

**National Arson Awareness Week
May 2-8, 2004**

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) announces this year's Arson Awareness Week "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson."

The number of organizations that are joining efforts toward the fight against arson is growing. Each new partner makes us stronger.

The goal of this year's Arson Awareness Week is to focus public attention on youth firesetting and juvenile arson. It is time to push the message that over 50 percent of all arson fires are set by children under the age of 18. By drawing people's attention to the staggering statistics about youth/juvenile firesetting, we hope to expand the resources and support necessary to reduce or end this crime.

Your involvement is critical.

We need to get stories into the media everywhere there are youth/juvenile fires set in your community. These are the types of stories that have immense media appeal because they are about children. The stories are also a way to let parents know of the resources that are available to help their troubled child.

Get involved, help a child!

The goals of Arson Awareness Week are to organize as many arson awareness activities in your community as you can reasonably manage. The ultimate goal is to raise citizen awareness of this problem and to have them get involved also. Spreading the word about "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson" should be everyone's concern.

The following are a few activities that all communities could use to kick off National Arson Awareness Week.

The mayor, city council, or both could issue an Arson Awareness Week Proclamation. A sample proclamation is attached for your use or you can develop one focused on your community needs.

The fire and police departments, where appropriate, could jointly release information on juvenile fire statistics and ask for the community's help in educating parents and children of the consequences of firesetting/arson. The local release could be done in a press conference, a call-in talk (radio or TV) show or any other highly visible event that will get good media coverage. Public events and trade shows have been great places to get this message out to the community.

Letters to the editor or editorials to your local newspaper are encouraged. Most newspapers have to print "letters to the editor." This is one of the more popular ways of getting your messages read. Don't forget "Dear Abby" or similar columns, these are read throughout the country.

With this year's theme "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson," you may want to enlist the help of your local Shriner's Organization to help promote awareness of the perils of fires and the catastrophic result on human lives. Consider having an fire/arson victim as your spoke person, first hand information is very emotional and powerful.

Plan presentations during Arson Awareness Week at local schools.

Enlist the help of other organizations to help distribute materials and promote awareness, i.e., Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Boy Scouts, and church groups.

Sample Proclamation Request Letter
[Use your organizational letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [first and last name]
Governor of [insert state]
State Capitol
City, State, Zip

Dear Governor [insert last name]:

On behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), I am contacting you for your support in proclaiming May 2-8, 2004 as "Arson Awareness Week."

The IAAI is a worldwide organization comprised of firefighters, police officers, insurance personnel, and others dedicated to the suppression of arson.

The IAAI has thousands of members and Chapters in all states and many foreign countries.

The objectives and goals of the organization are:

To unite for mutual benefit those public officials and private persons engaged in the control of arson and kindred crimes.

To promote the legal exchange of technical information and new forensic developments.

To cooperate with other law enforcement agencies and associations to further fire and arson investigations and the suppression of insurance fraud and related crimes.

To encourage high professional standards of conduct among members and to continually strive to eliminate barriers to the administration of justice.

Fires reported by U.S. fire departments show that children under the age of 18 started 41,900 fires, causing an estimated 165 civilian deaths, 1,900 civilian injuries and \$272 million in direct property damage.

Two of the national sources of fire statistics, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) agree on one point; the crime of youth firesetting and juvenile arson accounts for over 50 percent of all intentionally set fires.

The theme of this year's Arson Awareness Week is "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson." Please join with the many states that have already proclaimed this week as "Arson Awareness Week."

If you have any further questions regarding this endeavor, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx at (000) 000 – 0000 or Pam Craig-White, USFA/IAAI Liaison, at (203) 238-7028.

