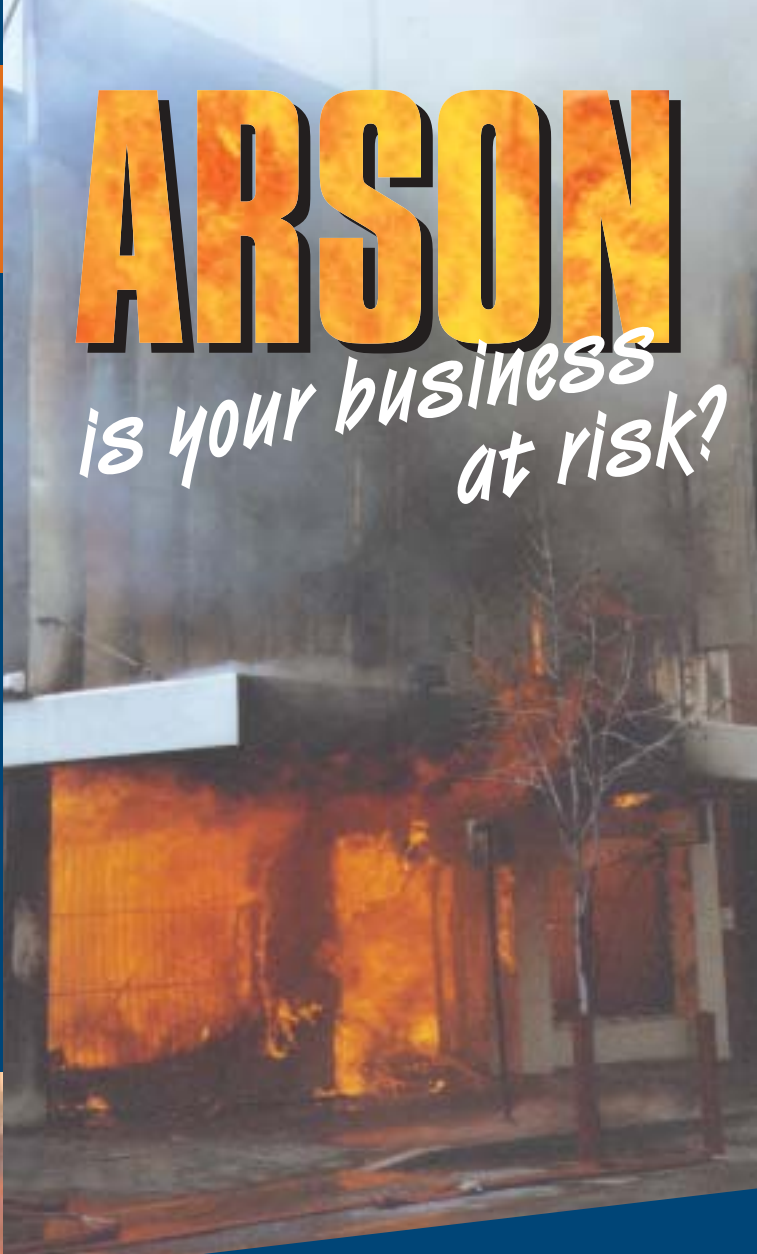


# ARSON

*is your business  
at risk?*



**FESA**

Fire & Emergency Services  
Authority of Western Australia



# The facts about arson

Every year the cost of arson to Australian business and associated infrastructure amounts to hundreds of million dollars.

Irresponsibility towards fire, by adults and children alike, is one of the most serious public safety issues confronting governments and communities throughout Australia and overseas.

Arson – wilful and unlawful intent associated with deliberate fire lighting – inflicts extensive social, economic, environmental, psychological and material damage on all sectors of the community.

## How can arson affect my business?

The loss of your business premises is the most obvious effect of an arson attack. The consequences of an arson attack can, however, be more far-reaching than you might at first think.

