

Clean House



Oftentimes, arson is a crime of opportunity. Remove excess vegetation and piles of leaves. Clean around your religious building and outbuildings, 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.

Establish a Community Arson Watch Program



Follow the successful Neighborhood Watch five-step program model provided here.

- ✓ Step 1: Analyze the specific, local problem and collect related data.
- ✓ Step 2: Build a partnership between fire and emergency services, the police and other law enforcement agencies, and the residents.
- ✓ Step 3: Assess the needs of your house of worship and determine which problems to focus on and the methods used to address them.
- ✓ Step 4: Train a dynamic group of volunteers, led by organized and motivated leaders.
- ✓ Step 5: Develop meaningful projects specific to the identified problem.



U.S. Fire Administration

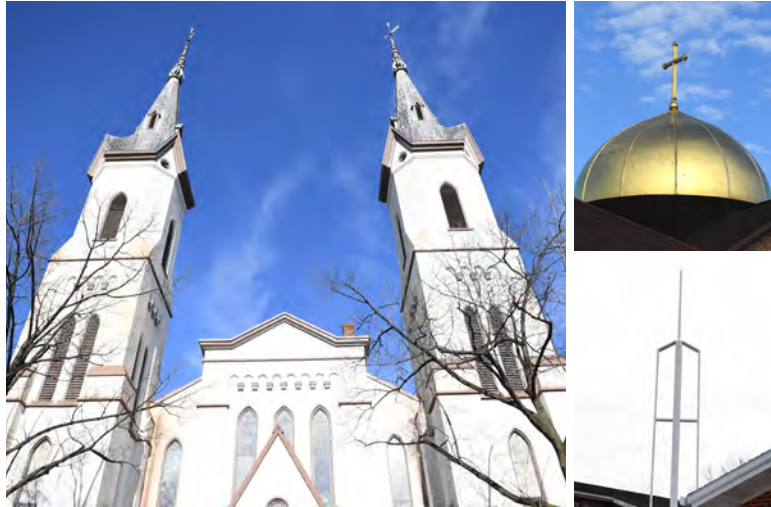
Protecting Houses of Worship Against Arson



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According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' U.S. Bomb Data Center's Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS), there have been an average of 103 arson fires per year at houses of worship reported by federal, state and local agencies during the 16-year period from 2000 to 2015. BATS shows the most house of worship fires in 2003 with 140 reported and the fewest in 2011 with 72 arson fires. Less than 2 percent (1.86 percent) were initially investigated as a hate crime.

In the U.S., between 1996 and 2015, 51 percent of the reported incidents at houses of worship were determined to be caused by arson, according to a recent analysis by the Pew Research Center.

Arson robs congregations of valuable assets, lives and property. Arson destroys more than the buildings used as houses of worship; it can devastate a community, resulting in the decline of the neighborhood through increased insurance premiums, loss of business revenue, and a decrease in property values.

The fire service can help communities reduce the occurrence of arson and reduce its devastating effect by making residents aware of the following measures to safeguard their church, mosque, synagogue, temple or chapel.

Illuminate Exterior and Entrances



Install lights, covering all sides of the building. Motion-activated lighting, which is inexpensive, should be placed near the entrances. Interior lights on timers give the illusion that a house of worship is occupied.

Clear Obstructions



Trim or remove shrubbery that blocks the view of the building from the street. During the growing season, bushes and trees may need to be trimmed frequently.

Install 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.

Keep Doors and Windows Locked



All external doors should be equipped with dead bolts. A simple locked door could be the deterrent that saves your congregation from experiencing arson. The hardware used to lock windows can sometimes be easily forced open using a credit card or other tool. The best type of window hardware has spring-loaded bolts that insert through the window frame into the wall frame. Limit and track which members of the congregation have keys and alarm codes. Set up a schedule to routinely change the locks.