



United States Fire Administration

FIIGHT FIRE

WITH FACTS

Recently your community was struck by fire. Someone died. As you continue to report about the devastating effects of this fire, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) encourages you to remind your audience that there are effective ways to reduce the threat of these attacks.

Arson is a national problem that damages our neighborhoods, threatens lives and costs billions of dollars. Arson *can* be prevented when people join together and report suspicious activity.

The following life-saving tips could make a big difference to your community. By incorporating them in your story now, you could protect houses of religious worship and save lives.

Did you know?

- Arson claimed the lives of more than 650 people in 1994 and caused \$2.2 billion in property loss.
- Two million fires are reported each year, including as many as 573,000 arson fires.
- Churches are often an easy target for arsonists since many are located in isolated areas, they are empty much of the time, and many are constructed of wood and furnished with wooden pews.
- Motives to set church arson fires include: spite or revenge, fraud, vandalism, murder, concealment of a crime, and/or racial hatred.

Following these simple fire safety tips can boost survival rates dramatically. Please share them with your readers because knowledge is the best fire protection.

For more information on how you can help prevent fire deaths please contact your local fire department on a nonemergency number or the United States Fire Administration at (800) 238-3358 or www.usfa.fema.gov

PREVENT CHURCH ARSON IN YOUR COMMUNITY

LIFE-SAVING TIPS

- 1 Illuminate the church exterior and entrances. Use motion-activated lighting near doors and windows.
- 2 Proper landscaping can help create a crime-free environment. Keep shrubbery and trees trimmed so the building can be observed by passing patrols.
- 3 Use adequate locks and security devices on doors and windows.
- 4 Communicate with law enforcement and fire officials about concerns regarding arson and other crimes.
- 5 Appoint a person from the church to work as a liaison with these authorities.
- 6 Promote a neighborhood arson and crime watch to report suspicious activity.
- 7 Keep church leaders and members informed of concerns and crime prevention activities.
- 8 Keep boxes, trash, wood and other combustibles away from the building.
- 9 Install smoke alarms on every level of the building and test the batteries once a month. Replace smoke alarm batteries at least once a year.