



Arson Control Forum

Topic	Arson
Title	Prison Fires
Organisation	West Midlands Arson Task Force
Date	2008-2009

Issue

- Need to reduce arson fires and false alarm incidents at Birmingham Prison
- Need to improve the professional partnership between the Prison, Police and Fire services in dealing with such incidents

Actions Taken

- MOU established between the Prison and Fire services agreeing Fire Service turn-out procedure
- Guidance provided the police and fire service on actions to be taken in the event of fire, including the reporting of arson incidents to the police, when appropriate
- Guidance provided from the police forensic and fire investigation officers on evidence recovery in minor and major fire incidents. Minor incidents to be dealt with as a matter of internal discipline by the Prison service
- Prison induction process to include presentation to new prisoners on the consequences of using arson as a means of prison protest

Summary of Benefits Realised

- Reduction in the number of prison arson incidents and false alarm calls
- Improved evidence recovery to aid prosecutions
- Improved prison security

Contact

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

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Additional Information

Many offences get appropriately dealt with by the prison systems however serious life threatening arson carries a potential life sentence.

In the case of cell fires often used as a protest tool by the prisoner the fact that other inmates and prison staff are at real risk elevates the crime to one that should be dealt with in the criminal justice system. If the prisoners are aware of the consequences of their actions then real arson reduction can be achieved.

The system relies on improving the partnership by arranging minimum standards to achieve a good investigation and the knowledge that an offender could face a potential life sentence even if they are currently only facing a relatively minor prison sentence.

This is yet another example that reduction can be achieved and life risk reduced by a true partnership that understand the risks and jointly take appropriate action.