- Your competitors gain greater market share while your business is not trading.
- You may lose regular customers and business.
- You may lose business due to your inability to trade or to fill contracts.
- Your insurance premiums may increase as insurance companies consider your level of risk to have increased.
- The loss of employment for your employees.
- You may have difficulty in obtaining new operating licences or new equipment.
- Some consequences cannot easily be measured (psychological, social, economic, environmental and material damage).



## What motivates the arsonist?

### Why do people deliberately light fires?

The reasons are many and varied but a few of the reasons can be:

- Spite and/or revenge against you or your business.
- General vandalism or mischief to your property.
- Concealing the crime from a break and enter to your business.
- An employee acting from a grievance.
- An employee wishing to gain attention and praise for discovering and extinguishing a fire.



## How do I prevent my business from becoming a victim of an arson attack?

Preventing an arson attack on your business is really a matter of security. If access to your business cannot be gained, it becomes very difficult for the arsonist to be successful.

Some security measures can be:

- Use of lighting in yard areas and remote entrances to your business to discourage trespassers from entering.
- Monitored security and fire alarm systems which allow the detection of trespassers or fires. This would enable an earlier notification and response from emergency services.
- Making sure industrial rubbish dumpsters and plastic 'wheelie' bins are locked and secured in areas where arsonists cannot access them.
- Ensuring that all windows and doors are locked and secured after hours and on weekends.
- Reporting any unusual activities happening in the workplace or suspicious person/s in the area to the appropriate authorities.



*Bins unsecured and close to premises—an invitation to an arsonist.*



*Good housekeeping—lockable dumpster bin in secured enclosure away from premises.*

# ARSON

# What fire detection and control measures can I take to protect my business?

Here is a checklist of precautions you can take to protect your business from arson. Check how your business rates at present and what you can do to improve fire control measures.

**Is the 'housekeeping' in and around your business of a high standard?**

Many arsonists will not carry materials with them but will take advantage of any easily ignitable materials found around your premises.

**Have you removed firefighting equipment?**

Burglars may take the opportunity to commit the act of arson to conceal their crime – even if arson was not initially contemplated – by using matches or cigarette lighters available from your premises.

**Are your employees trained and competent in fire prevention measures and the procedures to be followed in case of fire during business hours?**

The vigilance and co-operation of employees has prevented many arson attacks from occurring.

**Do you have a fully functional automatic fire detection system?**

The only sure way of detecting a fire in its early stage, both during office hours and after hours, is by having a fully functional automatic fire detection system. This will assist in the early attendance of the FESA Fire Services.

**Have you installed fire suppression equipment? (Eg. sprinkler systems and/or other fixed or portable firefighting equipment.)**

Such systems would detect a fire and help control it until the Fire Service arrives. Ensure portable firefighting equipment is serviced to Australian Standards.



Waste stored in a caged area.



Chemicals and gas cylinders behind security gates.

**Does your business premises have adequate structural 'compartments' and fire-resisting doors between the different sections of the building and floors?**

Voids in the ceiling, walls and floor and areas without adequate barriers can contribute to the spread of a fire. Ensure that fire doors are not obstructed or held open.

**Have you ensured that waste materials or rubbish bins (dumpster and wheelie bins) are not stored within the premises or outside in close proximity to the external walls of the building?**

These items should be secured in areas away from any main premises. Temporary structures built out of combustible materials should be sited away from permanent buildings for the same reasons.

**Are all flammable liquids, gases and chemicals kept in locked and secured places when not in use?**

Whenever possible flammable liquids, gas supplies and chemicals should be isolated and secured in appropriate areas – preferably away from the main premises.

## Conclusion

The effect of an arson attack on your business will, in most cases, result in a far greater loss than that of a simple burglary. The risk of an arson attack can be considerably reduced if you and your employees are aware of the risks and take the necessary precautions to protect your business and investments.

For further information and advice contact FESA's Fire Investigation Branch on 9323 9395.

To report suspicious persons or deliberate firefighting call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

