



NEWS from DHSES

NEW YORK STATE
DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
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Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

Jerome M. Hauer, Commissioner

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DHSES JOINS NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK EFFORT

Governor Cuomo issues proclamation in support of nationwide fire prevention campaign; May 5th through May 11th designated as Arson Awareness Week in New York State

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Service (DHSES) today announced, through its Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC), that it is joining the efforts of the United States Fire Administration, the International Association of Arson Investigators, the National Association of State Fire Marshals and the National Volunteer Fire Council to promote this year's Arson Awareness Week theme – "*Reducing Residential Arson.*"

DHSES Commissioner Jerome M. Hauer said, "The goal for this year's Arson Awareness Week is to provide all residents with strategies to combat arson in their neighborhoods. The public can be engaged in Arson Awareness Week by implementing neighborhood cleanups along with improving internal and external security for their homes and abandoned properties."

Between 2008 and 2010, approximately 16,800 intentionally set fires in residential buildings occurred annually in the United States. These fires resulted in an estimated 280 deaths, 775 injuries and \$593 million in property loss each year.

The FBI documented that 14,717 law enforcement agencies reported 43,412 arsons. Arsons involving single occupancy and other residential structures accounted for 29.3 percent of the total number of arson offenses.

New York State Fire Administrator Bryant D. Stevens said, "In New York State, approximately 4,000 arson fires are reported by fire departments each year, with almost \$75 million dollars in estimated property losses. This does not include the almost 10,000 fires that are reported as either under investigation or of undetermined cause. Additionally, there are indirect costs such as medical care, funeral expenses, temporary shelter, business interruption, demolition, fire investigation, prosecution, court proceedings and incarceration that add substantially to these figures. Arson simply has a significant impact on New Yorkers from any perspective."

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Paul D. Martin, Chief of OFPC's Inspections and Investigations Branch said, "Fire robs communities of their most valuable assets – lives and property. The fire service can help communities thwart the occurrence of arson and reduce its devastating effect by making residents aware of these measures to safeguard their homes".

Many communities across the country and the state have experienced the devastating effects of residential arson fires and it is important to understand how you can make your home safe from residential arson. These deliberate fires often result in the loss of life, untold physical and emotional suffering caused by painful injuries, and the destruction of property. Society as a whole bears the burden in higher insurance premiums, degraded communities, and diminished local government tax bases in this already uncertain economic climate.

Several ways homeowners can keep their homes safe from arson:

- **Illuminate Exterior and Entrances:** Install lights covering all sides of the house. Motion-activated lighting, which is inexpensive, should be placed near the entrances. Interior lights on timers give the illusion that a residence is occupied.
- **Trim or Remove Shrubbery That Obstructs the View of the House from the Street:** Make sure that nothing blocks the view of the house. During the growing season, bushes and trees may need to be trimmed frequently.
- **Keep Doors and Windows Locked and Bolted:** All external doors should be equipped with dead bolts. A simple locked door or window could be the deterrent that saves a house from arson.
- **Clean House:** Oftentimes, arson is a crime of opportunity. Remove excess vegetation and piles of leaves. Clean around your house and garage, removing unused and unneeded paper, trash, cleaning supplies, partial cans of paint and other materials that could become kindling and fuel a fire for an arsonist.
- **Equip Homes with Smoke Alarms and a Fire Sprinkler System:** The combination of working smoke alarms and home fire sprinklers reduces the likelihood of death from fire by more than 82 percent. The most effective fire loss prevention and reduction measure for both life and property is the installation and maintenance of fire sprinklers. Alarm devices wired to transmit an alarm to the police or fire department provides a timely response by emergency responders.
- **Establish a Community Arson Watch Program:** Learn about the steps to establish a Community Arson Watch program. Form a neighborhood program and publicize your community's efforts. Arsonists seldom strike when you are ready for them.
- **Clean-Up Vacant Homes and Properties:** Secure abandoned and vacant homes, which are potential arson targets. This may include adding additional locks or boarding up broken windows or other openings with plywood. Remove abandoned vehicles. Contact public works to disconnect all utilities to include natural gas, water and electricity. If there are liquefied petroleum gas tanks, they should be disconnected and removed.

Please share this information with your family, friends and colleagues as part of a coordinated community effort to stop residential arson.

For more information visit the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control website at: www.dhSES.ny.gov/ofpc/resources and the United States Fire Administration website at http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fireservice/subjects/arson/arson_awareness.shtm.

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