

WHAT KIND OF YOUNG PEOPLE MIGHT SET FIRES?

Many of the young people who set fires fit certain psychological patterns. Many young people who have never set fires fit these categories to some extent; but juvenile firesetters often have severe problems in one or more of these areas:

- Youngsters who exhibit hyperactivity, accident proneness, poor judgment or impulse control problems. Their fires are often "play" fires that get out of control because they don't know how to handle the situation.
- Children who are aggressive and often have school behavior problems. They may be loners or run with trouble-making friends. They may have a poor self-image or embarrassing learning disabilities. These young people may need referral to social service agencies for individual and family counseling.
- Children who set fires to express frustration and anger. They may show other self-destructive behavior such as stealing and cruelty to animals. Their fires are intentional, and often severe. These young people need immediate help from a qualified therapist.
- Young people who are overly obedient, unobtrusive, or who may be trying to cope with life changes like divorce or death; or who have severe emotional or physical handicaps.
- Children who act in groups out of boredom, curiosity, or peer pressure.

In children, firesetting is a symptom of the problem, not the problem itself.

Whatever the cause of the firesetting, guidance and counseling may succeed in replacing it with more constructive activity, and helping to heal the real underlying problem.

Many Fire Departments offer programs to help juvenile firesetters—or even very young potential firesetters—to straighten out their problems. Contact your local Fire Department for more information. And be sure the Fire Department knows about young people with firesetting problems.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT ARSON...

1 Secure your home or business with strong locks on all windows and doors. Make sure, however, that these locks don't interfere with safe escape in the event of a fire. Install effective night lighting.

2 Eliminate readily available fuel for fire—wood piles, paper, leaves, trash, combustibles.



3 Provide internal security for storage rooms, particularly those containing flammable liquids or other materials that could produce a fast fire.

4 Become familiar with the comings and goings in your neighborhood or building so you can be alert to the unusual.

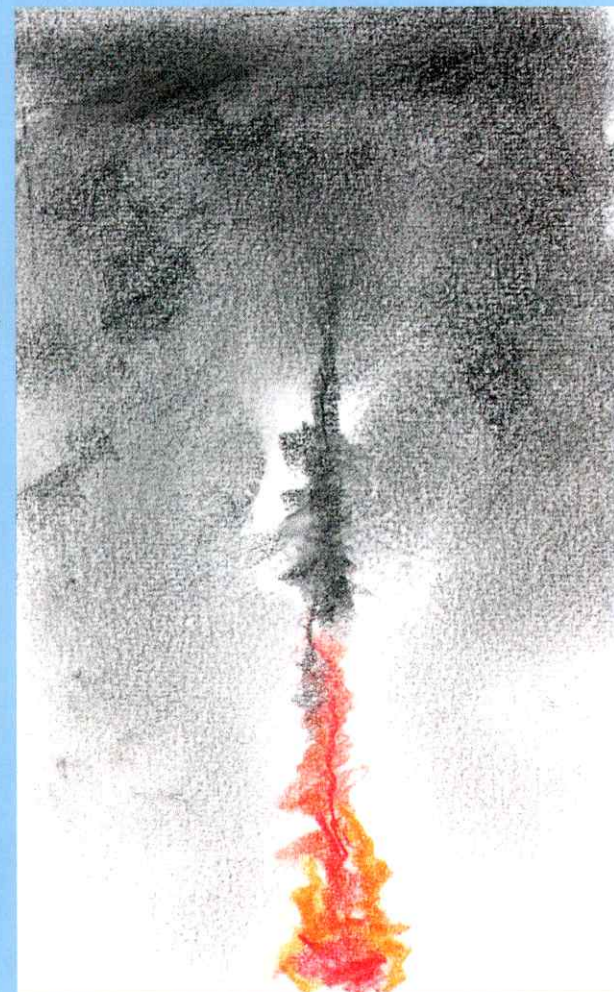
These measures will also help prevent other crimes, as well as accidental fires!



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FIRE CRIMES: FALSE ALARMS AND ARSON THE CAUSE THE COST... THE CURE





FALSE ALARMS ARE COSTLY AND DANGEROUS.

Fire departments respond as fast as possible to each call, even if it turns out to be a false alarm.

Responding to a fire alarm is a dangerous part of fire fighting. In 1986, fire departments responded to nearly a million false alarms. That includes both malicious false alarms and accidental activation of automatic alarms. That year there were five false alarms for every four structure fires!

Fire fighters are sometimes killed responding to a false alarm, and many others are seriously injured. What a tragedy!

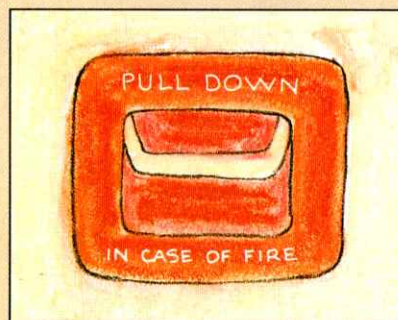
In addition, while fire fighters and their equipment are busy responding to a false alarm, they are unable to respond to a real fire. In some areas where false alarms are common, extra fire fighters and equipment must be maintained to make sure that all alarms can be answered. And that means huge amounts of money wasted.

WHO TURNS IN FALSE ALARMS?

Many of the people who turn in false alarms are children who aren't aware of the real physical danger they are causing. They also may not know that a false alarm is a crime punishable by imprisonment or a heavy fine.

Teachers and others can help by becoming aware of children who are prone to make false alarms and arranging for special help. All students should know about the consequences of false alarms—higher taxes, fire damage and death.

A personal counseling session with a local fire fighter or someone from the local burn center may help. Special class activities on firesafety may also help to re-channel anti-social behavior to more constructive ends.

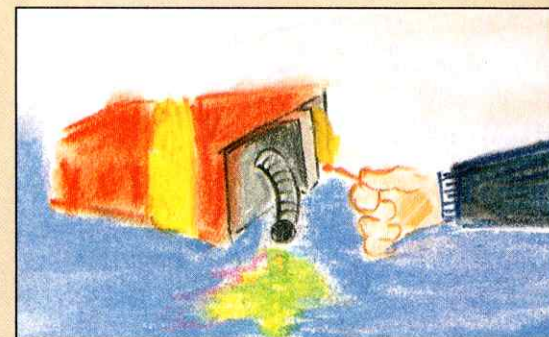


People of all ages should know where fire boxes are located, and how and when to use them. They should know that after turning in an alarm, they must stay by the alarm box to direct the fire engines to the fire.

And everyone should know this:

A false alarm is not a harmless prank. It's a dangerous and costly act that sometimes ends in injury or death.

ARSON



Arson and suspected arson fires are still the largest single cause of fire damage to property in the United States.

In 1986, arson (and fires where arson was suspected) caused damage to structures amounting to \$1,677,000,000. Those fires killed 705 people. Half of the building fires attributed to arson occur in residential buildings—where the danger of people dying is greatest.

Arson is a special problem in vacant buildings, buildings under construction, and school buildings.

And arson in cars and trucks is on the rise.

Arson is a crime committed disproportionately by young people. 40% of those arrested for arson are juveniles. Amazingly, one out of every fifteen arson arrests is a person under 10 years old! No other crime attracts so many young children.

Some juvenile firesetting is unintentional, the result of carelessness or curiosity. But intentional fires can be a vehicle for anger, frustration, revenge. In any case, it can be seen as a call for help.