



# **City of Madison Fire Department**

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## ***News Release***

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### **Arson Awareness Week Focuses on Arson for Profit**

It's Arson Awareness Week and this year the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is concentrating on arson for profit.

Arson for profit is insurance fraud, a criminal method of obtaining money from a fire loss policy.

While it makes up a relatively small percentage of fires in the City of Madison, there are some fears that it may be on the increase as the economic downturn continues.

The City of Madison Fire Department's Fire/Arson Investigation Unit Supervisor, Lt. Brad Olson says the most common scenario he sees is the incidence of car fires. This year alone, there have been 34 fires where the cause has been determined to be arson. Lt. Olson and his staff of two have completed 14 investigations, with four arrests.

The Department's Investigation Unit operates as part of a Joint Task Force with Madison police to provide a more seamless transition from investigation to prosecution.

Investigation techniques and tools have improved in recent years to result in a greater number of arrests, but the process can be slow and tedious as investigators sift through the ashes for clues.

Last year's property loss from arson in the City was \$248,867.00.

The Insurance Information Institute reports that arsonists destroyed nearly \$900 million in insured property and killed 295 civilians nationwide in 2007.

***The City of Madison Fire Department and the USFA provide these tips to reduce the chances that you may become a victim of arson:***

- External and internal security such as locks, alarms, and monitoring equipment can deter an arsonist.
- Arsonists, like burglars, fear light. Be sure to have sufficient lighting. Do not provide cover for the arsonists.
- 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.
- Report suspicious people and activity to law enforcement officials.
- Get involved with community awareness and watch programs, such as Neighborhood Watch programs.
- 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.

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