

January 13, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: **OSS JPA Liaison**
 OSS Safety Officers
 OSS Contact People
 OSS Servicing Agents

SUBJECT: **Arson Bulletin**

Attached is a bulletin from NorCal Relief related to arson.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Henry Brock
Risk Manager

Northern California ReLIEF

LOSS CONTROL/RISK MANAGEMENT SPECIAL BULLETIN



ARSON

Over 50% of all fires are set by children under the age of 18, while 61% of school structure fires are caused by arson, & 70% percent of high school fires are caused by arson. 78% of school fires occur during the school week, 33% occur during actual school hours, & 22% on weekends. Typically, fires are started in bathroom trashcans, exterior trashcans placed close to buildings, with the medium of choice being dumpsters. These areas present children with a place to set a fire without constant adult supervision. Fatalities from school fires are rare, but resulting injuries are higher than all non-residential structure fires.

There are effective steps that can be taken to minimize the frequency & severity of school fires. One of the most effective measures is to have all trash picked up before the weekend. Trash accumulation over the weekend creates a prime opportunity for arsonists.

NCR ARSON/FIRE FACTS

NCR Claims 6/01/06- 7/01/07	Fire Claims Reported	Cost Incurred	% of \$ Paid for Fire Claims	% of \$ Paid for All Prop. Claims
Arson:	20	\$8,427,058	79%	60%
Accidental:	6	\$2,303,572	21%	16%
Total Fire:	26	\$10,730,630	-	76%
Total All Claims:	219	\$14,164,860	-	-

Reduce the opportunities & scope of potential damage: Arsonists seldom bring combustible items with them, tending to use what is available on site. Reduce combustible access & storage levels whenever possible. Have security personnel remain visible & mobile. Ensure that doors & windows are secured & lockable. Fences, gates & external lighting prove to be a good deterrent. Refuse containers, including recycling bins, should be placed in a secure compound or secured by a padlock & chain to a post sited **no less than 20 feet** from the building to prevent them being moved against the building. Reduced opportunity & severity = reduced claims reported and costs = **reduced insurance rates.**

Subrogation Reality: Although parents are vicariously liable for the acts of their children & can be required by statute to repay the District as much as \$35,000.00 per child, this is a comparatively small recovery considering the large losses arson claims incur. To date, NCR has received zero recovery for arson claims.

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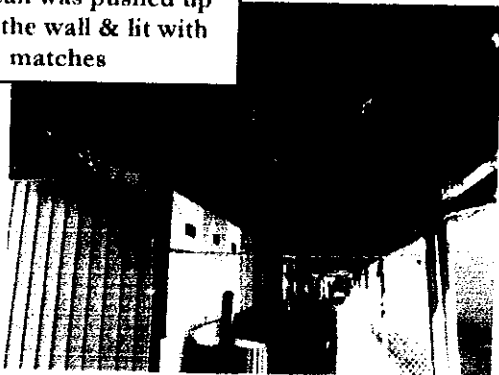
EDUCATION

- Staff should be made aware of the potential for daytime fires to occur.
- Parents should be notified of *all* fire occurrences at their children's school, & informed if arson was the cause or suspected.
- Fire Safety Awareness sessions, including the risks of malicious calls, provided by the local fire service should be held at regular intervals for *all* children.
- Regular fire drills should be practiced & records of each drill documented.
- Children should be regularly informed that lighters & matches are not allowed in schools. Any breach should be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.
- Teachers should consider integrating fire issues & risks into daily school life.
- All fires, *no matter how small*, should be reported to the Fire Department.

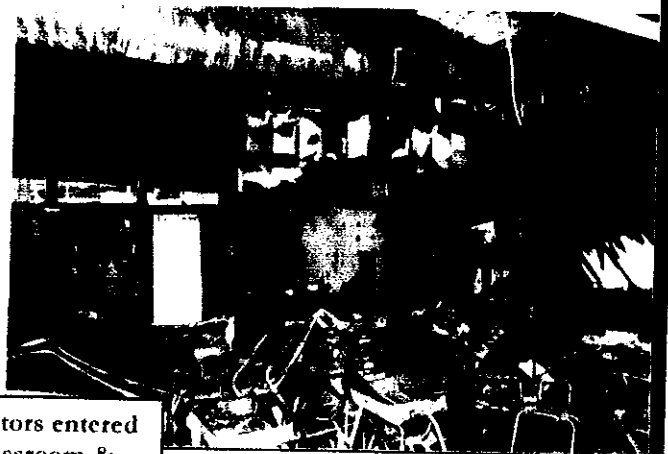
PREVENTION

- New schools should be designed & built with arson in mind, i.e. closets should be constructed with fire resisting walls & ceilings with self-closing fire doors.
- Keep all supplies containing combustible materials in & around the school locked.
- Stores containing chemicals & hazardous materials, often adjacent to chemistry storerooms, should be well managed, clean & kept locked. The Fire Department should be advised of the location of such rooms for their records.
- Trashcans should be placed away from buildings, preferably in locked compounds.
- Recycling bins should be located at least 20 feet from the building in secure enclosures, & collections made regularly to avoid a build up.
- Coats & other combustibles should not be kept in corridors or escape routes.
- Fire doors should be maintained in good working order & closed at all times.
- Automatic detection & fire alarm systems should be connected to audible alarms for constant monitoring & immediate transmission of a fire alarm signal to the local fire authority whenever the school is unoccupied.
- Do not leave flammable materials near candles or heat sources. Never leave candles in classrooms unattended. Dispose of old furniture properly.
- Close all doors at night, in effort to contain any fire or smoke within the room of origin, or at the very least, slow down the rate of fire growth.

A trashcan was pushed up against the wall & lit with matches



Unknown perpetrators entered this unlocked classroom & found paper on the walls as an easy means to arson



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RESOURCES

Safe Schools

http://www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/safety/index.htm

American Association of School Administrators list of resources on safe schools.

Hazardous Materials in Schools

http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/hazardous_materials.cfm

(National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Washington, DC)

NCEF's resource list of links, books, and journal articles regarding the identification, treatment, storage, and removal of hazardous materials found in school buildings and grounds.

Fire Safety in Schools

http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/fire_safety.cfm

(National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Washington, DC)

NCEF's resource list of links, books, and journal articles providing an extensive overview of resources on fire safety issues in school buildings.

School Facilities Management

http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/facilities_management.cfm

(National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Washington, DC)

NCEF's resource list of links, books, and journal articles on equipment, budgeting, and staffing methods used in the management of K-12 school buildings and grounds and college and university campuses.

National School Safety Center

<http://www.nssc1.org>

A national clearinghouse for school safety program information funded by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, and housed at Pepperdine University.