Respectfully Yours,

[Your name, title and address]

Proclamation
National Arson Awareness Week 2004

WHEREAS, juvenile arson is a serious crime that affects all people and can only be stopped when citizens realize the physical and emotional damage suffered by arson victims; and

WHEREAS, juvenile arson and youth set fires results in over 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries annually and \$300 million in property damage and more than 40,000 incidents annually; and

WHEREAS, If people can be become more informed along with communities having intervention and treatment programs for juvenile firesetters strides can be made in this very preventable malfeasance; and

WHEREAS, The price that America pays for youth-set fires is extreme. Most of the lives lost are those of the very children setting the fires. In addition to the cost of the damaged property, there is the cost to the community of the increasing resources needed to fight the problem; and

WHEREAS, Public awareness is one of the specific responsibilities of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that The International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc., Board of Directors meeting in Executive Session on November 1, 1985, in Atlanta, Georgia, hereby proclaims the week, beginning on May 4, 1986, as National Arson Awareness Week, and the first full week of May shall be so designated each year thereafter.

By action of the Board of Directors
International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc.
November 1, 1985
Atlanta, Georgia

Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, juvenile arson is a serious crime that affects all people and can only be stopped when citizens realize the physical and emotional damage suffered by arson victims; and

WHEREAS, juvenile arson and youth set fires results in over 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries annually and \$300 million in property damage and more than 40,000 incidents annually; and

WHEREAS, over half of the arsons in the country are caused by juveniles and young children; and

WHEREAS, The price that America pays for youth-set fires is extreme. Most of the lives lost are those of the very children setting the fires. In addition to the cost of the damaged property, there is the cost to the community of the increasing resources needed to fight the problem; and

WHEREAS, the support and promotion of National Arson Awareness Week will honor all that is best within humanity by focusing our collective efforts on a community solution:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [Governor's or Mayor's name], [Governor or Mayor] of [City or State], on behalf of its citizens do hereby proclaim May 2-8, 2004, to be Arson Awareness Week.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Governor's or Mayor's name] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] pay special tribute to all fire and law enforcement investigative agencies for their dedicated and tireless service.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, the [insert Governor's or Mayor's name] and insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] of the [insert City or State] have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the [insert City and County or State] to be hereunto affixed in the

[City of State] of _____ on this _____ day of
_____ 2004.

_____[Signature]

2004 ARSON AWARENESS WEEK - MAY 2-8

The theme for this year's Arson Awareness Week is "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson." The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) sponsor Arson Awareness Week.

The crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement of all other crimes with 55% of all arson arrests in the U.S. are children under 18 with nearly half of these age 15 or less with more than 5% under age 10. Juvenile arson and youth set fires results in over 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries annually and \$300 million in property damage and more than 40,000 incidents annually.

The price that America pays for youth-set fires is extreme. Most of the lives lost are those of the very children setting the fires. In addition to the cost of the damaged property, there is the cost to the community of the increasing resources needed to fight the problem.

Fire in the hands of children destroys – regardless of a child's age or motivation.

Youth Firesetting IS NOT a fire problem... it IS a kid problem! In addition to fire departments, communities must involve the police department, mental health professionals, school system, children's hospitals, social services and the media.

If people can be become more informed along with communities having intervention and treatment programs for juvenile firesetters strides can be made in this very preventable malfeasance.

Juvenile Firesetters continue to account for a disproportionate share of arson arrests according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and USFA National Fire Data Center statistics and the Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Report.

The major goals of Arson Awareness Week are:

- To create a national recognition, awareness and understanding of the youth firesetting and juvenile arson problem in the United States.
- To encourage communities to get involved in the dissemination of arson awareness information by creating a simple, identifiable and unifying message for juvenile firesetting intervention and prevention.
- Organize local events that raise a community's awareness of youth firesetting and juvenile arson issues.
- Engage national, regional and local media outlets in delivering the message.

USFA has designed a media kit which includes brochures, new press releases, arson statistics and supporting area awareness events throughout the country. We are very optimistic about this year's campaign and think it will be one of the best to date.

For more information, contact the United States Fire Administration at 1-888-603-3100.

Juvenile Arson – Youth Firesetting Facts

Fires reported by U.S. Fire Departments show that children playing with fire started 41,900 fires, causing an estimated 165 civilian deaths, 1,900 civilian injuries and \$272 million in direct property damage.

The crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement. For the eighth straight year, juvenile firesetters accounted for at least half of those arrested for arson. According to the FBI, nearly one-third of those arrested were children under the age of 15, and 5 percent were under the age of 10.

Roughly three out of every four child experimenting with fire, and at least four-fifths of associated deaths and injuries, involve matches or lighters. Children also start fires by playing with candles, stoves, fireworks, and cigarettes.

Just over half of children experimenting with fire in homes start in a bedroom. Three out of five involve children igniting bedding, mattresses, upholstered furniture or clothing.

A major contributor to youth set fires is a child having access to lighters. In 1998, the most recent year for which national fire loss data are available, an estimated 2,400 residential structure fires occurred that were caused by children younger than age 5 playing with cigarette lighters. Children younger than age 5 playing with multi-purpose lighters caused an estimated 800 residential fires that resulted in about 20 deaths, 50 injuries, and \$15.6 million in property loss in 1998.

According to studies of firesetting behavior, children who start fires may be children in crisis, with the fires acting as cries for help from stressful life experiences or abuse.

A study by the National Fire Protection Association indicates a substantial link between arson and illegal drug activity, on the order of one-fifth to one-fourth (20-25 percent) of reported arson cases in affected cities.

The median age of children who start reported fires by experimentation is 5 years old, compared to a median age of 3 years old for fatal victims and a median age in the early 20s for non-fatal injuries.

Sources: National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, November, 2003, "Children Playing With Fire." USFA Fire Data Center and

Only a small percentage of school fire incidents are reported to fire departments each year. Incomplete fire reporting gives an inaccurate picture of the school fire problem.

The crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement of all other crimes with 55% of all arson arrests in the U.S. are children under 18 with nearly half of these age 15 or less with more than 5% under age 10. Juvenile arson and youth set fires results in over 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries annually and \$300 million in property damage and more than 40,000 incidents annually.

Sources: National Fire Protection Association, November, 2003, Children Playing With Fire - November, 2003, Oregon Office of the State Fire Marshal, Fires Caused by Children Playing with Lighters, Consumer Product Safety Commission - September 2000, USFA National Fire Data Center statistics and the Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Report.

Speaking Notes

Youth firesetting and juvenile arson remains one of this nation's most dangerous and costly threats for citizens and their property. Over 50 percent of all fires set are done by children under the age of 18. Of that 50 percent, nearly one-third were under the age of 15, and 5 percent of that total were under the age of 10.

Nationwide, there were 41,900 fires set by children!

The latest statistics from the National Fire Protection Association shows that there were 165 civilian deaths and 1,900 civilian injuries caused by fires that were set by children.

Who are these children?

According to studies of firesetting behavior, children who start fires may be children in crisis. These fire acts may be cries for help due to stressful lives, unpleasant experiences or verbal and physical abuse.

Can a very young child understand the consequences enough to "intentionally" start a fire? If not, what do we call the fires they start?

A child may initiate a fire without intending harm or intending any legitimate purpose for the fire. Even a child in crisis who starts a fire as a cry for help may not intend the fire to cause harm. In law, each state has a minimum age below which a child is presumed to be unable to form the intent to harm. In many states, 10 years old is the minimum age for legal responsibility.

Prior to 1999, a fire started by such a child would be appropriately coded as "child playing." However, this term was problematic in that "playing" seemed to convey not so much an absence of conscious or legally defined intent as the presence of a frivolous intention of reckless entertainment. Attempts to replace the phrase "child playing" with "juvenile firesetter or firestarter" or "experimentation" solved the problem of inappropriately ascribing a frivolous intention but left intact, or even strengthened, the connotation that the fire was intended.¹

How much of this resulted in property loss?

The property damage directly associated with these fires was approximately \$272 million dollars.

How many of these fires could have been prevented?

Roughly three out of every four children responsible for fires used either available matches or lighters. Additional fires were also set by experimenting with candles, stoves, fireworks and cigarette. Keeping these type of items out of reach to children is a start to decreasing the number of fires associated with youth firesetting and juvenile arson.

Educational programs that teach children about the dangers of matches and lighters such as Risk Watch® and Learn Not to Burn® are available for pre-kindergarten and school-age children. Only about 5 percent of the nation's classrooms utilize these programs.

Increased use of effective fire safety educational materials in schools, mass media public awareness and the educating of adults of the dangers of lighters and matches around small children is certainly a positive approach to reducing the number of fires started by children.

What is being done to help reduce youth firesetters and juvenile arsons?

Several things:

Public awareness programs such as Arson Awareness Week sponsored by the United States Fire Administration and the International Association of Arson Investigators to educate communities on arson.

Programs developed by the NFPA specifically focused on youth firesetting such as Risk Watch® and Learn Not to Burn®.

State run programs such as the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Programs.

So . . . what can WE do to help?

We can stop treating kids that experiment with matches as though it is just a phase that every child goes through. We must look at children experimenting with fire the same way we look at children experimenting with guns. Believe me Ladies and Gentlemen when I tell you that a child with one match or lighter can do far more damage than a child with a gun. If you suspect a child is experimenting with fire, don't wait for it to get out of hand. Talk to them. Find out why they're doing it. If it's because they don't know about fire, get them some education. If it's more than that, get them some help.

There are several organizations in our community that might be of assistance. The local fire departments, the police departments, the school system, mental health facilities - - to name a few can often provide guidance to a parent in need of direction.

National estimates derived from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) in combination with NFPA's annual fire department survey.

Sources: National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, May, 2003, "Intentional Fires and Arson"

Being a Good Spokesperson

Tips for Interviewing

Whether you are doing a media interview on camera, on the radio or over the telephone, be aware of the way you appear. Speak clearly, speak in positive terms, keep your message clear and consistent, and stay in control of the interview.

When possible, try to get your points across even if the reporter doesn't ask you directly. It's a good idea to stick to the facts when being interviewed and stay away from opinions. Here are some guidelines:

Be Prepared

Know your material and review related issues that may be tied to your story. For telephone interviews, have written material right in front of you in case you need to check a statistic.

Consider providing the reporter with the Facts Sheet included in this media kit plus pre-printed quotes to minimize the possibility of factual error in the story.

It's a good idea to spend time prior to the interview speaking with the reporter about fire victims in general so they understand the big picture. Avoid jargon! Don't assume the reporter has any particular expertise in this area. We've found that most reporters want to do an accurate, interesting story and they often work on tight deadlines so be sure to be on time yourself!

Tying your message to events in the local area will help you establish the story's relevance and get on the air. Do some research with local fire departments and building commissioners.

Decide before the interview what core message you want to communicate and lead the reporter to that information. Have in mind a strong closing statement that sums up the most important points you want to communicate. Repeat this information even if you've already said it before, because opening and closing statements are the easiest for editors to locate.

It's okay to say, "I don't know."

If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, say so. It is much better to tell a reporter you don't know than to "guesstimate" and be embarrassed later. Tell the reporter you'll try to find the answer and be sure to follow up in a timely manner.

There's No Such Thing As "Off the Record."

Speaking off the record with a reporter can be risky and is not advisable. Stick to the facts and what you plan to address ahead of time. Professional reporters who have an ethical track record will sometimes agree to the following ground rules prior to the interview:

On the Record: As soon as someone says, I'm a reporter, you are on notice that anything you say can be used in print, quoting you by name, title and company affiliation.

Not-for-Attrition: If you want to answer a reporter's question but don't want to be quoted by name say so first.

Off-the-Record: Technically means that you don't want to see the information you are providing in print.

Background: You won't be quoted directly but the reporter can take the information you provide and confirm it with another source.

At the end of the interview ask the reporter to read their notes back to you.

TV Tips

Prepare for on-camera interviews, but don't rehearse a script, as the reporter may arrive with completely different questions than you expect. Thoroughly review any pertinent information, statistics, etc., and practice framing answers. Unless you are directed otherwise, look at the reporter, not into the camera. Maintain eye contact. Don't fidget, use your hands excessively or rock or swivel in your chair. If you have access to a video camera, practice with it so you can spot any characteristics which detract from your ability to communicate or which make you seem insincere.

[Request for Interview]

[Date]

[Name of Writer/Editor/Producer]
[Name of Newspaper, TV Network, etc.]
Street Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Writer/Editor/Producer's Name]:

I [read/watched/listened] with interest to [your piece/the piece] written by [author's name here if you want to reach the editor instead of the writer] in today's [name the publication/TV or radio show] on [arson/fire]. [you might praise a portion of the story to show the writer/editor/producer you have read/watched/listened to the piece carefully.]

Arson is one of the costliest crimes facing our nation today - nearly \$2.7 billion in property damage each year. But that's just part of the price that arson extracts. Approximately 600 people die each year in arson related fires. What is even more frightening is the Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that nearly half of those arrested for arson are juveniles (under the age of 18).

Children often set fires because they are curious, infatuated with fire, mischievous or wanting attention. Children who start fires may be in crisis, with the fires acting as cries for help from stressful life experiences or abuse. Children experimenting with fire started 41,900 fires that were reported to U.S. fire departments, causing an estimated 165 deaths and 1,900 injuries. The median age of children who start reported fires by experimenting is five years old.

That's why the first week of May each year has been designated Arson Awareness Week, to raise America's consciousness of the problem. This year's theme is "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson." The IAAI is working to help make communities aware that they need to get involved in the education of fire prevention regarding our youths.

I believe an article on Arson Awareness Week would make an excellent follow up story. Enclosed is an editorial on the extent of the arson problem and what the United States Fire Administration and the International Association of Arson Investigators are doing to combat it. It includes some important information about Arson Awareness Week.

If you are interested, I would be happy to arrange an interview with an appropriate person from our organization. I can be reached at [phone/email].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Chapter President or Campaign representative]

Arson Awareness Week News Release
[Use your letterhead]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [insert name of local Arson Awareness Week Committee Chair]
Phone: [insert contact's phone number]
Fax [insert contact's fax number]

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON."

Washington, D.C.—Each year billions of dollars worth of property is destroyed and hundreds of people are killed due to arson. For the eighth straight year, statistics show, juvenile firesetters account for at least half of those arrested for arson. Close to one-third of those arrested are under the age of 15.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) statistics for November, 2003, show that children experimenting with fire started 41, 900 fires that were reported to U.S. fire departments, causing an estimated 165 civilian deaths, 1,900 civilian injuries, and \$272 million in direct property damage.

Children experimenting with fire and juvenile arson is a serious national problem. That is why the first week of May (each year) has been designated National Arson Awareness Week, to raise America's consciousness of this most costly of all fires and the steps that are being taken to combat it in communities across the country. This year's theme is "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson."

Children often set fires because they are curious, infatuated with fire, mischievous, or wanting attention. Children who start fires may be children in crisis, with the fires acting as cries for help from stressful life experiences or abuse.

About one in every four fires is intentionally set.

The IAAI says if you know or suspect that an arson crime has been committed, contact your local fire or police department. Also, if you suspect a child is setting fires notify the proper authorities, it may not be "just a phase" they are going through.

Also, report suspicious activity near a house or other building to the local police and support Neighborhood Watch programs.

Other steps that can be taken to reduce the firesetting opportunity:

- * Store matches and lighters out of the reach and sight of children, preferably up high or in a locked cabinet
- * Never use lighter or matches as a source of amusement for children, they may imitate what you do
- * Keep doors and windows locked when a building is unoccupied. But don't use double cylinder locks, bars without quick release mechanisms, or other security provisions that could trap a person in a building with a deadly fire.
- * Keep leaves, firewood, overgrown brush and shrubbery and other combustibles away from building. Most arson fires are started outdoors. Don't make it easy for a youthful firesetter or juvenile arsonist to start a fire or easy for an outdoor fire to spread to a building.
- * Finally, if you suspect a child is intentionally setting fires or unduly fascinated with fire, get help immediately. Your local fire department, school, or community counseling agency can put you in touch with experts trained to help in these matters.

Remember, youth firesetting and juvenile arson ARE the preventable fires.

For additional information and brochures on arson prevention, call the 1-888-603-3100, or visit them on the web at www.usfa.fema.gov

If your business, group, or community organization would like to have someone speak, free of charge, at an upcoming function, contact your local fire department.

*SOURCE: National Fire Protection Association's "Children Playing With Fire," November, 2003.

Tips on Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor

Every day the newspapers are filled with articles and editorials concerning arson. As you read, notice how the issues are presented, and consider these three questions:

1. How do I feel about what is being said?
2. Is there information not contained in the article or editorial that is necessary to understanding the issue?
3. Is the information accurate?

The answer to these questions will help you decide how to respond to press coverage through letters to the editor. The editorial pages give you the opportunity to speak out on the arson and fraud issues that concern you. In a letter to the editor you can:

- Correct inaccurate or misleading coverage.
- Write to educate or inform readers.
- Agree or disagree with a position previously expressed.
- Voice your opinions on issues you feel strongly about.
- Persuade readers to act in a specific way.

Here are some hints to help you express your views more effectively.

- The influence of your communication depends on how well you make your point. Make sure that your letter is clear and concise. The reader may lose interest in a long, rambling letter.
- Support your arguments with specific examples or statistical evidence.
- Use your knowledge to help increase the public's understanding of the arson problem.
- Don't insult or attack the reporter, the paper, or the author of the piece to which you are responding. The purpose of your letter is to correct inaccurate materials or disagree with a person's view, not to personally offend the writer. A letter that is positive, reasonable and offers solutions or alternatives is generally more effective.
- Proofread your letter carefully.
- Remember to include your name, address and phone number. This is important because most newspapers will want to contact you to verify that you wrote the letter. The paper will not publish your address and phone number, just your name and association.

Sample Editorial

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON"

A November 2003 report, titled *Children Playing With Fire*, published by the National Fire Protection Association, shows that fires reported by U.S. fire departments indicate that children experimenting with fire started approximately 41,900 fires. The staggering part of these statistics is that these youngsters and juveniles are under the age of 18. Those fires are the cause of over 165 deaths and more than \$272 million in direct property damage.

Firefighters around the country do the very best they can with short budgets and even shorter public attention spans. They are our true heroes, day in and day out. But they can't do it alone.

Fighting arson effectively takes the entire community. A coordinated effort at the federal, state and local levels can make a lot of good things happen.

Now is the time to take action against this very serious problem. Nearly half of those arrested for arson are under the age of 18. One-third of arson arrests are under the age of 15, and 5 percent are under the age of 5.

Arson can wear many faces. Arson is the child in crisis, using fire as a cry for help from life's stressful experiences. Arson is a kid who wants revenge or seeks acceptance. But, arson is also the child experimenting with the lighter, mimicking mom or dad.

Roughly three out of every four child set fires, and four-fifths of associated deaths and injuries, involve matches or lighters. Just over half of these fires start in the home in a bedroom.

Children are very inquisitive by nature. Without proper education they are unaware of the dangerous and fatal consequences fire can have. Communities need to get involved by teaching kids about the danger of fire, letting them know the consequences of their actions, asking parents to control their kids' access to matches and cigarette lighters, and urging all adults to set a good example for kids.

David Sneed, President of the International Association of Arson Investigators said, "Arson is not just an adult problem. According to statistics juveniles set nearly half of all arson fires. It is our responsibility, as adults, to educate today's children about the perils of fire, and the circumstances of being involved in this type of fire activity. During the first week of May, we as an Association are involving all of our resources to educate the public, parents and educators regarding youth firesetting and juvenile arson."

