

FAITH - CHURCH ARSON FACT SHEET

2015

KEY POINTS

- > Arson - number one fire threat
- > Arson risk checklist



Church arson and break-ins are on the rise in Australia with New South Wales and Victorian regional areas having been targeted in the last few months.

A recent arson attack on a Church in Carlton, Victoria has raised security concerns even further.

So what can you do to reduce the risk of break-ins and arson attacks at your Church building?

Arson poses a significant threat to Church property. It is the most common cause of large fire loss, and a major security challenge for Church communities.

Fires can be started deliberately, either by arsonists or opportunist thieves in an attempt to conceal their crime, or accidentally by children. Churches are often viewed as a soft target.

By regular reviews and taking simple steps to improve the security, you can significantly reduce the risk of becoming a victim of arson at little or no cost.

Review your arson risk:

The following checklist will help you review the arson risk to your Church or Church hall, and guide you through some simple steps to help mitigate the risk.

CHECKLIST:

- Regularly review Church security arrangements. Are adequate measures in place to protect vulnerable areas against unauthorised access?
- Encourage your neighbours to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity immediately to the police.

continued overleaf...

CHECKLIST:

- ❑ Good housekeeping is vital. Do not accumulate rubbish and combustible waste in or around the Church. Candles and matches should be locked away. Do not leave petrol in the Church. Do not leave bales of hay/straw for the Christmas crib in the Church all year. Boiler houses should be locked with no combustible waste stored in them.
- ❑ Do not site wheelie bins or refuse containers close to buildings. Locate bins in secure areas well away from buildings if possible. A fire in a waste bin close to the Church can quickly shatter glass and spread inside the building.
- ❑ Carry out repairs quickly if you suffer from graffiti or malicious damage attacks. Minor damage is often followed by more serious incidents including arson if not addressed quickly.
- ❑ Ensure the Church is locked overnight including all perimeter gates. The risk of arson increases significantly during the hours of darkness. Church halls should be locked when not in use. Doors and accessible windows should be adequately secured to prevent unauthorised access.
- ❑ Limit authorised entry points, other than for services, leave only one door unlocked during the day. This should be easily visible from nearby properties. If not, have Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) installed with signs mounted and clearly visible.



- ❑ Create the impression the building is visited regularly. Encourage parishioners and neighbours to visit as part of their daily routine. Use the Church as much as possible. If practical have a roster of Church sitters. Keep internal doors closed to prevent fire spreading.
- ❑ Consider installing external security lighting and intruder alarms, or CCTV to help deter criminals. Fire and intruder alarms should have remote signalling to a receiving centre ensuring a 24 hour response to any activation, helping mitigate losses as far as possible.
- ❑ Ensure fire extinguishers are maintained annually and Church officials have been trained in their use.

For further information please contact our Customer Risk Solutions Manager on 03 8630 3137.