



## GuideOne Center for Risk Management Fact Sheet: Arson and Fire Prevention

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Arson is the leading cause of all commercial building fires. Your organization can decrease the chances an arsonist will strike by investing in a fire prevention program now. You can also take other steps to protect your facility from a devastating fire. Use this fact sheet to learn more about

- Why Schools are Vulnerable to Arson
- Reducing the Risk of Arson
- Eliminating Common Causes of Fire
- Using a Fire Prevention Checklist

### Why Schools are Vulnerable to Arson

- Predictable schedules.
- Multiple staff and volunteers in leadership positions often result in inconsistent security.
- Such facilities often become targets because of what they represent.

### Reducing the Risk of Arson

- Keep doors and windows locked when the building is unoccupied.
- Light all sides of the building and parking areas.
- Trim shrubbery to prevent it from being used for hiding.
- Remove loose material combustibles and trash from the property.
- Have police routinely check premises.
- Become involved in a "Neighborhood Watch" program.

(03.06)

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This material is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice, nor are any suggested checklists or actions plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions. You are encouraged to retain your own expert consultants and legal advisors in order to develop a risk management plan specific to your own activities. For more information, contact the GuideOne Center for Risk Management at (877) 448-4331, ext. 5118 for Church and Schools, or ext. 5175 for Senior Living Communities.

<http://www.guideonecenter.com>

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## **Eliminating Common Causes of Fire**

- Have the electrical and heating systems inspected by a qualified service person once a year.
- Install a lightning protection system.
- Keep extension cords, temporary wiring, and combustible decorations to a minimum.
- Examine electrical lighting sets and extension cords for defects before each use.
- Never store gasoline-powered equipment or gasoline in the inhabited building.
- Store flammables in a UL-listed cabinet, approved for storing flammables.
- Remove trash daily; and keep outdoor trash containers a safe distance from the building.

## **Using a Fire Prevention Checklist**

Checklists can be an effective tool to provide a safer environment. Answer the following questions relating to external, internal, and awareness measures you can take to determine how well your facility is safeguarded against fire. A "NO" answer indicates an area that may warrant further examination.

### **External measures help discourage unauthorized entry:**

- Does lighting sufficiently illuminate all sides of buildings and parking areas?
- Do all exterior doors have non-removable hinge pins?
- Are open crawl spaces protected?
- Is access to roofs, fire escapes, and outside stairways limited to authorized persons?
- Is shrubbery trimmed to prevent it from being used for hiding?
- Are loose materials and trash removed daily?
- Are windows and glass entries protected with wire mesh, bars, or Lexan?
- Is there fencing or controlled access to property?

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**Internal measures discourage unauthorized entry and encourage early fire detection:**

- Are foyer and hall lights left on at night?
- Are windows and doors equipped with proper locks, jams, and/or deadbolts?
- Is there a central station alarm system for notification of fire, smoke, or breach of security?
- Are personnel assigned to secure the building daily (for example, locking doors and windows and activating security systems)?
- Are personnel assigned to check for unauthorized occupants?
- Are building keys controlled by a strict sign-out policy and marked "do not duplicate"?
- Are locks changed or re-keyed when keys cannot be retrieved?
- Are valuable objects and combustible materials securely locked away from sight?

**Awareness measures build teamwork and ownership attitudes among members:**

- Do the police routinely check premises?
- Is the school involved in local "Neighborhood Watch" programs?
- Are members and personnel made aware of building use, security, and fire prevention measures?