



Arson Control Forum

Topic	Community Engagement
Title	Arson Task Force
Service	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Region	South East
Date	June 2007 – present

Issue

In a special 2006 report, the Department for Communities and Local Government, along with the Arson Control Forum, identified that only 9% of arson cases recorded by the police resulted in an offender being identified.

The conviction rate (3%) was even lower, and as a result, Fire and Rescue Services, and the Police, were asked to jointly focus on improving multi-agency investigation of deliberate fires, to help increase the detection and conviction rates of arsonists.

The Hampshire Arson Task Force was established to support Fire and Police colleagues involved in the investigation of deliberate and serious fires.

Arson is the largest single cause of fires in the UK, and the estimated cost to communities in Hampshire is in excess of £1million.

Actions Taken

Having secured funding via the Hampshire County Council Local Public Service Area Agreement 2, (LPSA2), Hampshire's Arson Task Force (ATF) went "live" in June 2007, and is a joint initiative between Hampshire Constabulary (HC) and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS).

The Hampshire ATF is an intelligence-led unit which exists to:

- detect and prevent deliberate fires (arson)
- reduce risk to life and property
- and enhance arson investigation via tactical response and appropriate support.

A detective constable was appointed as the Arson Task Force Detective and works alongside a Hampshire Fire and Rescue Arson Task Force Officer, Watch Manager.

Key responsibilities include the operation, promotion and daily management of the task force, vehicle and resources as well as carrying out Fire Investigations as part of HFRS dedicated team. The ATF is also responsible for receiving, recording and monitoring intelligence with a secondary role as a trained Fire Investigation Search Dog Handler specifically trained for the detection of hydrocarbon ignitable liquids at crime scenes. Key responsibilities also include the delivery of arson-awareness training to identified groups, and assisting HFRS fire investigators/ constabulary crime scene investigators with the investigation of suspicious fires.

Summary of Benefits Realised

In its first year of operation April 2007 to April 2008, The Arson Task Force was staffed by one HFRS Watch Manager & one Hampshire Constabulary Detective Constable. Efforts in this first year concentrated on the training of the team, the establishment of the protocols for provision of a tactical response to level 2 & 3 Fire Investigations and a comprehensive review and update of Fire Investigation paperwork, policy and procedure.

During the year the team assisted with 174 investigations and deployed to provide a tactical response on 92 occasions. The volume of work undertaken and level of success achieved in this first year, resulted in a successful bid for additional funding.

Since April 2008, restructuring has enabled the redeployment of the Community Safety Team (consisting of two HFRS personnel) to work in support of the Arson Task Force and Fire Investigation Officers as the Fire Investigation Support Unit. The allocation of a dedicated Administrator and an Arson Analyst to the Task Force has significantly bolstered the teams capability.

During their time in post the Watch Manager and Detective Constable assigned to the Arson Task Force have undertaken training in fire investigation and the psychology of the arsonist.

With the Arson Task Force as its nucleus the multi agency team approach to fire investigation has improved significantly. Each responding resource, be they Police CSI's, HFRS Fire Investigators, Local Police Units or CID officers they are now working cohesively to ensure an effective investigation of the incident(s) at the scene of the fire. This collaboration has seen arrest rates relating to level 2 & 3 arson investigations increase significantly, from the baseline of 9% in 2005.

Year	No of Investigations	% of incidents resulting in arrest	% of charges resulting in conviction
2007	92	73%	88%
2008	124	68%	91%

Contact

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