

Arson Control

Understanding the Risk

Arson attacks can arise through the actions of vandals, disgruntled employees and/or former employees.

The majority of malicious fires occur during the hours of darkness; however a significant number are started during working hours in less populated areas of premises such as warehouses and storerooms. Externally, combustible material, combustible waste, and undergrowth are common targets for the arsonist.



Controlling the Hazard


Protection against arson is achieved by assessing and addressing the management issues, and both the fire and security protections of the premises. Vigilance is the key.

Controls generally fall into two categories – Human Element and Physical Element – which respectively relate to management procedures, and to protection or design principles. These controls are concerned with reducing the likelihood of an event occurring, and reducing or mitigating the impact on the business should an incident occur.

The following issues should be considered to create a comprehensive and integrated risk control programme:

Human Element

- The site manager should take responsibility for defence from arson attack, and a named individual should be made responsible for 'locking down' the premises at the end of each working day.
- Undertake risk assessments to identify hazards and develop self-inspection checklists.
- Good housekeeping standards should be practiced:
 - Conduct self-inspections at the end of each day to ensure that the premises are fully secured, no combustible material or hazardous goods are left lying around, and fire and security alarms are properly functioning.
 - Combustible waste should be removed to external metal bins with lockable lids, and sited at least 6-metres from the buildings.
 - Undergrowth and vegetation should be cut short.

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- Visitors and Contractors: Access and movement throughout the premises should be strictly supervised and controlled.
 - Staff Training: The need to minimize the risks of arson should be made clear to all staff, and supervisory staff should be made responsible for applying this culture.
 - Vet new employees carefully, particularly verify their references.
 - To ensure that protections are in good working order, all fire protection and security equipment should be regularly checked as part of a maintenance contract.

Physical Element

- Perimeter fencing should be robust and secure.
- Doors and windows should be adequately protected and secure.
- Letter boxes should be fitted with internal metal boxes.
- Good external automatically activated security lighting should be installed.
- Intruder Alarm system: an approved system should be installed and set, providing comprehensive coverage and off-site notification.
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Surveillance can form an important element of the integrated security package. CCTV can act as a deterrent to potential arsonists, and can also provide vital evidence of identification.
- Fire protection equipment should be installed as appropriate. This can comprise of (or any combination):
 - Automatic Sprinkler systems
 - Automatic Fire Detection systems
 - Automatic fire suppression equipment
 - Fire extinguishers
 - Hose reels

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