



Notable Practice Case Study

Topic	Arson Reduction
Title	The SCARE Project (School Crime and Arson Risk Evaluation)
Service	Bedfordshire and Luton FRS
Region	East
Date	7th July 2010

Issue

While the finance for the proposed national "Building Schools for the Future" project has suffered a blow, *Maintaining* Schools for the Future, a Bedfordshire and Luton partnership activity, is continuing to make sure fires and subsequent costs of damage and disruption are reduced in educational properties.

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service (BLFRS) has been working for several years with Bedfordshire Police and local councils to cut the risk of crime and arson in schools. The result has been a 75% reduction in school fires compared to 2003.

Actions Taken

The SCARE project (School Crime and Arson Risk Evaluation) was the first of its kind in the country when launched last year.

Now SCARE has been made official with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between fire, police and three local authorities (July 7th 2010). The success of SCARE was shared with professional colleagues at the Fire and Rescue Show in Harrogate in June.

Nationally there are over 1,300 school fires every year, approximately 70% of which are attributed to arson. These attacks result in a huge cost in terms of the damage and the disruption they cause to schools and the wider community they serve.

Northern Area Safety Manager Tim Birchall believes BLFRS are the first Fire and Rescue Service to undertake such an ambitious project. He said: "The reviews we are undertaking have already driven down the risk of an arson and crime at our schools - by 75% since 2003, when Bedfordshire and Luton was the third worst area for school fires in the UK."

Individual schools were scored and BLFRS took into account several factors including the number of fires within a five mile radius to check if there is a pattern of arson within that area.

BLFRS would like to see sprinkler systems installed in all schools. They believe the cost of installation is far outweighed by the cost of arson attacks, which not only destroy property but cause a huge amount of disruption to teaching staff and children.

Throughout this project BLFRS has been working with crime prevention officers from Bedfordshire Police and

Health and Safety Officers from local councils, to assess all schools and rate them according to their risk from arson.

Summary of Benefits & Evaluation Method

Beginning with those at highest risk, all schools are visited and advised on ways to deter crime and reduce the risk of arson, for example :

- Regular removal of waste paper
- Wheelie bins secured 8 m from building
- Mobile classrooms 10 m from other buildings
- Arson proof letter boxes
- Security marking of valuable items
- End of the day lock up procedure
- Security fencing
- Hostile planting to deter unofficial access
- Security looking of windows

Beds Police Detective Sgt David Quamby said: "Since targeting those schools most at risk we have seen a significant fall in arson attacks and other reported crimes on school sites. We have worked closely with our colleagues in the Fire Service and local councils to improve security at schools and this has helped reduce theft, criminal damage and burglary there. The Police rely on the assistance of partners and the community to help reduce crime and such partnership preventative work is always an excellent use of our resources."



Contact

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