



Arson Control Forum

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| Topic | Arson |
| Title | Arson Courtroom Drama |
| Organisation | Dorset Fire and Rescue Service |
| Date | 2008 |

Issue

- Need to combat heathland arson
- Raise awareness of the issue and impact of arson with Young People

Actions Taken

- Initiative adopted by the Urban Heath Partnership supported by DFRS, involving Year 8 students acting out a courtroom scenario dealing with a case of suspected arson
- Students provided with scripts and props by the Partnership
- Students play all characters in the drama concerning an alleged offender accused of arson with intent to endanger life
- Fair punishment for guilty verdict debated
- Sessions attended by Fire officers reinforcing the key messages of the dangers of fire

Summary of Benefits Realised

- Substantial reduction in the number of arson fires in the county. Deliberate grassland fires have decreased from 502 fires in 2005/06 – to 211 fires in 2008/09, equating to a 57% reduction.

Contact

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

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Additional Information

Prior to the day of the drama students playing judge, witnesses, accused and defence counsel are given scripts to learn; the rest of the class make up the jury. The classroom is set out in the manner of a Crown Court.

Following an introductory narrative all evidence is shown and witnesses interviewed. The jury is encouraged to make notes of key points, and votes via ballot box once the case is completed. Sentencing sparks off a debate on fair punishment for the crime.

Fire Officers attend to highlight issues raised and to answer students' questions.

Feedback from both students and teachers suggests that the drama is an excellent educational tool that has a serious message but is fun to take part in.