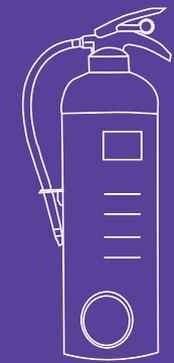
DO encourage employees to report suspicious behaviour and any damage to your premises.



DO store combustible material in a secure area and arrange for its prompt removal.

Assessing the Risk

This is essentially a matter of applying informed common sense, ignore the trivial and concentrate on significant fire hazards and security gaps. Decide whether or not you can do more to reduce risk by asking yourself if you can eliminate the hazards and gaps altogether, or control the risks so that harm or damage is unlikely. Assessments will naturally reflect variations in perceptions and judgements but if you are unsure seek advice from Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains and what you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low.



Do routinely check the fire detection system and any fire fighting equipment.

Record Your Findings

Unless you are carrying out a simple arson risk assessment, it will probably be easier to make notes of the fire targets and security gaps as you go along. Be precise about what the problem is, where it is located on your premises and what action needs to be taken, by whom and by when. An example of a simple pro forma is given at the bottom of this page.

Review Your Assessment

This is particularly important after a significant change to procedures or development of your premises which might bring in additional risks. It is also good practice to periodically review your assessment to ensure that actions have been implemented and the precautions put in place are still working effectively.

Fire Protection

Ensure that all fire fighting equipment is maintained regularly in accordance

with the manufacturer's instructions. Practice fire escape plans regularly and keep escape routes clear of obstructions. If fire breaks out, call the Fire and Rescue Service without delay and only ever attempt to fight the fire if it is safe to do so.

Fire Risk Assessment

The content of this guide does not in any way constitute a fire risk assessment, as required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This places a duty on any person who has some level of control in premises, to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire. Practical advice or information can be obtained from your Fire and Rescue Service and guides are available online at www.firesafetyguides.co.uk

Arson Risk Action Plan

Significant Hazards/Gaps	Existing Control Measures	Action To Be Taken



Arson prevention advice is given freely and without the intention of creating a contract. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service does not take any legal responsibility for the advice given. Implementing the advice will nevertheless reduce the opportunity for arson to be committed.

FIRECARE

FireCare is a free and confidential service for persistent firesetters up to the age of 17 years, involving home visits by two trained advisors. Consent from a parent or guardian is required to make a referral as well as contact details, age and details of the fire setting behaviour. To make a referral please use the contact details at the end of this guide.

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters Anstey Frith Leicester Road Glenfield Leicester LE3 8HD
Telephone: 0116 287 2241 Fax: 0116 231 1180
Email: infomanagement@lfrs.org

www.leicestershire-fire.gov.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE
FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE



ARSON

RISK ASSESSMENT

A Practical Guide

How to protect yourself and your property from an arson attack



LEICESTERSHIRE
FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE