

Arson Prevention Farms & the Countryside

Protecting the Rural Community

Each year in the UK on average around 1,600 farm buildings and 85,000 areas of grassland are destroyed by fire.

Around 40% of these fires are started deliberately, many as an act of mindless vandalism.

A serious fire on a farm can affect the financial stability of even the most well run business. It is estimated that up to 80% of businesses are seriously affected following a major fire¹.



¹ London Chamber of Commerce statistics 2003



Farms are particularly vulnerable to arson: their isolated location, open boundaries, and ready fuels such as readily ignitable hay or straw make them an easy target. Whilst arson attacks on farms and small holdings may be difficult to eliminate, a number of simple precautions can increase safety.

Arson on a farm within a small community can be particularly devastating, especially when the

community is dependent on the farm for employment. The distances the Fire Service may have to travel are likely to be far greater in rural areas and the possibility of delayed calls to the Fire Service due to the remote nature of the fire may also lead to the fire spreading more extensively.

Following this simple checklist below can substantially reduce the risk of an attack.

Check List

- Hay and straw should be removed from the field as soon as possible after harvesting. Hay and straw should be stored:
 - Separately from other buildings, particular those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery.
 - In stacks of reasonable size, spaced at least 10 metres apart.
 - Separately from livestock housing.
- Petrol, diesel and other fuels should be stored in secure areas and storage tank outlets should be padlocked.
- Fertilisers and pesticides should be kept under lock and key.
- Refuse should be disposed of safely and on a regular basis.
- Unoccupied areas should be regularly checked to ensure they are safe and secure and there is no unnecessary accumulation of combustible materials.



Assessing the Risk

A quick and simple survey of the farm will identify areas where an arsonist could strike. If there are certain areas you are unsure about, ask your local crime prevention officer or your insurer for advice.

Your survey may reveal the need to:

- Provide, repair or replace damaged fencing or gates;
- Install intruder sensors and security lighting;
- Maintain the security of the outbuildings;
- Replace or re-site security and warning notices;
- Ensure firefighting equipment is in good order;
- Prepare a fire routine and action plan, and ensure that all farm workers know what to do in the event of a fire, including how to use extinguishers.

If Fire Breaks Out

- Call the Fire Brigade without delay.
- Only attempt to fight the fire if it is safe to do so.
- Send someone to the farm entrance to direct the Fire Brigade to the fire.
- Prepare to evacuate livestock should the fire spread.
- Prepare to use farm machinery to assist the Fire Brigade.

Reducing the Risk of Fires by Visitors

The danger of fire during hot weather is self-evident. However, many fires occur in the spring and late summer, usually due to carelessness.

- Ensure all barbecues are properly supervised and do not allow the lighting of open fires on the property.
- Ensure cigarettes are extinguished carefully.
- Only allow camping and picnicking in selected areas.
- Provide litter bins for bottles and other rubbish - and empty them regularly.
- Ensure that parents supervise their children.
- Regularly check and maintain open water supplies for firefighting.
- Ensure 'Fire Danger' warning signs are in place.
- Security lighting can help to protect your property from unwanted visitors.

REMEMBER: Report all incidents of fire and anyone acting suspiciously to your local police

Help and advice on protecting yourself against arson can be obtained from your local Fire and Rescue Service, Crime & Disorder Partnership (via the Police) or your insurer.

Arson Prevention Bureau 

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