

Teacher Information Sheet – Arson

What is arson?

Defined by the Criminal Damage Act 1971 (Sec 1 – 3)

- Offence to cause damage to property intentionally or recklessly
- Creates offence of causing damage that might endanger life
- Makes the damage by fire the offence of ARSON

Useful facts and figures about arson in the UK:

- Each week there are 2,213 arson attacks
- Arson kills 2 people every week
- Each week 53 people are injured because of arson
- Every week 20 schools and colleges are damaged or destroyed by arson
- 262 homes are damaged or destroyed by arson every week
- Each week 360 businesses and public buildings are damaged because of arson
- Every week 1,402 cars are damaged or destroyed by arson

Arson costs the economy £53.8 million pounds each week in England and Wales

Around 40% of all fires that are deliberately started in the UK are thought to be caused by juveniles.

A large number of offences are committed by young people who are under the age of 18. This is usually within their local area, and often done in groups. Therefore it seems the majority of arson is unplanned, arising from opportunity, and perhaps even peer pressure.

In 2000, 5300 fires were started by children under the age of ten. These fires led to 13 deaths and over 1000 injuries. The estimated cost of these fires was £40 million. Some of these fires will be started by children and teenagers' playing with matches and lighters out of curiosity; the rest involve young people using fire as a form of vandalism.



Fire Safety - Teacher Information Sheets



You may find it useful to refer to the following information when discussing with the young people in your class some of the various issues relevant to keeping safe around the bonfire period. The following pages contain brief information on:

- **Fire Safety Top Tips**
- **The Fireworks Code**
- **Fireworks and the Law**
- **Useful websites for reference**

Fire Safety – Top Tips!



Children should be reminded of the following top tips – and remind their parents or guardians!

- Don't over stack bonfires or make them too large to control
- Check the fire before lighting (ensuring there are no animals or small children hiding inside)
- Never light a bonfire too early – it can soon get out of control
- Never light a bonfire that doesn't belong to you
- Never put fireworks on a bonfire
- Never burn dangerous rubbish – such as aerosols or paint tins
- Make sure spectators stand well back to prevent flying embers catching alight on clothing
- When the bonfire is over, the fire needs to be put out completely – don't leave it smouldering as it could catch light again

- Light sparklers one at a time and always wear gloves
- Never give a sparkler to a child under the age of five – they will not understand how to use them safely
- Children should be supervised when using sparklers
- When the sparkler has finished, plunge it into a bucket of water with the hot end down as they can stay hot for a long time
- Store sparklers in a closed tin box in a cool dry place
- Avoid wearing inappropriate clothing such as loose, flowing clothing that could potentially catch light

REMEMBER THE FIREWORK CODE

The Firework Code



- Stand well back
- Never go back to a lit firework
- Never put fireworks in your pocket
- Never throw fireworks
- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves
- Never give sparklers to a child under five
- Keep pets indoors

More specifically for adults . . .

- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114
- Keep fireworks in a closed tin box
- Follow individual instructions on each firework
- Light fireworks at arms length using a taper

Fireworks and the Law



Curfew on fireworks:

The Noise Act specifies that fireworks cannot be used between the hours of 11pm and 7am, with the exception of the following dates where the times may vary:

- November 5th – until midnight
- New Years Eve – 1am on the following day
- Diwali – 1am on the following day
- Chinese New Year - 1am on the following day

Fireworks – the law:

- Under 18s are not permitted to purchase fireworks or to possess them in a public place

Fireworks – the retailer's responsibility:

- Fireworks are an age restricted product and should be treated in the same way as other such products, for example, alcohol or cigarettes
- Retailers can face hefty fines for selling fireworks to anybody under the age of 18

Useful advice:

- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114
- Illegal fireworks are often sold cheaply, however the quality cannot be assured

Discussion Points:

- Reminder that from the age of 10 you are criminally responsible for your actions and can be punished accordingly by Police/Criminal Justice System
- Why do pupils think there are age restrictions placed on certain products such as fireworks? Do they agree with this?
- Why are time restrictions put on the use of fireworks? For example, anti-social behaviour



linking to loud noises during certain times (e.g. when people are trying to sleep).

Other Useful Websites:

- www.westyorksfire.gov.uk
- www.dti.gov.uk/fireworks