

BRIEF CaSE

Reducing the Risk of Arson

Arson is a very real threat to all organisations in the United Kingdom. The NFCC found that arson accounted for more than 50% of all fires attended in 2017/18 by Fire & Rescue Services in the UK, with an approximate economic cost of up to £11.46 billion.

Activities undertaken by faith groups, charities, and social enterprises (including cooking, the use of tools, arts and crafts and use of candles) can provide potential exposure to fire and/or arson risk. Whether they own the property or not, such organisations can help to control this risk through a few basic measures

Assessment and Staff Training

Arson is not just a risk to property, so it is important to assess the risk to employees and volunteers, service users and members of the public by carrying out a fire risk assessment. It is a requirement to keep a record of your findings when there are more than five employees under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Provide training to staff and volunteers to be “arson aware” and “risk conscious”. This training will be relevant to your premises and activities, but might include how to secure the premises, evacuation procedures including regular fire drills and how to conduct routine checks etc. Where relevant, thought should be given regarding public spaces and the potential fire risks caused by visitors.

Physical Fire Safety Measures

Ensure that both buildings and site perimeter security is adequate (“arson proof”); for example, install security lighting and/or window locks where possible.

Fire Risk Assessment – 5 Point Checklist

1. Identify fire hazards – ignition, fuel and oxygen
2. Identify people at risk
3. Evaluate, remove, or reduce and protect from risk
4. Record, plan, inform, instruct and train
5. Review – remember, this is an ongoing process

Other more general fire protection measures include:

- A suitable fire-detection and warning system - *this can range from a shouted warning (where it can be heard throughout the premises – e.g. a one room village hall) to an electrical detection and warning system, depending on the type of premises you have*
- A way of fighting a small fire which takes into consideration the type of fire(s) most likely at the premises e.g. if electric

fires are your main risk then consider having carbon-dioxide fire extinguishers at the premises - *as a guide, there should be at least one extinguisher for every 200 square metres of floor space, with at least one on each floor; you should take advice on which type of extinguishers are required based on your premises*

- Safe routes for people to leave the premises – *you should take advice on acceptable fire exit plans*
- Suitable fire exit doors on the escape routes which can be used without a key or any specialist knowledge
- Emergency lighting where required
- Suitable fire safety signs in all but the smallest premises

Good Housekeeping

Remove any material which is flammable and relocate it to a more inconspicuous position, or adequately secure it against unauthorised access. As an example, skips, recycling containers and bins should be kept away from the building eaves and canopies and should be locked, emptied, or removed regularly to discourage arson. You should also check regularly for third-party waste such as fly-tipping, as this is an additional fire hazard.

Organising Daily Routine Checks

Adopt an end of day closing routine which includes implementing physical premises security and alarm activation; ensure there are no unauthorised personnel on site; flammable materials should be secure; external lighting should be switched on.

Even if you follow all the steps above you cannot guarantee that your premises will not be subject to arson attack, so your Business Continuity Plan must include emergency arrangements for such an eventuality.

Other Useful Sources

Fire Protection Association / RISC Authority publication - RC48 Protection of premises from deliberate fire raising (this is available to download free of charge from the RISC Authority website) - <http://www.riscauthority.co.uk>

Further useful information is available from the [Arson Control Forum website](#), the [Fire Safety Advice Centre](#), the [National Fire Chiefs](#) and the [Government’s Fire Safety Checklist](#).