



Arson Control Forum

Topic	Firebeat
Organisation	Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service
Date	16.04.09

Issue

To tackle the annual problem of outdoor fires during the school summer holidays. These normally occur on parks and open areas and involve grass, trees and bushes.

Previous research has established that warmer temperatures correlate with an increase in outdoor fires. Incident analysis indicates that fires peak during the months of June-July, occur more frequently between 15:00-21:00 and during the weekend.

In comparison little is known about the motivating factors which come to the fore during the warm summer months. What is known is that the warm dry conditions are particularly favourable for grassland fires, which are started predominantly by young males between the ages of 9-13 years.

Actions Taken

Firebeat is an outreach youth diversion project, it involves fire fighters engaging young people in areas afflicted by deliberate fires. The project was delivered to coincide with the school summer holidays. Fire fighters toured local parks in Leicester on bicycles to engage young people in positive activities through the medium of football. The tour of duty was dependent on staff availability and weather conditions, however normal working hours were between 14:00-20:00.

Target locations were determined on the basis of deliberate small fire incidents and Fire fighter input. The ethos of the project is to link responsible behaviour with resisting the temptation of fire setting by promoting football as a healthy alternative. Fire fighters are encouraged to spend time engaged in sporting activity with groups of young people in order to build relations and emphasise this link.

Free mini footballs are provided for distribution to reinforce the message 'Can You Control It?' which relates to both the football and their behaviour. The project aims to alter perceptions about the consequences of deliberate fire setting through awareness raising, thereby reducing its incidence

Summary of Benefits Realised

Fire Analysis: in comparison to the previous year there was a reduction of 62% in the target area, however this compared to a reduction of 64% in the wider area. This was due to the unseasonably wet summer experienced in 2006, which also resulted in less than half of the project hours being worked. It was concluded that the project would need to be repeated to properly assess its impact.

Feedback: In general, Fire fighters felt that the project had been beneficial for themselves and young people. The highest rating was given to their own ability to contribute purposefully to the project and this was complimented by all fire fighters agreeing the project was worthwhile and recommendable to other fire fighters.

Outputs: In total the Fire fighters encountered approximately 500 young people and 72% were between the ages of 9-14 years old and also male.

Contact

If you require any further details about the points raised in this case study, please contact:

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