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MEDIA ALERT

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MAY 3-9 ARSON AWARENESS WEEK THEME: ARSON FOR PROFIT

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA: – [Arson Awareness Week](#) will be recognized May 3-9. The primary goal of this year's educational campaign is to focus public attention to a growing type of insurance fraud – arson for profit.

According to the United States Fire Administration, arson for profit takes place when one deliberately sets a fire to reduce financial loss, recoup initial investments, or to dispose of depreciated assets in order to receive an insurance payout from a fire loss policy.

“No matter what the reason, deliberately setting a fire is a crime – a crime that affects us all,” says Virginia State Fire Marshal, Ed Altizer. “Intentionally set fires have far reaching consequences, such as the loss of innocent lives, and debilitating injuries to both civilians and firefighters. Arson fires can also strain our economy through expensive pass-along costs from fraudulent insurance claims and increased insurance premiums.”

Hitting Home: How Arson Affects Virginia

Last year, Virginia experienced 313 suspicious, incendiary in nature residential structure fires according to preliminary data from the [Virginia Fire Reporting System \(VFIRS\)](#). The fires resulted in four civilian deaths, 10 civilian injuries and caused a little over \$10 million dollars in property losses. VFIRS arson statistics for the previous year were no better. In 2007, [370 arson-related residential fires](#) were reported along with 14 civilian deaths, 17 civilian injuries, and almost \$16 million dollars in total property losses.

There is No Profit in Arson

Arson for profit affects everyone through the loss of life, increased insurance premiums and related expenses for the fire and law enforcement professionals. Arson for profit can only be curtailed by a collaborative effort and cooperation of fire investigators, law enforcement, insurance professionals, the legal system, and the lay public.

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Do your part to prevent arson! Here are some tips to get you started:

- Secure and monitor unoccupied and abandoned buildings.
- Remove trash, debris, and other combustible materials from the front and back of your business or home.
- Remove or securely store flammable material and chemicals from your business or home.
- Lock your doors and windows.
- Report suspicious people and activity to law enforcement officials.
- Support local Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Illuminate the exterior and entrances.
- Remove garbage cans daily during nonschool hours. Garbage has been used as an ignition source for arson fires or to keep an unwelcome visitor warm.
- Keep dumpsters at least 10 feet away from buildings and roof overhangs. Make sure all discarded materials are placed inside the containers and padlock them after school hours.
- Lock and secure your vehicle.

About VDFP

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) provides support services to approximately 797 fire and emergency service organizations and over 70,000 firefighters in the Commonwealth. Support areas include funding, professional development, public fire and life safety education/awareness, research, operational support, advocacy, and technical assistance. For more information on VDFP, please click [here](#).

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