One opportunity to make our community more aware of the fight against arson begins today. It is called Arson Awareness Week, and the theme this year is "Youth Firesetting/Juvenile Arson: The Preventable Fires."

We spend a lot of time and energy worrying about our kids' safety, but maybe we ought to spend a little more time worrying about our safety from kids.

The statistics are frightening - and sobering. Arson Awareness Week should make all of us perk up our ears and respond to our local fire departments call for community support in the fight against arson.

Fire departments offer classes to teach kids about the dangers of experimenting with fire. They can also help parents who suspect their children may be setting fires by referring them to professionals who specialize in helping disturbed children and families in crisis. If you have reason to suspect a child or young adult has a problem with fire, don't hesitate to call your local fire station and ask for help. Or call the National Arson Prevention Clearinghouse at 1-888-603-3100. A child who exhibits tendencies toward arson deserves a "tough love" response from parents, teachers, and friends. Juveniles who actually commit arson deserve a hard-nosed "tough luck" response from the rest of the community.

The most effective way of combating arson, of course, is simply to prevent it from happening. That takes more than just federal dollars; it takes bodies of committed people. Everyone in every city needs to get involved in this worthy cause. Working together, we can make real progress in snuffing out a cowardly act that ruins far too many lives in this country.

Preparing For An Interview

1. Gather Background:
 - * ID reporter
 - * Name
 - * Phone/FAX number
 - * Experience
 - * Previous work
 - * Slant/Approach/Angle
 - * Specific questions (but don't expect only those):
 - * ID outlet
 - * Reputation
 - * Agenda
 - * Circulation/Audience
 - * Deadline:
 - * Any background you need to provide:
2. Determining Interviewee ("Subject Matter Expert")
 - * Available?
 - * Broad knowledge?
 - * Media trained?
 - * Experienced with media?
 - * People oriented?
 - * Able to explain in clear, general terms?
3. Location
 - * Appropriate/Representative
 - * Sanitized
 - * Sensitized
 - * No distractions
 - * Seating
 - * Lighting
 - * Special requirements:
4. Expectations (Ground Rules):
 - Attribution category:
 - * On record for full attribution (Strongly recommended)
 - * Time limit
 - * Subject boundaries
 - * Background information (Press kit, bio, fact sheets)
 - * Recording?

5. Develop Q&A

- * Opening statement: who, what, where, when, how? (Two or three sentences/30 seconds)
- * Impact on operations/decisions?
- * Safety (further damage/injury) concern.
- * Prevention of further incidents?
- * Why/Cause?
- * "How could you have allowed this to happen?"
- * Happened before? (Similar incidents?)
- * Accept responsibility?
- * Response/Statement to those affected?
- * Amount/Extent/Cost of damage?

6. Develop Messages

Categories:

- * Safety
- * Sympathy
- * Investigation
- * Admit mistake(s)
- * Restitution
- * Performance (personnel/equipment)
- * Isolated incident?

Techniques:

- * Get out in front of reporter; take lead. ("Hook")
- * Audience should know/remember
- * What/Why important.
- * Tie-in with larger issues.
- * Package in memorable quotations or sound bites
- * Analogies ("Compare with" "Think of a")
- * Bridging phrases:
 - "Broader perspective"
 - "More important concern"
 - "Another issue"
 - "Not the real issue"
 - "Equally important question."

7. Final Preparation

Interviewee techniques:

- * Vary pace
- * Energized and confident
- * Emphasize key word/phrases/points ("Flagging")
- * Common language. (Avoid service jargon and technical terminology. Explain if you must use.)

Visual aids?

- * Maps
- * Charts
- * Statistics
- * Graphs
- * Samples
- * Visits
- * Videos
- * Photos

Appearance

Posture:

- * Sit straight
- * Head up (Maintain eye contact)
- * Feet on floor or cross legs at knee toward interviewer.

Details:

- * Light-color shirt
- * Dull brass
- * Clear-lens glasses
- * No cover (hat) if possible
- * Accept makeup

Practice (murder board?)

