



Arson Control

Understanding the Risk

Arson or incendiary fires are typically started for revenge, thrills, vandalism, malicious mischief, concealment of a crime, extortion or for political purpose. 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 warehoused and storage, combustible waste and unkempt vegetation also common targets for the arsonist.

Loss Statistics

Arson, or malicious ignition, is a leading cause of fires in commercial and industrial premises. According to UK Fire Statistics, fires caused by deliberate ignition account annually for 26% of large fires. Over a 10 year period, there has been an average of 130 such fires per year, at an average cost of approximately \$750,000 USD (£500,000GBP). In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported 62,807 arson offenses in 2008 with an average industrial/manufacturing loss of \$212,388 USD per offense.

Controlling the Hazard

Protection against arson is achieved by assessing and addressing the management issues, and both 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 arson risk control program:

Human Element

- The site manager should take responsibility for defense from arson attack, and a designated individual should be made responsible for securing the premises inside and out at the end of each working day.
- Undertake risk assessments to identify hazards and develop self-inspection checklists.
- Good housekeeping standards should be practiced:
 - Self-inspections should be conducted at the end of each day to ensure that the premises are fully secured, no combustible or

hazardous materials 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 located at least 6 meters (20 feet) from buildings.
- Flammable liquids and compressed gas cylinders should be secured in their proper storage areas at the end of each day. Fuel pumps should be shut down and secured.
- Uncontrolled vegetation should be maintained short.
- Access and movement of visitors and contractors throughout the premises should be strictly supervised and controlled.
- The need to minimize the risks of arson should be made clear to all employees with supervisory staff responsible for applying this culture.
- Vet new employees carefully, particularly verify their references.
- Facility fire and security protection should be regularly checked to assure it is in good order as part of a robust preventive maintenance program.

Physical Element

- Physical security should be enhanced including:
 - Perimeter fencing should be robust and secure to deter unauthorized entry.
 - Building doors and windows should be adequately protected and secured with good quality locks or padlocks.
 - Letter boxes should be fitted with internal metal boxes.
 - Good external security lighting should be installed, especially where yard storage is present.
 - An intruder alarm system should be installed using an approved system providing comprehensive coverage with off-site notification and prompt response.
 - Closed circuit television (CCTV) system can form an important element of the integrated security package and can act as a deterrent to potential arsonists, providing vital evidence and intruder identification.

- Fire protection equipment should be installed as appropriate including:
 - Automatic sprinkler systems
 - Automatic fire detection systems
 - Special fire suppression equipment such as clean agent gaseous or dry chemical point of hazard systems
 - Portable fire extinguishers
- Manned security guards can conduct random internal and external patrols and can also provide constant site level monitoring and rapid response to fire and security surveillance and CCTV intruder alerts.

Through proper risk awareness and appropriate prevention and control measures, arson related risks can be properly managed to help assure a well protected facility.

For further information, contact your local AIG Global Property Engineer.

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