



NEWS from DHSES

NEW YORK STATE
DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

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MAY 4TH – 10TH IS ARSON AWARENESS WEEK IN NEW YORK STATE

Nationwide awareness campaign promotes crime reduction with “Vehicle Arson – A Combustible Crime” theme

New York State will join 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 theme – “*Vehicle Arson-A Combustible Crime*” by proclaiming May 4- May 10 as Arson Awareness Week in the State. The Proclamation can be viewed [here](#).

The goal for this year’s Arson Awareness Week is to focus on the importance of a collaborative effort with fire and emergency service departments, law enforcement, insurance companies and the justice system to help reduce the unscrupulous crime of vehicle arson.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program indicates that over the last 10 years (2003-2012) there has been an average of 14,737 vehicle arsons reported, accounting for 26.5 percent of total arsons annually.

New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) Commissioner Jerome M Hauer said, “Arson for profit is insurance fraud and the impact of vehicle arson goes beyond the loss of a car or truck. Add to the true cost of arson, the indirect costs such as medical care, business interruption, fire investigation, prosecution, court proceedings and incarceration and the costs are truly

staggering. Vehicle arson has a significant impact on New Yorkers from any perspective and setting an automobile on fire may be seen as a quick and victimless crime; however, higher insurance premiums are passed on to law abiding customers.”

New York State Fire Administrator Bryant D. Stevens said, “In New York State approximately 7,000 vehicle fires are reported by fire departments each year, with property losses approaching \$11 million. These figures do not include the almost 2,000 vehicle fires that are reported as either under investigation or of undetermined cause. Reducing this activity through coordinated mutual cooperation will benefit all law abiding New Yorkers.”

Investigating a vehicle fire can be a formidable undertaking. Principles in investigating vehicle fires require the use of many of the same methods that are used to investigate a structure fire. Due to the fact that vehicle fires are usually given a low urgency and often overlooked, it is increasingly important that fire investigators maintain a keen awareness of the potential for arson and to conduct a thorough and technically competent vehicle fire investigation in order to combat a problem of this size.

The NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) works with the National Insurance Crime Bureau and New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, which led to the creation of a Vehicle Arson Awareness Program as a means to make fire officials and police more aware of the factors used to help identify potential vehicle arson. This, coupled with OFPC’s Vehicle Fire Investigation course, provides fire investigators a solid platform to first identify and then confirm through investigation the act of vehicle arson.

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