Handling Hard Questions:

- * Off subject
- * Out of territory
- * Relating to other incidents
- * Repeating negative words/phrases in responding
- * Challenge/False premise
- * Boxed in by having to choose from unattractive alternatives
- * Rumors say . . .
- * Multi-part questions.
- * Advice to senior or other service/organization
- * "Must be tough/hard/difficult/exasperating to . . ."
- * Putting words in mouth
- * Non-truth or distortion to elicit response
- * Relating to unrelated incident/circumstance/program
- * Accusations
- * No off-the-cuff remarks (Interview not over until reporter/camera/microphone gone.)
- * Expect silence (You don't have to fill it.)

8. Final Advice:

- * Be polite
- * Keep your temper
- * Be helpful
- * Be certain of the question
- * If you don't know, say so. Offer to find out; task PAO.
- * Be truthful
- * Stay within area of expertise and responsibility
- * Emphasize positive points
- * No personal opinion
- * No speculation ("If/Would/Could/Should . . . ?")

9. Immediate Follow-up/Feedback

With reporter:

- * Correct any errors or misimpressions
- * Determine whether more info. needed
- * Determine expected run date/time

With interviewee:

- * "How do you (interviewee) think it went?"
- * Messages delivered/received?
- * Effective interview?
- * Suggestions for improvement:

10. Intermediate Follow-up

- * What else do you need to know/find out?
- * Provide follow-up information

Results reported in/on outlet:

- * Fair/Balanced?
 - * Accurate?
 - * Complete?
 - * In context?
 - * Dignified?
 - * How played in "living rooms"?
 - * Own objective(s) reached?
 - * New/More questions raised?
 - * Errors or misrepresentation noted:

11. Long-range follow-up

- * Lessons learned?
- * Corporate memory input.

Corrections required?

- * Morgue
- * Letter to editor
- * Meeting with reporter/editor/publisher
- * File

Public Service
Announcements

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON" – 15-second PSA

Here's a frightening fact: KIDS ARE BURNING KIDS. Kids are setting arson fires that kill other kids. It's true.

The fact is nearly fifty percent of the people arrested for arson are kids. These fires rob, injure and kill thousands every year. Call your local fire or police department and find out what you can do to help prevent arsons.

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON" – 15-second PSA

Ever thought that an arson fire could cost you your job, or your home, or even your life? Thousands learn the hard way every year. May 2 through 8 is Arson Awareness Week. Get involved with your local fire and police departments and find out what you can do to help prevent youth firesetting/juvenile arson.

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON" – 15-second PSA

Kids do the darndest things. Sometimes, they even set fires that kill other kids. Did you know that the FBI reports that nearly 50 percent of those arrested for setting arson fires are juveniles? These aren't harmless pranks. Every year, arson fires set by children kill hundreds of people, and cause billions of dollars in damage.

The United States Fire Administration and the International Association of Arson Investigators need your help in educating children about the dangers of setting fires. May 2 through 8 is Arson Awareness Week. If you suspect a child of setting fires, don't turn away - contact your local fire department.

"JUVENILE FIRESETTING: THE PREVENTABLE ARSON" – 60-second PSA

How would you picture an arsonist? Maybe a dangerous, shifty-eyed criminal - someone with an axe to grind? Maybe someone with little regard for human life? Maybe someone who has a pattern of violent behavior? Would you ever picture a kid?

According to the FBI nearly 50 percent of those arrested for setting arson fires are juveniles. These kids wind up burning and killing hundreds of people, including other children. Children often set fires because they're curious, mischievous or just want attention.

May 2nd through 8th is Arson Awareness Week. The United States Fire Administration and the International Association of Arson Investigators want you to get involved. Please take this opportunity to teach children about the dangers of fire. If you suspect a child of setting fires, contact your local fire department, police department, or a mental health professional - before that child kills someone or hurts himself. You can help protect all of our children by getting involved. Remember: Youth firesetting and juvenile arson ARE the preventable fires.

